

tion exclusively for biennial sessions of the Legislature, because it would require a change of what should be the permanent organic law, to suit a matter of mere expediency.

In the course of the discussion, gentlemen had referred to the judgment which they allege had been passed by the people, in favor of biennial sessions, and had stated that this judgment stood unrepealed, and should be obligatory and conclusive upon our action. The vote by the people was cast, to which reference had been made, by about fifty-five thousand voters, but an aggregate vote of twenty thousand more had often been given by the people of this State. How would the twenty thousand men who did not vote, have voted on this subject—none could tell. A small portion of them would have over-ruled the majority of four thousand six hundred, by which this judgment had been given. And it was yet to be determined, (he spoke as to a matter of figures,) whether a majority of the people of this State were, are, or ever had been in favor of biennial sessions of the Legislature. We had as much right to conclude, that the twenty thousand citizens who did not vote, were in favor of annual sessions, as that they were in favor of a change to biennial sessions. If the twenty thousand were in favor of a change, why did they not so declare themselves? They did not vote, we may conclude, because they preferred the existing law, providing for annual sessions. To say the least, they were indifferent about it, and hence a majority could not be said to be favorable to this change to biennial sessions.

Another consideration which controled the decision of many voters in favor of biennial sessions, and which had an important bearing in neutralizing the influence of many who would otherwise have opposed it—the embarrassing condition of the finances of the State, at the time this vote was cast. The State had suspended payment in specie or its equivalent. We all know that men were induced, from economy alone—in order to aid in maintaining the faith of the State, to vote for biennial sessions. They determined to make sacrifices of what they had hitherto enjoyed, in order to obtain means to be just. That necessity had now passed away—thanks to the people of the State—to their sterling honesty, and their devotion to the public plighted faith. He was, therefore, yet to be satisfied that, if the question had then been put to the people as an isolated question, there would have been a majority in favor of biennial sessions. Other considerations influenced this vote, as has been stated on this floor. The friends and opponents of reform by Convention, used it to advance their peculiar views, and voted for or against biennial sessions, as it influenced that measure. But, he that as it might, he had nothing more to say on the subject, but to add, that in supporting the amendment of the gentleman from Queen Anne, (Mr. Spencer,) he, (Mr. R.,) believed he was doing nothing inconsistent with any expressed wishes of the people. But had there not been an expressed declaration of the people, opposed to biennial sessions? Now it was not until that famous biennial bill had been passed,

and the people had experienced its operation, that they, through their delegates, called this Convention. That measure might have been the very last grievance to fill up the measure of their forbearance, and render intolérant things as they were. Certain it was, that up to that time, no such vote could ever have been obtained in the Legislature, to call a Convention—immediately after the operation of that darling measure of biennial sessions was known, this Convention was called. The reformers saw, or thought they saw, in these biennial sessions, no hope of alterations in the Constitution by the Legislature, and that a Convention alone could afford them relief.

If the question to be decided was, whether the Convention should insert in the organic law, as a matter of permanent provision, a clause that there should be biennial sessions of the Legislature, and none other—was this Convention to deprive the Legislature, and through the Legislature, the people, of the right to have annual sessions, be the exigencies of the State what they might; and that, too, when in this very bill it was declared that the Governor should have this power? How would this show the inconsistency of those gentlemen, who were heretofore maintaining in this Convention, popular rights with so much zeal and eloquence, if they now refused to the Legislature the exercise of this power, and gave it to the Governor? Who had the best opportunity of knowing when, and what legislation was required? The Governor or the Legislature? Those to whom the Constitution has confided the legislative power, or he, whose power that Constitution has declared, shall be forever separated from those of the Legislature? He did not think it could be asserted, that the Governor could possibly have the means which the representatives of the people possessed, of knowing what they desired, or what legislation was necessary or proper for them, or at which time it ought to be enacted. Let the power, therefore, be placed in the hands of those who had been selected to discharge that duty, who were best able to judge of the emergency which might demand its exercise. It did not follow, as a matter of course, that we were to have annual sessions. All he contended for was that they should not be prohibited by the Constitution.

Let the times of the meeting of the legislature, whether annual or biennial, or triennial, be determined by the legislature. Thus you exclude this vexed question from being a Constitution provision—you prevent alterations in the Constitution, merely to change the times of the meetings of the legislature which should be controlled by the temporary demands of the State.

Another view of this subject. The Convention would, he believed, endanger the adoption of this Constitution, by permanently fixing annual or biennial in its provisions. Many would vote against it, because their opinion on this subject was opposed by its provision; whereas, their votes for the Constitution might be secured, if the right had been reserved to themselves through the legislature, to change biennial into annual sessions. In this respect the Constitution