

The first step to be taken therefore, is to provide for taking the sense of the people upon the subject of a convention to revise the Constitution of the State.

To advocate the call of such a convention, and to urge upon the next Legislature the necessity of submitting that question to the people at the earliest practicable day, is the only legitimate mode by which the most earnest advocate of emancipation can inaugurate that policy. I have never hesitated to avow the opinion that the next Legislature should by all means make such a provision. The people of the State have the constitutional right to express their views upon the subject of a revision of their organic law every ten years, and, whether or not the same constitutional duty of providing for this right rests upon the next Legislature, as ~~it~~ did upon the last, no one will question their right to do so, and few that will not urge the propriety of their so doing, unless in the meantime a complete revolution is produced in public sentiment by the most unwise course of dealing with the subject.

Nor will a disposition of the question by this, the only means of meeting it, involve the delay which some seem to suppose. The convention which assembled in 1851, and framed our present Constitution, was authorized by an act which was passed by the Legislature immediately preceding it. The same act provided for submitting the question of a convention to the vote of the people, and for the assembling of that convention, if authorized by such vote. The same proceeding may be adopted now, and I shall not hesitate to recommend it to the next General Assembly.

Thus may not only the question of a convention be submitted, but the convention itself assembled by the summer of 1864, and the whole question disposed of before that summer is ended. With such a prospect of the complete settlement of this vexed question, so far as Maryland is concerned, before the close of another year, what reason is there for wrangling among the loyal voters of the State over this collateral issue? and what justification for any such premature and violent proceedings with slave property as are calculated not only to inflame these wranglings, but to jeopard, if not certainly defeat, such proceedings in the next Legislature as I have just suggested, and upon which so much depends.

I have already referred to the devoted loyalty of our people. Their intense affection for the Union, and their determined purpose to stand by the Government in their most vigorous efforts to preserve it, ought to be by this time as well known everywhere else as they are here. Whilst again and again they have been aware of outside efforts made to influence the Administration in the adoption of measures which they believed injurious, their chief concern in the subject has always been prompted not so much by their own local interests, as by the effect of such measures upon the success of the war. Hence they have abstained, abstained perhaps more than they properly should have done from obtruding their views upon the Administration, or even making known their individual grievances, that they might, by no possibility, embarrass the Government, or seem to withhold their heartiest concurrence in all that might be necessary to subdue the rebellion.