of the State, was in the December session of 1825, chapter 166. That act constituted a board of public works to consist of nine, eight of them, named in the bill, of the most intelligent and respectable men in the State, and the Governor to be *ex officio* the presiding officer of that board. They were under the law required to investigate and examine all the various portions of the State, to ascertain where improvements might be advantageously made. At that time there was a perfect *mania* upon the subject, spreading not only throughout the State of Maryland, but throughout the nation. Almost every creek in the State was examined and surveyed, in order to determine how far it was practicable to make valuable improvements. A very short time afterwards the system was changed, the board of public works abandoned, and then the Treasurer was directed to vote either in person or by proxy for the stock of the State. In the December session of 1832, chapter 318, we find the next action of the legislature upon the subject. By that act the Governor and Council was directed to appoint three competent persons to represent the stock of the State. They then fixed the compensation at $4, per diem, and itinerant charges such as were given to members of the legislature. They were required to vote in all the joint stock companies of the State where the State had an interest. That continued from 1832 to 1840.

In the December session of 1840, chapter 155, the change was made to election by concurrent vote. Five agents were at that time appointed to perform all the duties which had previously devolved upon three. They were required in addition to report annually the proceedings of their board to the legislature. In the December session of 1841, there was a still further change upon the subject; and at that time they changed the mode of compensation from the per diem and itinerancy to a fixed salary of $100. From that time to the present that system has been in operation.

[In 1847, I was chosen a member of the board of directors. At that time the bill had been passed for the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal; that bill having passed in 1844. The State had been exceedingly anxious that that bill would be carried out, and that the great object which the people of the State had so much at heart, should be accomplished. Various difficulties presented themselves. A contract for the completion of the work had been made, but the laws was very stringent, and the contractors were unable within the time to carry it out. Very shortly after I came into the board, we were successful in entering into a contract for the completion of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. At that time the duties of the State agents had become very arduous. They had concurrent jurisdiction under the law of 1844 with the directors in the formation of a contract for the completion of that great work. We were bound then, after entering into the contract, before it became valid, to obtain the concurrence of the agents of the State. The consequence was that we had frequent meetings, at all of which the agents were bound to attend, and I am happy to say the duty was performed promptly by the gentlemen constituting the agency. The work has happily been completed; we hope soon to enjoy the full advantages which were anticipated by the most ardent friends of the work. And now, when the work is completed, a change in the system of government is proposed—for what purpose is manifest, I am sure, to every gentleman in the Convention.

The proposed change which I shall first consider, is the bill proposed by the gentleman from Frederick, [Mr. Thomas,] and I regret that he is not here to day, for I should have been glad to hear from him a further explanation of his views. What good is to result from the change I cannot myself see. The whole responsibility and control of the matter is left with the President and Board of Directors. The agents of the State have no further duties to perform than merely to act at stockholders' meetings, and to vote for the President and Directors. When they have done this, their functions cease for the year. They can have no supervision over the work, because the charter gives the entire control to the President and Directors. I cannot for my life, conceive why agents selected by the people of Maryland, would be more likely to select competent and proper persons for the faithful performance of that duty, than agents appointed in the present mode. The Legislature are as competent, and I think much more so, to select gentlemen to perform the mere office of voting for the State, than the people of the State at large. In nominations we all know how things are effected; and we know, too, that for the office they would be more likely to fix upon ambitious politicians, and very frequently broken-down and hacknied politicians, for the purpose of giving them some little eclat in their ranks as politicians, than men because of their merit.

The gentleman from Frederick proposed, although not named in the bill, the salary of $100. I would ask what gentleman would consent that his name should go before the voters of some five or six counties, and after he should have been elected, to go to Baltimore or some other point, twice in the year for the purpose of performing the required duties, for such a salary? They are required to meet in June, when the stockholders appoint a committee, who examine the report and the action of the Board during the past year. They meet again after some thirty days, to act upon the report and to elect President and Directors. If the officers have been faithful in the discharge of their duty, they are re-elected; if not, the stockholders have it in their power to make a change. That state of things must continue to exist, whether the agents of the State are appointed as at present, or elected by the people; and I see no necessity for making a change. I am opposed to the whole matter, as one with which