

speaker's desk when the General Assembly adjourned. Gentlemen who have been members of the Legislature, or who have been in Annapolis during the session of the Legislature, know these things.

The question is: How can we best secure attention to great public measures? It has seemed to me that when they had been prepared and properly digested it was best that the Legislature should not be compelled to adjourn upon any particular day, and for that reason I offered the amendment, that if they cannot with sufficient deliberation and discussion come to a vote upon a question upon the 10th of March, they should have until the 12th or 14th. At the same time the committees, understanding that all business must be presented before the 20th of February, or whatever day is fixed upon, would bring in their reports and place them before the Legislature in season to be acted upon.

I am not strenuous as to the mode, but the result I am exceedingly desirous should be effected. If anybody can present anything better I will cheerfully yield to it, but at present this seems to be better than any plan which has been suggested.

Mr. STIRLING. The object which my colleague has in view is a perfectly proper one, but it really seems to me that the mode by which he seeks to accomplish that object will not be effectual. So far as I have had any experience or observation here, it appears to me that those measures of general importance have not been introduced during the period to which his amendment would apply. People with important private interests do not generally neglect them so long. I submit that the reason why at the end of the session matters of less relative importance are made to absorb and occupy the attention of the body to the exclusion of graver subjects, is because private interests are more direct and personal than public interests; and just so long as that feeling remains in the human mind, just so long will private business absorb public business. The gentleman has got to legislate selfishness out of the human heart before he can legislate this difficulty out of a legislative body. It is impossible to make a machine that will work itself. We cannot make the machine of the government, except upon the basis that it is to operate upon the human body and the human soul, and you cannot legislate upon the operations of the human soul or control them. You may provide for a thousand contingencies, and you will find that two thousand contingencies have been left unprovided for.

I am disposed for these reasons to oppose the amendments and to support the proposition which the gentleman from Baltimore county has given notice that he will introduce here. I believe there is but one proper way to prevent the sessions of the Legislature from continuing too long; and that is to stop pay-

ing them after a reasonable period; and if they are forced to remain at Annapolis at their own personal expense, they will not stay unnecessarily. This is practical, because it bears directly upon the operations of the human mind. The great mass of the legislative body are not going to stay here and pay their own expenses, unless there is some absorbing public question appealing to their patriotic motives to be decided. In that case they will stay here and attend to the public interests; but otherwise they will not stay if they do not get paid.

The amendment will prevent another thing, which may not be very much the custom in this State, but which certainly is the custom to a certain extent, that people come down to the General Assembly simply because the per diem is more than they make at home. If they seek the per diem, they will not want to stay longer than the time they are paid for. They will not stay without compensation and at their own expense.

It is sometimes necessary to introduce business a short time before the end of the session. Then we must provide, as the gentleman from Kent (Mr. Chamber-) says is done in Washington, for exceptions to the rule; and then it may turn out that the exceptions become the rule, and adhering to the rule becomes the exception, if it is left to the discretion of the body.

It is perfectly apparent from the action of Congress that the limitation of the session does not prevent hasty legislation, and does not prevent the accumulation of business at the end of the session. The reason is that in a large body it takes time to get together; time to get them to work together; and procrastination is the general habit of two-thirds of men, and the universal habit of all large bodies. If you give them a session of three years in duration, there would be at last some time when they would make up their minds to go home, and for the last week there would be the same hasty legislation, the same spectacle of night sessions, and members sleeping upon the benches in order to get through, for the last two or three days of the session. Practically they must bring their session to a close by a joint resolution, and at last their business is left partially undone.

This is a difficulty that cannot be obviated. I am rather inclined to think that the restrictions in the present Constitution have accomplished no very great results. I am willing to let them stay as they are. We have got them in the Constitution now, and I am not disposed to amend it more than is necessary. The provision of the committee extends the time from the 10th of March to the last Thursday in the month. I am willing to vote for that; but I am not willing to vote to fetter the Legislature. I do not think this body is any more likely to anticipate contingencies than the Legislature itself. The