

for the entire state government. The state librarian was to notify the board of the needs of the legislative and judicial branches, and the secretary of state was to do the same for the executive branch; the board was then to advertise for bids.⁷⁹ Each year the board had to become involved in letting contracts for hundreds of these items—pens, pencils, ink, glue, rulers, and stationery.

Part and parcel of this responsibility was arranging as well for the necessary printing of legislative documents, also through competitive bidding. The 1905 contract called for 4,500 copies of the governor's message (4,000 in English, 500 in German), 3,000 copies of the comptroller's report, 1,000 copies of the treasurer's report, 300 copies of House and Senate bills, 1,500 copies of legislative acts and resolutions, and differing numbers of various other documents.⁸⁰

By 1910 the Board of Public Works more or less settled into a routine—managing such state property as existed; superintending public construction and just moving into the field of public contracting generally; winding up its role as a board of admiralty; finally having disposed of most of the state investments in the banks, railroads, and canal companies; exercising some economic regulation; superintending the issuance and management of public debt; and performing a few other miscellaneous functions.

By and large these functions continued during the next decade, but in enlarged fashion. The board continued to handle the sale of an increasing number of state bonds. Between 1909 and 1920 state debt increased from \$7.5 million to over \$28 million, some \$6 million of the increase being for the purpose of building and improving state roads.⁸¹ The board also continued to let printing contracts, employ auditors to examine the books of state agencies, authorize the payment of routine bills, place insurance on state property, supervise public construction, and approve all leases entered into by the state or its agencies and rental payments due under them.

In 1916 the General Assembly turned to the board to extricate the state from an unexpected financial plight. Two years earlier the legislature enacted a comprehensive law for the protection of the state oyster industry. It created a Board of Shell Fish Commissioners and charged this board with, among other things, mapping and surveying the natural oyster beds and bars. The act then provided that the interests of any lessees under outstanding leases covering areas within the natural beds or bars, as established by the survey, were to be condemned by the state. The legislature evidently underestimated the value of these outstanding leases, however, for as the condemnations proceeded substantial judgments were rendered. At its next session, in 1916, the General Assembly concluded that "the interests of the state require that the said areas or lots should not be taken by the state at the amounts of said respective judgments," and it called upon the Board of Public Works to negotiate a reduction in those judgments.⁸²

At the time judgments totaling nearly \$260,000 had been rendered against the state. The legislature appropriated \$75,000 to the board to settle the debts "for such amount or amounts as in the opinion of the Board of Public Works, may be fair, reasonable and proper" and directed that if unable to effect a settlement on those terms the board should abandon the condemnation proceedings from which such judg-

79. Acts of 1904, ch. 397.

80. BPW Minutes, 31 May, 23 November 1905, 1:158-59, 187-88.

81. See "Annual Report of the Comptroller, 1909," *Maryland House and Senate Documents* (Baltimore, 1910), p. 29; E. Brooke Lee, *Annual Report of the Comptroller of the Treasury* (Annapolis, 1920), pp. 31-53, MdHR 783218; Acts of 1914, ch. 267, authorizing a \$6 million state roads loan.

82. Acts of 1914, ch. 265; 1916, ch. 582.