

of the state under article 3, section 24 of the Constitution, any persons who failed to cooperate. The committee's report was due on or before 19 March 1906.

The report was not favorable to the B & O.⁶⁸ On the eve of its publication, and in an effort to avoid further unpleasantness, the board wrote to the B & O requesting that it make an offer for the stock. It received in return a stinging letter from B & O president Oscar Murray criticizing the report. On 20 March the board responded, expressing the hope that the B & O would offer \$2,500,000 for the stock, more than double the previous offer of \$200 a share. The railroad immediately replied that if the state offered the stock for sale the B & O would guarantee a responsible bid of \$2,500,000. The board consulted the joint committee, which secured a resolution of the General Assembly urging acceptance. The price, said the resolution, was a "much larger sum than could be procured from any other source."⁶⁹

The board decided to "cheerfully comply with the request of the Joint Special Committee" and so notified the railroad. It promptly advertised for bids, and on 28 March 1906 accepted a \$2,500,000 offer from the Maryland Trust Company.⁷⁰ And so ended another long, rocky marriage.

The board was unable to dispose of the other major bank and railroad securities owned by the state until after 1910. But it did manage in 1889 to settle a long-standing dispute with the Susquehanna Canal Company, the Tidewater Canal Company, and the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad over monies due under a mortgage owned by the state.⁷¹

The state's relationship with the railroads extended beyond its role as stockholder and creditor. It also regulated them in a variety of ways, and it was not long before that responsibility also was delegated to the board. In some instances, this was an unpleasant and thankless task.

In 1882, for example, the General Assembly authorized the B & O to construct a bridge across the Susquehanna River as part of its branch line to Philadelphia, but it attached a number of conditions to that authority. One was that the railroad "first receive the approval of the board of public works of the plan and character of the bridge to be constructed; and said board shall be authorized to prescribe all necessary conditions for the construction and use of said bridge so as not to impede navigation."⁷²

On 5 July 1883 the B & O presented its plans for a bridge at Port Deposit for board approval. The board deferred action in order to give interested persons an opportunity to present their views and conducted a hearing on 12 July for that purpose. The citizens raised a number of objections to the project. They apparently felt that the bridge as planned would interfere with navigation on the river. The board again deferred a decision. On 19 July the B & O agreed to amend the plans by raising the height of the bridge ten feet in order to meet the citizens' objections. Still the board took no action. On 26 July it met again to consider the proposal but decided to make a personal inspection of the site, which it later did. Finally, on 9 August the board approved the amended proposal, with the additional caveat that the B & O maintain a tugboat at the bridge during the season of open navigation to tow all vessels requiring towing. An amended application was submitted and approved on 30 August 1883.⁷³

The same scene was replayed in 1907, when the B & O sought permission to reconstruct the bridge to accommodate a double track. Once again the local citizens

68. "Report of the Joint Special Committee," 2 April 1906, *S. Jour.* (1906), pp. 1847-67.

69. BPW Minutes, 17, 19, 20 March 1906, 1:263, 264-67, 269-72; *H. Jour.* (1906), pp. 1144-45.

70. BPW Minutes, 21, 22, 28 March 1906, 1:274-75, 278-79, 280.

71. *Ibid.*, 31 January 1889, vol. 1883-1905, pp. 105-6.

72. Acts of 1882, ch. 223.

73. BPW Minutes, 5, 12, 19, 26 July, 9, 30 August 1883, vol. 1851-83, pp. 432, 434-37, 441.