

REPORT.

The Committee of Ways and Means, to whom was referred the special message of His Excellency, Governor Bowie, of the 15th of March instant, relating to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, pray leave to report to the House of Delegates that they have given to the questions treated of by the Governor, careful consideration. They agree fully with the Governor that the interests of the Company and of the State have been seriously prejudiced by the mode of administering the affairs of the Canal through a long series of years; its control having been swayed by the fluctuating schemes of political partizans, instead of having been guided by an enlightened and zealous regard for the development of trade and the advancement of the pecuniary interests of the stockholders and creditors of the work. The State of Maryland, by the force of circumstances, has insensibly been drawn into the position of a large private proprietor. Her proper attitude, at all times, should have been that of patron and promoter of works of internal improvement. It is eminently desirable that at the earliest moment she would resume her proper attitude, and ceasing to be a private owner of gainful property, act as the guardian of the interests of her citizens and a leader among her sister States in the development of commercial and industrial enterprise.

It had been fondly hoped by those entrusted to frame the organic law of the State, that the structure of the Board of Public Works was such that its members would be so far removed by the diversities in the manner of their appointment, from the casualities of partizan politics, that consistency of policy and permanence of administration in respect to the internal improvements of the State would be insured. But it being conceded by the message of the Governor, in effect, that such a result cannot be anticipated, and he having recommended that means be devised to remedy the evils in the management of the Canal, arising, first, from partizan control, and, second, from constant change of administration, and agreeing with him in the general proposition, that those who have a property interest, rather than those who have a partizan or local interest in the work, may most safely be entrusted with its management, the Committee have endeavored to form a plan of administration which will accomplish that end, while it avoids the legal and constitutional difficulties which prevent the adoption of the particular plan suggested in the special message.

The primary charter of the Canal Company was granted by the State of Virginia on the 27th of January, 1824, and to the terms of that charter we must look for the law regulating the management of the work. By that charter the