

The convention of 1787, which formed the Federal constitution, after the most mature consideration, and after the question had been argued pro and con, with great ability by the leading spirits of that day, and by men who were inspired by the highest patriotism, determined that the true basis of representation should be fixed upon the whole free population, both *white* and *black*. And in a spirit of compromise, they gave the slave States a representation for three-fifths of their slaves. This principle of representation was adopted by every slave State in the Union, and is now adhered to by nearly all of them, and the Federal basis of representation has never, up to this time, been changed except in one or two States. Slaves being considered as the chief productive industry of the country, and contributing mainly to the support of the government, the constitutional convention of 1850, which assembled in this hall; and from whom we received our present constitution, went a step further, in fixing our basis of representation. They fixed it upon the whole population, doing away with the distinction which had existed theretofore, between the representation of the free and slave population. They not only treated the slaves as persons, but as property, and gave them this representation because they constituted the chief productive industry of the State. The majority report ignores this settled and just principle of representation, as adopted in the Federal constitution, and also the basis of representation as agreed upon by the convention of 1850, and recommends a new basis, which is not at all applicable to the State of Maryland, and if adopted will give Baltimore city the controlling influence in the State legislature. The majority report further proposes to give representation according to the white population of the State. Now, let us look at the effect of adopting the majority report, upon the several and respective interests of the State. You must bear in mind that this is a small State, containing about 687,000 inhabitants, having within its limits Baltimore city, containing 212,000, nearly one-third of the whole population of the State, who are a commercial and manufacturing people.

In the lower counties, where they are more largely engaged in agricultural pursuits than in any other portion of the State, there are slaves in large numbers, and in some of the counties the negro population exceeds that of the white population. Then it would be a manifest injustice to that portion of the State to adopt any other basis of representation.— And the effort is now made here to do so, for the purpose of depriving that portion of the State of its proper political influence in your State legislature. If this principle is carried out, what will be its effect upon the future political condition of your State? You give to Baltimore city, only representing a few of the

many distinct interests of the State, having within her confines nearly one-third of the whole population, one-third of the whole representation in your legislature.

Mr. ABBOTT. Will the gentleman allow me to correct him? The report allows Baltimore city less than one-fourth of the representation.

Mr. BERRY, of Prince George's. I am obliged to the chairman of the committee for this correction, as I do not desire to state any thing not founded in fact. The report gives to Baltimore city about one-fourth of the whole representation, instead of one-third, as I stated. Now, is this principle of representation according to population applicable to Maryland? Can this principle be inaugurated in our State government without doing manifest injustice to other parts of the State? Look at the geographical position, and manifold interests of the various portions of the State to be represented in the popular branch of your legislature. The Eastern Shore is divided from the Western Shore by the great Chesapeake bay; here people are an agricultural people, and their chief products are wheat and corn. In the lower part of the State our chief product has been tobacco, and our soil is only suitable for the growth of tobacco. Baltimore city is interested in commerce and manufactories, and the northern part of the State is rich in its mineral resources. This shows that Maryland, from its position, is divided by various, and may be, by conflicting interests, and it would be unwise to give to any portion or particular interest of the State a controlling influence over the other portions of the State.

This has always been a question of compromise in Maryland, and can only be fixed upon a basis of compromise, without you intend to overlook the material interests of the State. In the convention of 1850, where this question was very elaborately and ably considered, it was determined that the principle of representation, as applicable to other States, was not applicable to Maryland, because of her geographical position, because of the distinctive interests which prevailed in every part of the State, and because of its being a small State, with a large city within its confines. It was therefore determined that it could only be fairly settled upon a basis of compromise, to give the several interests of the State their proper representation, and not to give to any other section or interest an undue influence in the legislature. There is scarcely a State in the Union in which this question has not been settled upon some principle of compromise of rights. I will refer to the basis of representation as fixed in the constitution of Rhode Island, as being more nearly applicable to Maryland than that of any other State.

The house of delegates there is composed