

the single question of the necessity of a convention. If they are in error in their estimate of the public sense upon this subject, the ballot taken will correct the mistake, and the trifling expense to which the State may have been subjected, will be more than repaid by the profound tranquillity ensuing upon such a decision. If, on the other hand, the majority of votes shall determine that a convention is needful, it will matter little that the minority differs in opinion, or deems the present order of things most advantageous, provided the form of government, under which we live, does not interpose an impassable obstacle to the gratification of the general desire.

The undersigned are of opinion, therefore, that the questions which are properly before the legislature for decision are—first, do the people of the State think that there exist such defects in our present form of government, as render its reconstruction advisable; and secondly—if so, can they legally be assembled in convention by the act of the legislature, in the manner prescribed in the bill submitted herewith.

The undersigned entertain a conscientious opinion, that the majority of the people of this State, are in favor of the measure contemplated by the bill which they present. But as their information must of necessity be conjectural only, they have discharged their duty to the people and to the State, by providing that a vote shall be taken with regard thereto, before the serious responsibility of invoking a convention is assumed. They leave the decision of this necessity to those whom it chiefly concerns.

But assuming for the present, that the majority of the voters in the State are in favor of the convention, provided for in the bill, the undersigned would respectfully ask, with what reason the legislature can oppose itself to this desire. It is quite true that as at present constituted, it represents a minority of the voters in the State and that the distribution of delegates follows an arbitrary rule, which is dependent neither upon territory or population. This circumstance would incline the undersigned to believe, were they in ignorance of the early history of the State, that there was some principle existing in its constitution at variance with the general rule, that government is designed for the greatest good of the greatest number, or some compact by force of which no change could be effected in the constitution itself, except in the manner provided for in that instrument, without the violation of private, or of local rights, of a character too sacred to be rudely disturbed.

The undersigned have no disposition to convert their report into an inquiry of greater length, or detail, than the examination of the subject referred to their care properly demands. But the committee, which reported in 1847, unfavorably to a proposition, similar in many respects to that submitted to your body, placed upon the records of the legislature views and arguments, which, if historically or legally correct, would leave no other remedy to the majority of the people in this State, should they demand a convention, than a revolution. Such a contingency the undersigned