

State of Maryland
Executive Department
Annapolis Sept. 9th 1863

Hon. Francis Thomas

Dear Sir:

In the conversation I had with you a few days since upon the subjects at present agitating the people of the State you were pleased to express the opinion that the views I then presented on these subjects might, if brought to public attention, lead to a more accurate understanding of our position and purposes by the members of the Administration, and tend to harmonize the differences at present so unhappily existing among the Union men of the State.

Whilst I have no reason to expect such results from such means, and have no inclination to obtrude my opinions upon any one, yet as I have never hesitated to express them, and should be delighted to think that by any means these differences — for which, as it seems to me, there is so little cause — could be reconciled, I have concluded to recur to the subject in the shape of this communication.

From the commencement of the War to the present moment the loyal people of our State, constituting, as we both know, a vast majority of its population, have been absorbed with the thought of so prosecuting that War that the rebellion against which it is waged should be subdued in the speediest and most effectual manner. When they have thought at all on other issues, or turned their attention to subjects of State policy or local institutions, it has been always with the determination to make them all subordinate to the great purpose which engrossed their most anxious thoughts, and to the accomplishment of which they ever have been and still are, ready to make all else subservient.

The question of slavery and the best method of disposing of that institution has, of course, engaged much of their attention. The abstract consideration of the question — little as they were disposed to embarrass more important issues by its agitation — was, to some extent, unavoidable.

It was the mighty subject of the South's pretended wrongs, and out of which they constructed the pretext for their rebellion. It was also, continually brought to their attention by the repeated messages of the President recommending it to their consideration; but more than all, the effects of the War upon that species of property forced the subject upon their notice, and compelled them to consider some plan of disposing of it whilst anything valuable in it remained to be disposed of. The discussions which have ensued have developed various phases of opinion.

The greater part, if not all, of the Secessionists among us, still strangely, clinging to the hope that the rebellion would succeed, the Southern Confederacy be established, and Maryland be made a part of it, have been, as a matter of course, opposed to every mode of emancipation, and determined to cling to slavery as the great pillar of their new Republic. Bitterly, however, as they may have hitherto been bent on that purpose, the stubborn facts of their situation, the waning prospects of the Rebellion, and the steady depreciation of slave property, are fast opening their eyes to the necessities of the case, and of providing by prudent legislation for such of it as is left. Besides the class above mentioned, there are doubtless