

amount of debt, and knowing that the motion to reconsider would be made, he was disposed to accede to the wishes of gentlemen who desired greater restrictions, rather than risk the whole provision. To his mind, the most important object to be accomplished by the call of this Convention was to place restrictions upon the legislature—to prevent them hereafter from involving the State in pecuniary difficulty. But he did not wish to treat the legislature, as a captured enemy—refusing to them, even the honors of war.

The proposition of his friend from Cecil, (Mr. Constable,) actually treated the legislature as if they were a foreign enemy; the gentleman was afraid to trust them with any expenditure of the public money. And it was his, (Mr. G's,) opinion that the propositions of the gentleman from Cecil, [Mr. Constable,] even in their original shape, were much more likely to involve the State in difficulty than the proposition of his, [Mr. G's.] colleague.

With all the interest which he felt in this matter of legislative reform, he did not wish to embarrass and tie down the legislature by Constitutional provisions in such a manner as to stop the wheels of the government. He was disposed to believe that the objection to the proposition of his colleague, if any could be raised against it, was that it was too stringent.

He, [Mr. G.,] would himself have been willing to go to the extent of one hundred thousand, instead of fifty thousand dollars, to meet deficiencies in the treasury, not fearing that any prejudicial results would have followed from the adoption of this more extended limit.

The question which the Convention had now to decide, was whether they would take the proposition of his colleague, [Mr. George,] as modified, or would take the various propositions of the gentleman from Cecil, [Mr. Constable,] and with them, the amendment of the gentleman from Harford, [Mr. McHenry.]

He, [Mr. G.,] understood that the true meaning of the amendment of the gentleman from Harford, was, that the legislature might impose taxes, for the purpose of redeeming the public debt, hitherto contracted. The gentleman seemed to act under the supposition that no provision had been made for the payment of that debt. Yet we had heard from various quarters of the Convention, and amongst others, from the gentleman from Anne Arundel, (Mr. Donaldson,) whose intimate knowledge of the financial condition of the State was well known, that, in the course of twelve or fifteen years, the payment of this debt would be accomplished under the provision now made for the purpose. There was, therefore, no necessity for making any provision to pay off the debt hitherto contracted.

Mr. McHENRY interposed, and turning to Mr. GRASON, made a remark apparently in explanation, of which nothing was heard by the Reporter.

Mr. GRASON then proceeded to examine *seriatim*, the propositions of Mr. CONSTABLE—remarking at the outset, that he, [Mr. G.,] objected generally to them, because, notwithstanding the ability of the gentleman by whom they were

drawn, they were complicated—and it would be impossible for any man but a lawyer to comprehend their full extent and operation.

Reading the first, second, and third branches of the substitute of Mr. CONSTABLE, Mr. G. expressed the opinion that all these details were provided for, and the whole ground covered by the proposition of his colleague.

The fourth proposition of the gentleman from Cecil was, that the Legislature shall have no power to appropriate money for any purpose, or to any object for which they are not authorised to raise the sum so assessed by a general State tax. It seemed to him, (Mr. G.,) that this section was somewhat obscure. He took it for granted that the Legislature at present had no power to appropriate the public money for any purpose for which they might not raise a tax. But, according to the language of the gentleman from Cecil, it might happen that an appropriation was needed of one thousand or fifteen hundred dollars for the payment of some particular services. The question would then come up before the Legislature, whether they had the right to levy a tax upon the people to pay this sum. He thought that this was rather obscure—too minute—and that it was better provided for in the amendment of his colleague.

The next branch, as to the imposition of State taxes for the defence of the State, and the payment of the principal and interest of the public debt, was provided for in the amendment of his colleague.

“To defray the necessary expenses of the Government,” was another object provided for in the same section. This was a branch under which, he thought, more abuses might creep in, than could under the amendment of his colleague.

The sixth and last article related to the exemption of property from taxation. He thought that the Legislature should have the power to exempt from the operation of any system of taxation property simply enough for the purposes of public worship, &c.; he meant churches and burial grounds. Yet, as he construed the proposition of the gentleman from Cecil, (Mr. Constable,) it did not exempt churches.

The fifth section gave the Legislature a general power to establish a system of public schools, adequately endowed, throughout the State. There was a general feeling throughout the State, by men who were zealous upon the subject, that private resources were not sufficient to keep up these schools, but that it was necessary for the Legislature to resort to the public Treasury, and take from it money raised by taxation for the establishment of a more general system. There was nothing in his colleague's proposition which prohibited the Legislature from making appropriations for public schools. But at the same time it contained no invitation or incitement to that end. The Legislature would be prompt enough to apply the public funds to purposes of education without any suggestion in the Constitution. The danger rather was that they would run into the contrary extreme, and that there would be as great a rage for schools now as there was for internal improvements twenty years ago.