

DAY BY DAY

By LOUIS AZRAEL

SUGAR DADDY

WHENEVER somebody on this side of the Chesapeake Bay criticizes the Eastern Shore and the 'Shoremen have no logical answer, they fall back on an ancient cry. "Well," they say, "if you don't like us, lump us. Lump us with the Delaware and the Eastern Shore counties of Virginia and let us be a state to ourselves."

That, always, is their ultimate defense against all charges and, of course, it has been revived in the last few weeks more vigorously than ever before. They want to secede. They want to form the state of "Delmarvia." At least, they say they do.

From the Maryland statewide viewpoint, I don't know that it would do any harm except sentimental harm. A considerable proportion of Baltimoreans either come from the Eastern Shore or are descended from Eastern Shoremen and, as a sentimental matter, they'd dislike the idea of divorcing the place of their birth or ancestry from Maryland.

On the other hand, there would be decided compensation if such an action were taken.

But forget the Baltimore viewpoint. Secession would be worse for the Eastern Shore. Divorced from Baltimore, the Eastern Shore would find life a different, more difficult, less pleasant thing. Think it over, 'Shoremen. You'll hush this secession talk before somebody starts taking it seriously.

We Put Up Cash



THE MOST obvious reasons, though not the most important, are economic. From the standpoint of taxation, Baltimore is the Eastern Shore's sugar daddy. With about half the population of the state, Baltimore pays about 80 percent of the taxes. Baltimoreans pay four cents taxes on each gallon of gasoline and these pennies reach a vast total every year. But Baltimore gets only one-fifth of that total. The rest goes to the counties of the state, which means that a good part of it goes to the Eastern Shore. In every county on the 'Shore there are roads built with Baltimore money. There are public buildings built with the taxes of Baltimoreans. Governmentally, the Eastern Shore is not self-supporting, but it's been all right because Sugar-Daddy Baltimore has made up the difference.

Undoubtedly, the 'Shore can support itself, despite the fact that its residents complain even now that their taxes are too high. But with the Sugar Daddy in another state, it will be a much more difficult matter. That's one phase of the situation.

They Have the Votes

OTHERS ARE more subtle but no less potent.

Right now, Eastern Shoremen have a continuous source of glee. They're bosses, in a way. They're superior.

Consider the situation. Here's Baltimore, big and burly and urban. These city slickers think they're smart. But from the political standpoint, every Eastern Shoreman is worth four or five or more Baltimoreans. Wicomico County, where Salisbury lies, has six delegates in the Maryland House of Delegates. That is the same number the Fifth District of Baltimore City has and, without consulting figures, I venture to say the Fifth District has at least four times as many inhabitants as Wicomico County. And in the State Senate there are six Baltimoreans and nine Eastern Shoremen, despite the fact that nine counties, plus all of Delaware, plus the Virginia counties, have a total population less than Baltimore's.

Consequently, Baltimore is submerged, as far as the state government is concerned. I have heard and seen Eastern Shoremen in the Legislature tell Baltimoreans that Baltimore cannot borrow money for Baltimore parks. For years Eastern Shoremen led in telling Baltimore that Baltimore cannot have the sort of Sunday laws Baltimoreans want. And they've gotten much glee out of that situation; the glee of the little fellow who can boss the big fellow around. With the new state formed, that glee would be gone. The counties would be pretty much on a par. There'd be no one they could boss. That's another aspect of the situation.

And Other Reasons

THERE ARE still others. Look over the list of office-holders in Maryland. You'll find that the ratio of Eastern Shoremen is far greater than the ratio of the 'Shore population. Why is that? I am afraid it is because Eastern Shoremen are better politicians than Baltimoreans. They play the game more intensively. Or perhaps it is a native talent.

But in a state consisting entirely of the Eastern Shore conditions would be different. The competition for political jobs would be among people who have equal political ability. It would be keener.

And there is something else. The 'Shoremen would have no place upon which to expend their mischievous feelings. Now, mischievous inclinations are not peculiar to the 'Shore. Baltimore has almost as many of them. But even with the 'Shore gone, Baltimore still would have Southern Maryland and Western Maryland. We could still say, "Oh, those hicks." But the 'Shoremen could no longer say, "Those city slickers." And that may sound trifling but it would be a great deprivation.

From the Baltimore viewpoint, we might be better off economically under the proposed arrangement. We would have one less dependant, and if Eastern Shoremen are to be believed, they don't buy much from Baltimore anyway. And they'd still buy something, regardless of the name of the state.

From other viewpoints, however, there is no point in hiding the fact that Eastern Shore secession would be unpleasant. Baltimore, on the whole, likes the 'Shore and admires it, under ordinary circumstances. It is not likely that Baltimore would agree to secession.

The question, however, will not be tested. Eastern Shoremen talk loudly of Delmarvia. But they are canny folk. If the issue should seriously arise they'll realize the advantages of having a Sugar Daddy around.