

practice of greater economy in the expenditures of those companies, and would for the future secure to the State the application of the revenues of those companies, in accordance with the provisions of the law.

The Legislature might also rely upon a board thus constructed, for full and accurate information in reference to the condition of the corporations, to guide their future actions. In view of the magnitude of the investments which the State has made in her works of internal improvement, and which are now practically unprotected, any expense which might be consequent upon the establishment of such a board is utterly unworthy of consideration. In a representative government the purity of the elective franchise is of vital importance. Where the permanency of the government depends upon the will of the people, it is all important they should be thoroughly satisfied that the ballot box has fairly expressed their wishes, and that those who are to rule over them are in truth the choice of a majority of the citizens of the State. In view of the excited feeling which pervades the public mind upon this subject, I cannot too strongly urge upon your attention the consideration of this important question. I would recommend such alterations in the existing laws as will satisfy the public mind that for the future no fraud can be committed upon the elective franchise. I would suggest for your consideration the propriety of passing a general Registry Law, applicable to the whole State, confirming the right to vote to those who should furnish the evidence of their citizenship, and record their names in accordance with the provisions of that law.

Two arguments have been heretofore successfully urged against the application of such a law to the several Counties of the State, first, that it would be inconvenient for the voters residing in the country to comply with its provisions, and secondly, that such a law is unnecessary, as applicable to the Counties, because of the small number of votes taken at any poll, and the consequent facility, with which an attempt to vote illegally would be discovered. On the other hand our fellow citizens of Baltimore, whilst they admit the ease with which the guards thrown around the elective franchise may be evaded within the limits of the City, yet with much force deny the right of the Legislature to apply the provisions of such a law exclusively to them.

This argument, gentlemen, may be urged with additional and almost irresistible force when your Senators representing the several Counties of this State, and you gentlemen of the House of Delegates, the representatives of the people of those Counties, will admit that in the recent elections, every poll book in every County of the State, if investigated, would disclose some illegal votes. I cannot think that any inconvenience consequent upon the compliance with the provisions of such a law should outweigh the benefits which would result from its enactment. I know that the People in every part of the State will cheerfully conform to the provisions