

PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. OFFICIAL REPORT

The Day Devoted to Consideration of the Report of the Committee on Agriculture.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7.)

burg more power, it will only increase the tiff.

Mr. O'FLAHERTY: I will say to the gentleman that I fully appreciate that situation. I want to know how it will be possible for three members to outvote ten members, and remove the department, if it were possible to remove it, which it will not be under the provisions we have made, what the further power and ability to take part of the General Assembly to increase this board. How would it be possible for those three members to override the votes of at least ten others? It can not be unless the representation in Congress is reduced. I appreciate the fact that there has been a motive of that kind; but here we have Blacksburg. It seems to me, more safe than to have been.

Mr. BROWN: Will the gentleman from Page (Mr. Parks) permit me to ask him a question before he takes his seat?

Mr. PARKS: Yes, sir.

Mr. BROWN: The gentleman has stated that since 1885-1886 there has been an effort made at every session of the General Assembly to remove the Board of Agriculture from Richmond to Blacksburg.

Mr. PARKS: Yes, sir.

Mr. BROWN: I desire to ask the gentleman if he asserts that influence has been exerted by the authorities at Blacksburg.

Mr. PARKS: I am not able to say that, but I know that the president of Blacksburg was before the committee, and I heard him make a speech in favor of it.

Mr. BROWN: I desire to state to the gentleman that at the last session of the General Assembly, when the matter of the fertilizer act was up, members of the Blacksburg board were appointed to take part in such a movement as that, and declined to do so; and I want to state here and now on this floor that this is no movement on the part of Blacksburg to remove the Department of Agriculture from Richmond to Blacksburg, but it is an endeavor to have these boards put into thorough intercommunication with the agricultural interests of the State.

out that whole provision from line 9 to line 12.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does the Chair understand the gentleman from Rockingham to make that motion?

Mr. KEEZELL: Yes, sir; and in making that motion I want it distinctly understood that I am in favor of such legislation as will bring the agricultural department and the department at Blacksburg into the very closest harmony, but I think it is very dangerous to undertake to put into the Constitution a iron-cast provision which might prove very ineffective in accomplishing the results which it is endeavoring to accomplish.

Mr. McILWAINE: Mr. Chairman, in support of the motion just made by the gentleman from Rockingham (Mr. Kezell) I hold in my hand two letters which I received in the mail this morning from my constituents which seem to take identically the same view held by the gentleman. Both of them are from gentlemen of intelligence and education. One of them is a large farmer; the other man lives on a farm and does some farming. One of them says:

"As the mail is about to go out, I will urge upon you to use your influence against the proposed changes in the agricultural board. It is doing the best work now it has ever done, in my opinion, and any tampering with the present law may result in evil."

The other gentleman expresses the same views, and then adds: "I am sorry to see that it is probable that the president of the Polytechnic Institute and the rector of the board of visitors of said school will have anything to do with the State department of agriculture. That school has not been worth a row of pins" (Laughter) "to the farmers of Southside Virginia. The bulletin sent out from that institution is not practicable. The last three were sent me treated of how to cure dog distemper, how to raise forestry, &c." (Laughter.)

Now, sir, we have a superfluity of dogs in Southside Virginia and a superfluity of trees.

Mr. STUART: Mr. Chairman, I dislike very much to address the committee so often. The gentleman from Rockingham (Mr. Kezell) seems to object to this provision here which is necessary to the very thing he seems to approve of. He says he thinks there ought to be reciprocal relations, but he is opposed to the only thing we have been able to think of which would provide reciprocal relations. I have asked both the gentleman from Page (Mr. Parks) and the gentleman from Rockingham (Mr. Kezell) to give me a direct answer to a direct question—what control these two members from the Polytechnic Institute could have of the question of moving this department from this city.

Mr. PARKS: I did not understand the gentleman to ask me that question. I had not discussed it until after the gentleman from Russell took his seat.

Mr. STUART: I will except you from that. I did ask the gentleman from Rockingham.

of all really successful effort for an early upbuilding and advancement of the agricultural interests of this State. I mean the separate and independent establishment, but the permanent unification in interest, of the varied agencies working for the advancement of the agricultural interest, along progressive lines.

