

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE CONVENTION

Maryland has had four Constitutional Conventions, those of 1776, 1851, 1864 and 1867. The Convention of 1864, when framing the instrument adopted by it, embodied a test oath* which had the effect of disfranchising a great number of people. It was provided, however, that the disabilities could be removed by a two-thirds vote of both branches of the General Assembly. In a short time the great mass of voters regained the privilege of suffrage. Public sentiment was then aroused in favor of a convention to revise the Constitution framed during the Civil War and adopted by a minority of the people. The General Assembly of 1867 passed legislation submitting the question of a new Constitutional Convention to a vote. The campaign for and against the Convention became extremely bitter in some parts of the State. The fear was frequently expressed that if a new convention were called an effort would be made to compel the State to reimburse those who had suffered losses by reason of the liberation of slaves.

Opposition was stirred up on this ground despite the fact that the act of the General Assembly providing for a ballot on the question contemplated that any constitution framed by the proposed convention should contain a clause "prohibiting the Legislature from making any law providing for payment by this State for persons heretofore held as slaves."

The Democrats and Conservatives were in favor of the convention. The opposition was furnished by those known as "radicals."

The following advertisement, illustrating the nature of the arguments used for the convention, is taken from The Sun of April 10, 1867, the date on which the election was held:

*See test oath, page 523.