



AND

## NORTH-CAROLINA GAZETTE.

"Ours are the plans of fair, delightful Peace,  
"Unwarp'd by party rage, to live like Brothers."

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### DEBATE ON THE CONVENTION QUESTION.

CONTINUED.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.  
Dec. 18, 1821.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, this subject was one of great interest to the State, and on the decision of which no man could feel indifferent. It is a question which is calculated to call forth that kind of public feeling which is necessary for the welfare of the country.

Mr. M. was sorry to see any thing like party feeling introduced into this argument. He must tell the gentleman from Newbern (Mr. Hawks) that he had misunderstood the remark of the gentleman from Salisbury, (Mr. Fisher) when he said we will have a Convention; it was not the language of menace, which he used, but of prediction.

If he could prevail on his friends from the East to attend dispassionately to a plain statement of facts, he should have no doubt of convincing them that our present representation is unequal and unjust, though they might still doubt the policy of the proposed amendment.

But the gentleman from Newbern has endeavored to excite an alarm in the committee, which was calculated to prevent a fair discussion of the merits of the question.

The gentleman from Halifax, (Mr. Alston) had compared the situation of our large and small counties to the States of New-York and Rhode-Island, under the General Government. [Mr. A. explained.] How are these States represented in Congress? Like the counties in this State in the General Assembly? No, Sir, the United States are each of them distinct and independent Sovereignities, whereas our counties are marked out by lines changeable at the will of the Legislature. Congress cannot divide a State, or interfere with it at all. Mr. M. hoped, therefore, this comparison will pass for nought.

Do we, asked Mr. M. see property represented in the General Government? No; the Senate is composed of men representing the sovereignty of the several States. Go, then, to the House of Representatives. Is any thing like property there respected? No; nothing but freemen, with the exception of three-fifths of other persons, which was a matter of compromise with the Southern States at the time the Constitution was formed.

And is there any reason, (asked Mr. M.) why property should be represented in this government? If so, how would gentlemen have property represented? How is the Senate at present composed? Is it not the representative of the landed interest of the country? Is not this a sufficient representation of property? Would you have your slaves represented as in the general government? Would you have property represented in both Houses? If so, you would put it in the power of wealth to dispose of the destinies of your country.

But the gentleman from Newbern says that Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison, whom he calls the high-priests of Republicanism, live in Virginia, where no person unpossessed of freehold property is permitted to vote for a representative, yet he says they do not complain, nor are their unrepresented people less ready to fight the battles of their country. Sir! in the late contest with Great-Britain we have seen the sturdy yeomanry of Virginia ordered to Norfolk for her protection; we have seen them fall victims to the climate and to exposure; and they now lie mouldering in the dust, sacrificed by the laws of a country in which they had no voice; sacrificed by the laws of a State in which they were legislatively annihilated. Mr. M. said he admired the character of Virginia; he revered her sages; but he hoped he should not be considered as a political infidel, when he told the committee, he shuddered to think, that the poor freemen of his State should ever be excluded from the Legislative councils of the country.

To whom, ask Mr. M. did this Country belong, when it burst the British fetters and became independent? It certainly belonged to the whole community, and not to the wealthy alone. Why, then, should the people be deprived of any privilege for which they jointly fought and to which they are justly entitled?

Mr. M. believed, if he could assure himself that the situation of this State would always remain as it now is, he would not be in favour of calling a Convention; for no gentleman of that committee held the constitution more sacred than he did. He approached it with that awe, with which Moses approached his God while the thunders of Sinai were playing around him; he touched it with that diffidence with which the Israelites touched the ark of the Covenant. But the foundation of our political Fabric is rotting; we must repair it in time, or in time it will tumble.

What, Mr. M. asked, was the situation of things at the time when our present Constitution was formed? The Eastern part of the State was almost the only part which was inhabited. The West had but few settlers. But our lands are now rising in value, and our population is every day increasing, while the Eastern part of the State remains much the same. Take us, said he, poor as we are, and where is the boasted superiority of the East? Mr. M. apologized for this remark; but said, the moment this subject was introduced, the gentlemen from the East made it a party question.

Mr. M. said, he had made a few calculations on this subject, which he would offer to the committee. In this estimate, he had given Granville to the West. He had considered Wake as neutral, as she ought to be. She is as much the darling of the West as of the East. He had made his calculation first as the gentleman from Newbern wished it to be, according to Federal numbers.

The total amount of population (including slaves and free persons of colour, is 638,829. The whole Federal population of the State is 556,839. The Federal population of the 27 Western counties is 305,015, which reckoning 2,993 persons to send a member, entitles them to 102 members, instead of

81, which they now send. The Federal population of the 34 Eastern counties is 234,100, which entitles her to 78 members only, instead of 102, which she now sends.