We are at the parting of the ways; a false step now will have serious consequences. It would make possible a continuance of the lack of community of interest and sympathy between the great agencies that can and should work together unselfishly for the benefit of agriculture in Virginia, and would perpetuate indefinitely present unprogressive methods, with the hard struggle for the survival of the fittest, unaided by united and intelligent direction and by scientific research, and by practical demonstration of the usefulness of the results obtained.

Harmonious relations should be established between the Board of Agriculture and the Board of Visitors of the Agricultural College and their officers.

The provision of the report that makes the president of the Board, and the Commissioner of Agriculture and Immigration members ex-officio of the Board of Visitors of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and the Rector of the Board of Visitors, and the President of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute members ex-officio of the Board of Agriculture, is a step in the right direction, the most cordial relations between the two institutions.

In almost every other State such harmony and mutual help exists and is made possible by just such a provision as is here proposed. I desire just here to most emphatically deny any suggestion that the authorities at Blacksburg desire in any way to absorb or interfere with the proper functions of the Board of Agriculture as here proposed.

I desire just here to most emphatically deny any suggestion that the authorities at Blacksburg desire in any way to absorb or interfere with the proper functions of the Board of Agriculture as here proposed.

The proposed provision in the Constitution which shall be reciprocal ex-officio membership between the two boards emphasizes the fact that there must be two boards always separate and distinct and in itself denies the assertion that either board can absorb the other.

The joint efforts, on the other hand, of the two boards working independently but in harmony, will produce most valuable results, which will be for the best interests of the agriculture of the State.

It is to put them in this sympathetic touch with each other that the committee has wisely made the provisions here recommended.

One of the great State agents for the advancement of knowledge in agriculture is the Virginia Polytechnic Institute, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Virginia, with its corps of scientific investigators along lines that deal with the most material interests of agriculture.

of the board elected by and responsible to it.

A board of seven members must be elected to govern a certain purpose—presumably the advancement of the agricultural interests of the State in the different sections represented by them.

With tied hands, all initiative is checked, effort and enthusiasm dampened, good work rendered difficult by the concentration of all power in the hands of one not responsible to them.

With larger powers, more voice in the administration of the affairs of the department, each member of the board would be an active officer of the body, a special commissioner, as it were, in his section of the State, in close touch with his people.

One-man power in such a department and especially with the responsibility so ill-defined, is thoroughly objectionable.

Power granted to the commissioner to appoint all assistants, would greatly increase and intensify the evils of the present system. Assistants, dependent upon his pleasure for reappointment, would be active workers in his personal interest.

With the development of this department made possible by the constant increase in fertilizer tax (now over \$30,000, I believe), there would be a score or more of officials wholly devoted to his service.

Such a system is unknown in our State or the South, and directly opposed to our democratic-republican ideas.

Besides the other evils incident to one-man power, it is impossible for a single man adequately to deal with the various agricultural and horticultural interests of the State—to feel equal sympathy with all.

Hence the value of a board with adequate powers, representing every section and its peculiar interests.

If experts are to be employed, or scientific assistants, these should be selected on their merits. Such a selection is best if made by the State, by some individual who is not directly responsible for his acts or at best only remotely so.

The department should rest upon the confidence and support of the agricultural public.

A representative board can best secure an expert. In the great majority of States, and particularly those in which the Boards of Agriculture are most efficient, there is no commissioner, but, secondly, there is no administrative officer of the board, elected by and subject to it.

I cite the composition of a few of the Boards of Agriculture that I have considered.

Connecticut—Governor a member ex-officio; four are appointed by the Governor; eight elected by agricultural societies. Board elects a secretary.

Vermont—Governor and the president of the Agricultural College members ex-officio; three members appointed by Governor. Board elects its own officers.

Maine—President of Agricultural College members ex-officio; sixteen members chosen by agricultural societies. Board elects its own officers.

New York—Has no board; only a commissioner appointed by the Governor for three years.

