

alienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform or abolish their government in such manner as they may think proper."

I will now make one or two references to the Constitutions of some of the Southern States. I turn to the Constitution of the State of Tennessee. In their Declaration of Rights the first article is in these words:

"That all power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority, and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness; for the advancement of those ends, they have, at all times, an unalienable and indefeasible right to alter, reform or abolish the government in such manner as they may think proper."

I now turn to the bill of rights of the Constitution of Mississippi, which is the last one from which I will now read. It is there declared—

"That all political power is inherent in the people, and all free governments are founded on their authority and established for their benefit; and, therefore, they have, at all times, an unalienable and indefeasible right to alter or abolish their form of government in such manner as they may think expedient."

I find the same in the Constitutions of the States of Connecticut, Virginia, Kentucky, Alabama, and every other State that I have examined. That simple doctrine is asserted, and left to stand alone in its grandeur. And nowhere in the bill of rights of any of these States do I find anything that provides for the amendment or alteration of their Constitutions. I, therefore, prefer to take the article here as it now stands, and to follow the guides that have been laid down for us by the embodied enlightenment of all the States of this Union in making their Constitutions, rather than to alter it or add anything to it, which, in my judgment, materially detracts from its force and effect.

As I have already said, I shall move in the proper place—under the head of amendments to the Constitution, or some other proper place—I shall move myself, if some other gentleman does not, to insert a provision prescribing the mode in which this Constitution shall be altered or changed. But I think that provision ought to be rather advisory and suggestive than positive and directory in its terms, as it was in the last Constitution, and which the people disregarded; or at least as it was in the Constitution of 1776, which, according to the gentleman from Somerset, (Mr. Jones,) the people disregarded in 1850. The people have always claimed the right, whenever they chose to alter their own Constitution, to do it in their own way. And whether that change in its incipency comes from the people, or it is ratified by the people when proposed by others, it makes no difference; the people have said they will not consider binding upon

them, in reference to the change of their organic law, anything that any previous Convention may have ordained. For that reason I think that whilst it is proper for us to insert in its proper place a provision in reference to amendments or alterations of this Constitution, that provision ought not to be in the terms of the present Constitution, that the people shall alter or amend in this way and no other; which the people have disregarded for themselves and treated as an absurd assertion on the part of those who made it. I shall therefore support this article as it now stands, without amendment or alteration.

Mr. BOND. It appears to me that in the discussion of this question there has not been that clearness of statement as to what the question really is, that ought to be put before this Convention. The question of the unalienable right of the people to change their government has been mixed up with the question of the expediency of providing some particular mode in which that right shall be exercised. Now, sir, no one denies the right of the people to modify or change their Constitution at will. That is a principle so universally acknowledged that no man in any part of the United States, that I am aware of, has ever been heard to deny it.

But the question here, and the only question, as I understand it, is the expediency of providing some particular mode by which the people shall act in their exercise of this right. Shall the people, by the broad declaration contained in this first article of the report of the Committee of the Bill of Rights, be left at liberty to adopt the course of proceeding which Dorr adopted in Rhode Island; shall they be left at liberty to say at any time—our Constitution wants alteration—and to call meetings throughout the State, in any county or city of the State? Why, sir, such a course would be productive of the greatest anarchy and the greatest evils, and would probably result in war and bloodshed between contending parties. The only thing, therefore, which seems to me to be necessary to provide for in this Constitution, is a way for the people to exercise their right to change their Constitution; not that the people have no such right, or shall be bound by the act of this Convention for all time; because the right of revolution lies behind and beyond anything this Convention can do to bind them; nobody doubts that, nobody denies it. But is it not the safer and better course to point out some peaceful mode, regulated by law, by which this change may be brought about whenever the people desire it? And it is with that view that I propose to offer an amendment to the amendment of the gentleman from Somerset (Mr. Jones) to strike out all after the word "manner" in the fourth line of this article, and insert the words "as may be provided by this Constitution." Then the article will read: