A Sesquicentennial Moment

Aug. 4-10, 1861

Gathering on Aug. 6, 1861, after a six-week adjournment, delegates to the Second Wheeling Convention quickly created a committee to consider a division of the state of Virginia.

In the days that followed, delegates once again declared null and void all resolutions approved by the Richmond Secession Convention and debated the issue of a new state at length.

Though some delegates preferred slower, more cautious action, John Carlile urged fellow delegates to "Cut the knot now!" Carlile believed action would ensure the safety of western counties within the Union regardless of the war's outcome.

On Aug. 10, the Committee on a Division of the State signaled its readiness to report an ordinance for dividing and creating a new state. Delegates were still not in agreement on the issue, however, and the debate would continue for days before the convention reached a consensus.

Photo Courtesy of State Archives

This sesquicentennial moment is brought to you by the Archives&History Section of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

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