and a Central College, were passed.

A vote of thanks to the officers was passed. President Rich responded in a neat and appropriate speech when after singing and prayer, the Convention adjourned sine die.

Frederick Douglass' Paper, September 14, 1855.

REFERENCE NOTES

1. William J. Watkins (1828-?), a native of Maryland, was a noted black abolitionist who was also active in the Underground Railroad. Between 1855 and 1856 Watkins was associate editor of Frederick Douglass' Paper. In 1853, Watkins, along with Robert Morris, another influential Negro, presented a petition, signed by sixty-five blacks, to the Massachusetts legislature, praying that body for a charter to form an independent military company since blacks were barred from the state militias. In support of this position, Watkins also delivered a brilliant speech before the legislative committee on the militia, February 24, 1853, in which he recited the role played by black men in the American Revolution and the War of 1812 and demolished the arguments advanced against granting the Negroes' request. But his appeal brought no action.

Watkins soon became active in politics. During the 1850's he supported the Free Soil Party and urged his people to follow suit. Later, he became an ardent spokesman and campaigner for the Republican Party.

2. It is interesting to note that in 1854, there was talk of nominating Frederick Douglass for Congress on the Liberty Party ticket to succeed Gerrit Smith, the noted philanthropist and abolitionist, who had recently resigned his seat. Commenting on this occasion, Douglass wrote: "The possibility of electing a Negro to the American Congress, is a modern suggestion. The idea is a new one, as little hoped for by the despised colored people, as dreamed of by their white friends. We accept it simply as an indication of a slightly altered state of mind in the country, but without the slightest belief that the idea will ever be realized in our person, tho' we do hope and expect to see it realized in some competent colored man before we shall have done with the journey of life. The thing is in itself reasonable, and, therefore, probable. It is consistent with all the elementary principles of the American government, though it is in conflict with our national prejudices and practices. . . ."

In spite of the fact that black did enjoy the right to the ballot to some degree before Radical Reconstruction, only one Negro, John Mercer Langston, was elected to public office in this period. In 1855 he was elected on the Liberal Party ticket to the post of township clerk in Brownhelm, Ohio. See Philip S. Foner, The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass (New York, 1950), II, 78-79. See also Philip S. Foner, The Voice of Black America: Major Speeches by Negroes in the United States (New York, 1971), p. 410.

3. Horace Greeley (1811-1872), founder of the New York Tribune, a successful and influential antislavery organ and later one of the foremost of Republican editors.

4. In July 1855, John H. Wheeler, United States minister to Nicaragua, was about to embark from Philadelphia to New York. He had brought along with him a Negro woman named Jane Johnson and her two children, Daniel and Isaiah. Shortly after boarding the boat, Wheeler and his three servants retired to the deck, whereupon Passmore Williamson, secretary of the Pennsylvania Antislavery Society, approached Wheeler and asked permission to speak to his servants. Wheeler refused, but Williamson pushed past him and asked Jane if she were a slave. When she admitted as such, Williamson informed her that since she had been brought into free territory by her master she could be freed. Soon an argument followed and in the excitement which followed a group of blacks who had accompanied Williamson seized the woman and her children and carried them off the boat. The slaves were then loaded into a waiting carriage and carried away.

Williamson, who had taken no actual part in assisting the slaves, was nevertheless implicated. For Wheeler petitioned the United States District Court for a writ of habeas corpus in an attempt to force Williamson to