South Carolina—Has neither board nor commissioner, but the duties of such a board are discharged by the trustees of the Agricultural College, and the college performs the duties usually assigned to a secretary of agriculture.

Michigan—Governor and president of Agricultural College members ex-officio; six members; elect officers. Board is also board of trustees of college.

powerful incentive to accomplish this in the most feasible manner. Your following lines that have been adopted in nearly every State of the Union which has agricultural colleges and agricultural boards. The tendency in the State is to keep them independent in their departments, but to draw them closer together in their work for the interests of agriculture.

Colleges are heavily endowed by the United States Government in every State of the Union, and the endowments are given for the purpose of employing experts, and are in just measure restricted to such uses in nearly every instance. In fact, the law making these appropriations defines absolutely how they must be used.

It does seem to me that when we have an opportunity to draw all these forces together for the advancement of the agricultural interests, we should not do anything that will further force them apart, but should do what the Convention best may do to require that there should be this harmonious and cordial relation existing which I have pointed out as desirable, to the end that the people of Virginia may be able to enjoy to the fullest extent the result of the appropriation made by the Government of the United States.

A wide field of usefulness is proposed for the Board of Agriculture, and I am glad to see that the people of the United States realize generally its value and its opportunities. There is a wide field for college work, and I am glad to see the people endorse the work being done in the colleges; but it is in the power of the Convention to draw these two agencies together in Virginia, to unite them into one effort, so that they will be though separate and independent, still working together along lines where they overlap.

They will be working separately where their interests are divergent, but always working in the common interest, with the full knowledge of the demands and desires of the people who need their help and for whose assistance they are established.

Gentlemen, I thank you for your attention.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question is on the amendment proposed by the gentleman from Page (Mr. Parks).

Mr. FAIRFAX: Mr. Chairman, I respectfully submit the following amendment: Strike out in line 9, the words "the rector of the Board of Visitors and," which would make it read: "The president of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute," and in the same section strike out, in line 20, the words "and the commissioner of agriculture and immigration."

Mr. KEEZELL: I would suggest to the gentleman, in the interest of harmony in appointments, that the rector of the Board of Visitors should be put on the board.

Mr. FAIRFAX: My amendment was to strike out the commissioner.

Mr. KEEZELL: I simply make the suggestion that your amendment does not seem to be an exactly harmonious amendment, in that it recognizes the president of the Polytechnic Institute.

Mr. FAIRFAX: And the president of the Board of Agriculture.

Mr. KEEZELL: It seems to me the rector of the Board of Visitors of the Polytechnic Institute would correspond more to the president of the Board of Agriculture than would the chairman of the faculty there.

The chairman of the faculty would represent the commissioner of agriculture to a very great extent. That is merely my suggestion. Of course I have nothing to do with the amendment except to make that suggestion.

Mr. FAIRFAX: I am offering it with a view of meeting objections that have been made. I want to make the board as nearly as possible a perfected board, and to have it please the farmers and those interested in this measure, if possible. I think, Mr. Chairman, we had better strike out the commissioner.

THE CHAIRMAN: The Chair suggests to the gentleman from Loudoun (Mr. Fairfax) that the amendment proposed by the gentleman from Page (Mr. Parks) involves an addition of certain words, and that the amendment just offered involves striking out certain words. The proper proceeding would be to consider first the amendment of the gentleman from Page and then the amendment proposed by the gentleman from Loudoun which would be acted on first.

Mr. PARKS: Mr. Chairman, I withdraw my amendment, and will let the vote be taken on the amendment of the gentleman from Loudoun.

THE CHAIRMAN: The gentleman from Page withdraws his amendment. The question is upon the amendment of the gentleman from Loudoun, which the Secretary will read.

THE SECRETARY read as follows: Strike out, in line 9, the words "the rector of the Board of Visitors and," strike out in line 20 the words "and the commissioner." The section would then read: "The president of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute shall be a member ex-officio of the Board of Agriculture and Immigration."

"The president of the Board of Agriculture and Immigration shall be a member ex-officio of the Board of Visitors of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute."