

six months. Different parts of the city of Baltimore now compose one entire Congressional district, and the other a portion of another Congressional district. A citizen of that city, then, (no fixed duration of residence being required, in migrating from district to district within the same county or city,) can acquire the right of voting in the district in which he has not before resided, though it be for a representative of a different people from those with whom he has before resided, by passing over the line separating the two districts only a few hours before the election; whilst another citizen of the State, equally entitled to the right of suffrage, but an inhabitant of another county, cannot come into the same district and acquire the right of voting without a previous residence of six months. This is unjust. But the worst feature is, the facility it gives to the perpetration of frauds on the elective franchise, under the system known by the name of "colonizing voters"—which facility, it is said, is extensively availed of. And it is this great evil we propose, in some measure, to correct by the pending amendment. It is not perfect I know, but it is better than nothing; and the best, it seems from the previous votes of the Convention, we can now obtain. It will answer to some degree, the object of requiring the six months previous residence within the counties, which I take it must have been in part, at least, to arm the resident legal voters with the means of protecting themselves from the perpetration of such frauds upon their dearest of political rights. By a previous residence among the people entitled to vote at an election, the person claiming that right becomes known, and his right or the absence of it, is of easier proof by those disposed to guard the purity of this franchise, and does not, therefore, depend exclusively upon statements or proof derived from the claimant himself.

This five days does not, I admit, take away the inequality of the operations of the present system, as regards the citizens of other counties, nor is the means of self-protection it affords to the resident voters of the district perfect; but it is much better than nothing, and will prove a very great impediment in the way of the perpetration of the species of fraud complained of. Mr. MERRICK added, he would have said much more, but he really felt he was physically unable.

— Mr. PRESSTMAN stated that it had been held by the judges in Baltimore, that no man is entitled to vote in a ward unless he goes to reside, previously, in the ward, with a *bona fide* intention to remain there. He must be a resident of the ward at the time of the election.

Mr. CHAMBERS. For how long before the election?

Mr. PRESSTMAN. He must have lived there the day before.

Mr. CHAMBERS. And may leave the day after—a *bona fide* intention to remain one day and go away the next.

Mr. PRESSTMAN. Could any reasonable man consider that as a *bona fide* intention to reside there?

Mr. MERRICK. Yes, the voter must have a *bona fide* intention to remain one day.

Mr. SPENCER said he had very briefly, on yesterday, expressed his opposition to the amendment under consideration. He did so, at the time, in consequence of members having imputed to those who voted against it, an indisposition to preserve the purity of the ballot box. He had, at a very early period, offered resolutions to this Convention, which afforded indisputable evidence of his feelings on that subject. He now rose to notify this body of his intention, at the proper place, to offer the following amendments, which he read, as follows:

"Insert after the second section, the following additional sections:

"Sec. 3. That every person who shall be elected to any office whatever, at any election to take place in this State hereafter, or who shall be appointed to any office whatever in said State hereafter, shall, before he enters upon the duties of the office to which he may be elected or appointed, first take and subscribe the following oath (if not conscientiously scrupulous, and in such case, affirmation) before some one of the Judges of the Court of Appeals of this State:

"I, ———, do solemnly swear, that I have not at any election held in this State since the ratification of the new Constitution of this State, or in any manner violated the provisions of the second section of the new Constitution relating to bribery, and that I have not procured or induced, by any means, any individual or individuals to vote at any such election in violation of the provisions contained in the first section of said Constitution relating to the age and residence of voters."

And any person who shall swear falsely in the premises, shall be guilty of perjury, and on conviction in due course of law, subject to all its pains and penalties.

Sec. 4. That the Judge, before whom such oath or affirmation shall be taken, shall cause the same to be subscribed by the person so swearing or affirming, in a book to be by him kept for such purpose, a duplicate of which said oath or affirmation, as the case may be, he shall transmit to the Clerk of the Court of Appeals of this State, with the name of the individual who took and subscribed the same, designating the office to which he has been elected or appointed, to be by the said Clerk, whose duty it shall be to do so, recorded in a book to be by him kept for such purpose, among the records of the said Court of Appeals, a certified copy of which said oath or affirmation, by the said Judge under his seal, or of the said duplicate by the said Clerk under his seal of office shall be had, taken and received as evidence in any of the Courts of this State having criminal jurisdiction.

Mr. CHAMBERS asked permission of the gentleman to state the fact, that the committee had a meeting yesterday, at which the principle of the amendment now suggested by the gentlemen from Queen Anne's was agreed to. He had been expected to reduce it to form, and present it as a supplementary report. It would be reported to the Convention as soon as he could prepare it.