Virginia (late 1840s): East vs. West – Role Play

You own a small farm in the western part of Virginia. You are angry because there aren’t enough roads and canals in western Virginia to get your crops to the market, and the Virginia government won’t spend the money to build new roads and canals near your farm.

You own a large wheat plantation in the eastern part of Virginia. You wish that the Virginians living in the western part of the state would stop complaining so much. You feel that there is not enough money in the state’s treasury for improving western Virginia’s roads.

You own a large tobacco plantation in eastern Virginia. The soil on your farm is poor and won’t produce as much tobacco as the soil in western Virginia. You oppose building more roads and canals in the western part of the state because you fear that you can’t compete with the farmers of western Virginia.

You are a carpenter living on a couple of acres of land in the western part of the state. You think it is unfair that you cannot vote just because you don’t own the required minimum of 50 acres of land.

You are a planter who owns several thousand acres of farmland in eastern Virginia. You feel that only white men who own at least 50 acres of land should be allowed to vote. You argue that it has always been this way in Virginia and that the tradition should continue.

You are a gentleman farmer living in the eastern part of Virginia. You own several thousand acres of farmland. You own many slaves who work in your fields. You argue that you farm business would be ruined and you and your family would be poor if you freed your slaves.
You own a small farm in the western part of Virginia. You neither need slaves on your farm nor do you think it is humane to own another human being as property. You think the Virginia government should put an end to the practice of slavery.

You are a Virginian living west of Virginia’s Blue Ridge Mountains. You think it is very unfair that even though there are more free people living west of the mountains than east of the mountains, western Virginians have fewer representatives in the General Assembly. You are angry that you and your fellow westerners don’t have the kind of voice in Virginia’s government that you deserve.

As the owner of a large plantation in eastern Virginia, you feel that the representation in the General Assembly is fair. You do not want to see any changes to the existing law.