

been deprived of their property by the action of this body. Now is that reasonable? Can you, with the same amount of justice, claim compensation for property which has been destroyed by the public enemy of the country, on the highway or elsewhere, as you can claim from your own government, your own State, compensation for property of which it has deprived you? Now, it has failed to strike me with any reason or force, that there is any justice in that claim. I admit the claim to compensation; but I do not admit it to rest upon the same foundation and basis as that upon which we claim compensation for property of which this body is seeking to deprive us of; but of the opportunity to do which I pray they may yet be deprived by the returning sense of the people, shown in the rejection of this constitution.

But does the proposition before us even offer compensation? Not at all. It is scarcely a crumb of comfort to those who have been deprived of their property, or to those whom it is sought to deprive of their property or rights without compensation. You have refused every proposition that has been offered here looking to the hope for compensation either from the State or from the general government. You have tied the hands of the legislature of the State, and prohibited them, by a section of this article, from making any provision by law, or making any appropriation from the treasury of the State for compensation to the owners of any slaves who have been liberated by the constitution which you propose to submit to the people. You are not even willing to leave it to the people of the State at some future election, when it might be made an issue before the people whether there should be any provision of this character made or not. There was certainly a manifest indisposition to trust the good sense of the people. I have no doubt that gentlemen remember how they came here, by how many votes this convention was called. And they seem to be apprehensive that, under a change of circumstances, there might be a different result at some future election hereafter.

But to refer to one objection, and the only objection that is made here to this section; that it makes a distinction in favor of one particular class of property owners. For I believe they do go so far as to admit, in their arguments at least, that there is property in slaves. And is there not a property? Can any reasonable man say there is no property in slaves in Maryland, or has not been? Shall we appeal to the higher law which has emanated from the northeastern section of our country, and has invaded the whole of our State, especially since it has been backed up so strongly by bayonet logic, which was appealed to as a convincing argument by the gentleman from Frederick (Mr. Schley) a few days ago. That is the law upon which

all these arguments are based, that there is no property in slaves.

Gentlemen have gone far back beyond the establishment of State governments, to show there was no property in slaves then, and therefore there can be none now. Now the people have heretofore been a practical people. They have heretofore taken practical views of all questions before them when permitted to do so. I emphasize the words—"when permitted to do so"—and I mean something by it. They have not enjoyed that privilege of late. They have been deprived of it by means discreditable to a free government; although those who sustain the course which has been practiced are claiming to be the very emanation of perfection; or to be the essence of perfection in human government, especially free human government.

But let us take a practical view of this question. Let us go to the common sense of gentlemen of business. They will say, all will say, that there is property in slaves. But when you lose your slaves by action of the government, or the State, you do lose your property. Have not slaveholders helped to sustain the government of this State, by paying taxes, since its formation? Have not slaves contributed as property to sustain the public credit of the State, from its earliest formation to the present time? Have they not constituted the basis of at least \$25,000,000 or thereabouts upon which the State has relied for taxes? And have not some gentlemen here present, put the money for which these slaves have been sold, into their pockets? I think it highly probable that some have, and that money was the proceeds of property. Slaves have been recognized as property from the beginning; and that is the only common sense, plain, practical view that any gentleman can take of the matter. It is useless to go back to all this paraphernalia of the common law and the statute law of England. Look at your own statute books in Maryland; look at the practical operation and view which has been taken of this property in this State in years gone by.

You have, by your action heretofore taken, denied us any prospective compensation. Give us the little crumb of comfort that is held out in the future by the proposition that was submitted by the gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Stirling.) That is, require the legislature to provide that a registration of that kind of property may be made, so that in the event of there being hereafter any disposition or policy on the part of the State or the general government or both, to provide some compensation, then there may be some way of compensating by some rule of fairness, equity and justice.

Some gentlemen present will remember, I am sure, a speech that was addressed