

6/Introduction

executive, with Governor Spiro T. Agnew characterizing the existing constitution as “outdated and restrictive.”⁵

Significant differences of opinion among delegates to the Constitutional Convention nonetheless prevailed on many issues, and extended discussion ensued on numerous provisions before consensus was reached. Protracted debate and repeated attempts to amend certain proposed sections of the new constitution finally prompted one delegate to observe that he had discovered how to detect when a consensus of the delegates had been reached. It occurred, he said, “when the delegates begin to beat their heads on the desk, and to scream ‘question, question.’”⁶ The lengths to which the convention would go in discussing various aspects of the new constitution is exemplified by the judicial article, which on initial review alone required five continuous days of debate and elicited sixty-one different amendments. Despite the overly sanguine hopes of some in the early days of the convention, it soon became clear that the work of drafting a new constitution would require more than the allotted ninety days. The convention overwhelmingly approved an extension to 120 days, the maximum allowed by the enabling legislation.

Day after day the delegates toiled, eventually extending the work week of the convention to six days, with committee meetings adding to the burden. The convention continued meeting, with an increased sense of urgency, as Christmas approached with much yet to be done. At a critical juncture when the draft constitution was nearing completion, numerous delegates were felled by an outbreak of influenza of epidemic proportions. Even the weather failed to cooperate, with heavy snowfalls on several days late in the session stranding delegates and making preservation of the crucial quorum precarious. Despite the difficulties, the delegates completed their work on 8 January, leaving just enough time for their proposed constitution to be printed on special paper for the official engrossment ceremony. The signing occurred in the House of Delegates chamber on 10 January 1967, with each delegate in turn signing three copies of the document that they hoped would set a new course for the State of Maryland.⁷

The purpose of this volume is first, to provide index access to the full *Debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1967-1968*, and second, to present a finding aid to the voluminous ancillary published and unpublished materials that constitute the archives of the Constitutional Convention Commission and the Constitutional Convention. Given the rejection of the proposed Constitution of 1968 by the voters—it was defeated at the special ratification election on 14 May 1968 by a vote of 367,101 to 284,033—one could fairly ask why an index to the *Debates* and a finding aid to the records of the Constitutional Convention Commission and Convention are needed at all.

An index to the *Debates* is required, above all, because what occurred on the floor during the 118 days the convention was in session represented the culmination,

⁵ *Report of the Constitutional Convention Commission*, p. ix.

⁶ Del. Harry E. Taylor, Jr., in *Debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1967-1968* (Annapolis: Hall of Records Commission, 1982), p. 957.

⁷ For a synopsis of the daily activities of the Constitutional Convention, see *Journal of the Constitutional Convention of Maryland of 1967-1968* (Annapolis: Constitutional Convention of Maryland, 1968).