

functions conferred on it or delegated to it by the Board of Public Works." All contracts, plans, and specifications for public improvements had to be submitted to the department for its review.⁷¹

The haphazard, uncoordinated manner in which duties had been heaped upon the board has been noted several times. Finally, in 1951-52 a study was made of the board's organization and function. It was part of a more general study of the state government undertaken by a gubernatorially appointed Commission on Administrative Organization of the State. Headed initially by Simon Sobeloff (until his appointment by Gov. Theodore R. McKeldin as chief judge of the Court of Appeals) and then by Baltimore attorney Enos Stockbridge, the commission over a two-year period issued twelve reports in which it described the administrative structure of the state government and made a number of recommendations for change. The eighth report, issued in November 1952, dealt with public works.⁷²

By and large the commission expressed its approval of the current administration of public works, finding no serious deficiencies. Most of its recommendations dealt with clarifying some procedures and coordinating the activities of the Department of Budget and Procurement, the Department of Public Improvements, and the State Planning Commission. Its only major recommendation pertaining directly to the Board of Public Works was that the board be "relieved of its responsibility under which it gives approval to thousands of minor transactions involving public works and property."⁷³

The commission noted the expanded jurisdiction of the board over the years but observed that it had "never been given or has never taken upon itself detailed responsibilities for supervision of administration." Rather, it had limped along with one part-time employee and had "relied for administrative assistance on the staffs of the three members in their major capacities." The board, said the commission, "should retain its authority over major decisions involving public works and property, but it should not be burdened with thousands of small items regarding which it cannot make informed decision." Such items should be transferred to other agencies for final action.⁷⁴

In specific terms the commission recommended that the board retain jurisdiction over the construction of state office buildings, the issuance of bonds and opening of bids, and the selection of sites for new buildings. It should not be required to approve all change orders, however, but only where the aggregate change amounted to 10 percent or more of the contract. Moreover, board approval should not be required for the disposition of personal property worth less than \$10,000.⁷⁵

The legislature paid no attention to these recommendations, and so the board went on as it had before.⁷⁶ In a typical meeting of the 1950s, the board might be called upon to (1) adopt resolutions for the sale of various installments of previously authorized bond issues, (2) decide whether one agency or another should receive a set of the state code, (3) award construction contracts and approve projects or change orders for dozens of projects and agencies, (4) approve leases for various agencies, (5) consider reports on various matters, with or without taking action on them, (6) consider requests for allocations from the general emergency fund, (7) approve budget reallocations from

71. Acts of 1947, ch. 171.

72. Commission on Administrative Organization of the State, *Eighth Report* (Annapolis, 1 November 1952), MdHR 806666.

73. *Ibid.*, 2:20.

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 20.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21. An example of this tedious action occurred at the meeting of 29 May 1946, when the board had to approve the sale of seventy-five worn-out tires by the State Roads Commission for \$7. BPW Minutes, 29 May 1946, vol. 7 (1946-48), p. 35.

76. A bill (S.B. 194) was introduced into the Senate in the 1953 session "relating to the powers and duties of the Board of Public Works and the Department of Public Improvements," but it never emerged from the Judicial Proceedings Committee. *S. Jour.* (1953), p. 263.