

May 4 - 10, 1862



As lawmakers debated whether to support the proposed division of the state of Virginia, the governor of the Reorganized Government of Virginia offered a few reasons why they should support the split.

Francis H. Pierpont said in remarks to the legislature on May 6, 1862, that trade and commerce between eastern and western Virginia was impossible because of the mountains that divided them.

He also argued that both regions were entirely dissimilar in their social relations and institutions. "While the East is largely interested in slaves, the West has none, and all the labor is performed by freemen," he said. Unfair taxes and unequal political power "have been a source of irritation and indeed of strife and vexation" for western Virginians for many years, he also noted.

Pierpont said there was no advantage to keeping the state whole, but many advantages to creating two separate states.

"If we could only get rid of the vast herd of the leaders in this rebellion in the State, and get their lands into the hands of honest, working men, I predict for the State a prosperity unexampled in its history," he concluded.

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