The Federal population of Wake county entitles her to six members. Representation, then, upon the Federal principle, entitles the West to 21 members more, and the East to 24 less than they now send into the Legislature, and Wake to 3 more.

Go to the next principle of representation; that of free white population and taxation. The taxes of the whole State (exclusive of clerks and auctioneers) is \$65,735 60. Taxes of the Western counties are \$31,184 9; of the Eastern, \$32,203 41; of Wake county, \$2,348 7. Estimating \$353 for each member, and the Western counties will send 88: the Eastern 91, and Wake 6.

Go to the next branch of the principle, that of free white population, to which the opposers of these resolutions have the greatest objection, and the Western part of the State, will be entitled to 31 more members than she has at present, and the Eastern part to 34 less.

For the total white population of the State is 419,200. The Western counties have 253,235, which, allowing 2,253 persons to send a member, will give her 112 members. The Eastern counties have 154,014, which will give to them 68 members. The white population of Wake being 11,951, gives to her 5 members.

So that upon the principle of free white population and taxation combined, the Western counties are entitled to 100 members, 19 more than at present. The Eastern counties, to 79 members, which are 23 less than at present. Wake county, to 5 members instead of 3.

Then compound the representation of the Federal population, free white population and taxation, and the Western counties are entitled to 101 members, 20 more than at present, and the Eastern counties will be entitled to 79 members, 23 less than at present. So that, upon the very principles upon which the opponents of the resolutions contend, the West evidently labor under important grievances. But wealth is sufficiently represented in the Senate to afford itself protection. The representation of our state should be upon the principle of free white population, requiring certain qualifications in the representatives, and in the electors of one branch of the Legislature, barely sufficient to protect wealth.

Wealth fattens upon the necessities of poverty; it can bribe; it can corrupt: and whenever it shall have a predominant weight in our government, we may bid farewell to the boasted freedom of our Republic, and ignominiously submit to the yoke of Aristocratic Slavery.

The 34 Eastern counties having a free white population of 154,014, send to the Legislature 102 members; the 27 Western counties send 81 members, which in the same ratio of the East represent 122,229, leaving a balance of 131,024 free white persons, together with all the negroes of the West arrayed against the negroes of the East, and unrepresented. Add to this, Sir, the vast extent of the West, the health of the climate, the territory acquired from the Indians, the vast increase of the value of the lands and wealth of the West, from internal improvement; add these to the grievances under which we labor, and ere long they will become intolerable, not only to patriotism, but to patience itself.

When I predict, under these circumstances, a Convention will be had, can the prophecy be doubted?

We have now met the call of the gentleman from Newbern. Here is our grievance, which we wish to be attended to.

No man would be more unwilling, said Mr. M. than myself to touch the Constitution, if I did not think the occasion called for it, and that the time is peculiarly favorable. The proposition before the committee ought not to be considered in the light of a contest for power. We do not ask from our Eastern brethren any thing to which we are not entitled. Nor would we ask for a correction of this grievance, if it were not constantly accumulating. For, to do our Eastern brethren justice, we acknowledge they have wielded their power with a great degree of justice and moderation, and it is hoped they will continue to do so.

It will be to the East, if we are ever invaded. It may be expected your protection will not be found in your negroes; it will be found in yourselves, or in the strength of the West.

For equal rights and privileges our fathers jointly fought, and bled and died, and their bones now lie hallowing the soil for the freedom of which they fell a sacrifice.

But give us these, and when the demon of desolation shall hover around your borders, and the tragedy of Hampton is to be performed on your shores, call on your brethren of the West, and the mountains will roll their might to the main, carrying protection to your wives, your children, your homes and your country.

Mr. BLACKLEDGE observed, that he had not intended to take any part in the debate concerning the resolutions on the table; how important soever their subject matter might be. He was anxious that the discussion should be restricted within very narrow limits; for he feared that our sectional feelings and prejudices might be aroused and exasperated by a protracted discussion of this ungracious subject. On similar occasions, it invariably eventuated, as he believed, in harsh and angry recrimination. He dreaded these anti-national feelings; he deeply lamented their existence; he still more lamented, that our Western brethren should so studiously foster their growth, and increase their acrimony, by annually thrusting upon us this invidious contest; when they must be sensible, that it will prove both unprofitable and unavailing. As he perceived, however, that the debate, contrary to his wishes, was about to take a very wide range, he felt it due to the few gentlemen who opposed these resolutions, on the floor; and also due to his constituents, not to remain entirely silent.

I do not intend, (said Mr. B.) to enter into an examination, or attempt to detect and expose the fallacy of the gentlemen's arithmetical and statistical calculations. Though compiled with so much care, and delivered with so much confidence and complacency, he believed they were assailable.

But he left that task to gentlemen who were more experienced and more able to execute it than himself: he knew there were such gentlemen, in their places, who were prepared to meet them, in due time, on that ground; and to oppose them with statements of an opposite character.

Mr. Chairman, (said Mr. B.) I beg leave to call the attention of the committee to some remarks, made by the gentleman from Rockingham, (Mr. Morehead,) in reply to the able address which his friend from Newbern, (Mr. Hawks,) had delivered on the subject.

It will be recollected, Sir, that he (Mr. Hawks) had laid down as the proper basis of representation, a ratio combining both population and taxation—and, resting upon this basis, had called on the gentlemen in opposition to shew that our present Constitution is inconsistent or unequal. The gentleman from Rockingham has essayed to do it. Mr. B's present object was to examine whether he had done it satisfactorily. That gentleman, (Mr. Morehead) had extracted from his statistical budget, the facts, that there were, in the Western counties of the State, upwards of one hundred thousand freemen, more than there are in the Eastern counties; and that the Eastern have a greater number of representatives in the Legislature, than the Western counties. From these data he concludes that the representation is unequal; and that the Constitution should be altered to remedy the grievance.

This, surely, is no answer to the argument of my friend from Newbern. However correct the conclusion might be, were we to assume population solely as the basis of representation, he needed not now to say—it was irrelevant to the question now in issue. But certainly when applied to the basis assumed, to the question in issue, the conclusion shot wide of the mark; it was false and illogical. But if the gentleman insisted that population, solely, should be the basis of representation, he confessed he differed from him essentially as to the correctness of the principle. He did believe, that in all governments, where the stability of its institutions was deemed important, it was found necessary that property, as well as persons, should be represented in the national councils. The protection of property was one of the strongest incentives to the formation of political societies; it was one of the most indissoluble links which bound us together as a society. It is property which mainly swells the State and National Treasury, by its liberal contributions; without which, indeed, both the State and the Union would crumble into ruins, from their own imbecility. It surely, then, should be duly protected; and it could not be properly protected without representation. Our own colonial experience has taught us this maxim, that nothing can be properly protected, unless its weight is felt in the national councils; and the experience of all nations, who have had any correct notions of rational liberty, has stamped it with the impress of truth. Our government is not a democracy; a pure democracy; nor did he conceive that it was the intention of the framers of our Constitution to make it such. It was impossible that a nation, as wealthy, as populous, and as widely extended as ours, ever could exist under such a form of government. It is, and was intended to be, a mixed republic; in which, whilst the liberality and freedom of its principles were carefully provided for, its stability and duration were not neglected; a form of government as distinct from democracy, as anarchy was from despotism. He hoped it would remain so—that the time never would come, when the privileges of a citizen and a freeholder, would be conferred on every vagabond who might wander amongst us, for he distrusted this vagrant patriotism—that we might never be reduced to the state described by a satirist, more prized for wit than ingenuousness; a state, "where every blackguard rascal is a king."

Mr. B. observed, that he believed the gentleman, (Mr. Morehead) himself, was not willing to go the whole length to which this principle of disorganization would lead him. He was induced to believe so from the second division of his argument. In this he assumed population and taxation combined, as the proper basis of representation; and contended that out of our own mouths we are condemned. He begged leave to call the attention of the committee to this part of the subject. That gentleman, (Mr. Morehead) invites us to review the Comptroller's report. He tells us that from this it is evident, that, (excluding the county of Wake,) the Western counties pay into the State Treasury a sum exceeding what is paid by the Eastern counties; though by a comparatively small sum; in fact, by what we may, on this subject, call a mere fraction, and hence concludes, that the representation is unequal, even on our own principles. Now, Mr. Chairman, said Mr. B. admitting that the gentleman's data are entirely correct, he asked the committee seriously, whether, when no real or practical evil existed, it was prudent or wise to demolish a fabric as venerable and as time-honoured as our Constitution, solely for the purpose of attempting to rear another, whose symmetry or proportions might better please the eye? Whether it were proper to burn that noble "Magna Charta" of rights, which our ancestors have left us, because our self-complacency induces us to believe, that we could write another which might read more trippingly on the tongue, or look better upon paper? Whether, in a nation comprising nearly a million of citizens, and many millions of wealth, because a mere fraction of either may not be fully represented, the very bonds of society should be dissolved: the government itself should be resolved into its original elements? and the Constitution, the Law and the Gospel, sacrificed on the altar of political experiment. Yet all this is demanded; and that, too, with no security as to what will be the event of the convulsion; with an utter uncertainty as to what may be the nature of the "shapeless monster," springing out of this chaotic confusion. With a possibility, nay, I may say, a strong probability that our situation will be deteriorated by the experiment. For I fear, that at least our wisdom and our patriotism would be found unequal to the task of preserving equal rights and national liberty, by throwing around them barriers as impreg-

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