

this question; because in that consists the only hope for their redemption and for the salvation of our State. Let me conclude by desiring gentlemen who are in the position of the majority here not to come to hasty conclusions, for hasty action is generally the effect of hasty conclusions; to hesitate long before you give your sanction to a change so deadening in its effects as this change must be, upon our system of government. Hesitate long; or rather, let well enough alone. Stop providing for war. Legislate for peace. Let us vote it down. I would recommend to my brethren here to give their aid to restore this Union into the fraternal embraces of well regulated government. If gentlemen will join me I will take the lead; and I will venture to assert that I will not propose anything that sound judgment will not dictate as the course for us to pursue during the pressing emergencies of this awful crisis, whereby this government may be again restored.

But perhaps the gentlemen do not want the government restored. Certainly two of the gentlemen from Baltimore city do not. They want a change of government. They want to strike down State lines, and build up a consolidated government. I would sooner live under the Czar of Russia than under such a government as they would adopt now. But I see that my time has expired. I thank the Convention for the patience with which they have listened to my desultory remarks. I only hope I have done my duty in the matter. It is a feeble attempt; but it has been honest and heartfelt. I tell the majority now, that upon them will rest the responsibility of the adoption of this measure, and I trust that they will see to it that they are able to bear it under all circumstances.

Mr. SMITH, of Carroll, moved that fifteen minutes further be allowed to Mr. Berry to conclude his remarks, but—

Mr. BERRY stated that he did not wish further to occupy the time of the Convention, and—

The motion was withdrawn accordingly.

Mr. RIDGELY. If any member of this Convention desires to be heard upon this subject now, I will yield the floor. [A pause.]

I have no purpose at all, Mr. President, to enter in detail into the discussion of this question, and in advance allow me to say that I owe an apology to the Convention for any attempt whatever on my part to participate in the debate now in progress. I certainly come to it without any preparation, having had no purpose whatever to take part in it until this morning. I shall not attempt to travel over the ground which has been occupied since the inception of this debate, in tracing the history of this question of State rights. I confess that, notwithstanding all that has been said—I speak it with great deference to the gentlemen who have occupied so much of the attention of the Conven-

tion—I have had no new light thrown upon this subject.

This question has been a bone of contention in this country ever since, and even before, the formation of the Constitution of the United States, and perhaps at no period in the history of the government was it discussed with more interest, with more vigor and with more power, than in the first Congress which met under the Constitution. It divided the nation in its very infancy, and I think I confine myself within the limits of historical truth when I say it created a sectional issue at the very moment of the formation of the government. It arrayed the North against the South, and that conflict has been persistently continued from that moment of time down to this hour.

During the first two administrations of the government the South solidly advocated and maintained this doctrine of State rights; coming up on the question of assuming the State debts; on the excise question; on the question of chartering a United States bank; on the tonnage question, and on the question of the alien and sedition laws, in the administration of the elder Adams.

During the two following administrations the North planted itself upon the reserved State rights which were secured in the article of the Constitution, which my honored friend from Prince George's (Mr. Clarke) has referred to. And without undertaking to dwell in detail upon the circumstances connected with the position which the North then occupied, I may say generally, that, notwithstanding it assumed precisely the same ground of State rights the South occupied, the South consecrated itself to the execration of the whole North from that hour to this day; and the name of the Hartford Convention is, and ever has been, a name of obloquy and reproach in the whole Southern country. If you analyze the proceedings of that Convention, growing out of its opposition to the embargo; growing out of its opposition to the war of 1812, you will find that it was an opposition predicated upon the same basis—their sectional commercial interests, being crippled by the embargo, and by the declaration of war which exposed their ships upon the ocean, their marine and their commerce to destruction by the enemy; and if you will trace back the doctrine of State rights in the South to its origin, you will find that it was based upon the same theory of sectional interests, because it was in the very first Congress of the United States that abolition petitions were presented from Pennsylvania, assailing the peculiar institution.

And my conviction is, from a careful reading of the progressive history of our country in connection with this subject of State rights, that it has either contracted or expanded in both sections according as their particular interests were affected by it. Not by con-