

During this 1818-19 session Del. Clement Dorsey received leave from the House of Delegates to introduce "an act to promote internal improvements, and establish a board of commissioners for that purpose." Although Dorsey and delegates Thomas Kennedy, Benjamin W. Lecompte, Kensey Harrison, and Thomas Kell were ordered to prepare the act for introduction, the *House Journal* does not show that it was, in fact, introduced. The legislature did, however, direct that a study be made of the feasibility of the state's purchase of the turnpike roads.³³

The next record of legislative action with respect to a board of public works appears in the *House Journal* of the 1821 session. On 8 January 1822 the clerk was ordered "to furnish the committee on internal improvements with a copy of the act, with its supplements, if any, of the legislature of Virginia, establishing in that state a board of public works." The Committee on Internal Improvements reported to the General Assembly on 11 February 1822. After stressing the importance of internal improvements and recommending the development of water transportation rather than roads, the committee concluded with a recommendation for a board:

To keep alive the attention and the zeal of the state upon this question, your committee conceive no better plan could be devised than the establishment of a board of public works. As this however is a matter for which the state may not yet be prepared, and which may require much more information in regard to the objects of internal improvement, than your committee have it in their power to present, they would recommend for the present the institution of a committee to be selected by the executive from among the most intelligent members of the community, with directions to report either individually or collectively to them, the most judicious course of improvement in reference to the roads, canals and rivers of the state, or such parts of them as may come under their notice. And further, that the executive be authorized, if they should deem it expedient, to cause surveys to be made, and maps to be returned of such districts, roads or water courses as in their opinion may be necessary to the illustration of any proposed plan of operation, and that directions be given, that such reports be made, if possible, in time for the meeting of the next general assembly.

The committee's resolution evidently failed, but it was reintroduced by Kennedy during the following session.³⁴ Again the *Journal* does not reflect any action on the resolution.

The General Assembly considered the subject of internal improvements again in its 1823 session. The *House Journal* reflects that the governor's comments on the subject were referred to the Committee on Internal Improvements, but the text of those comments is not preserved. Whatever the governor's wishes, the General Assembly continued to disagree on any coordinated approach to internal improvements, although at the urging of the Senate it seems that a committee of senators and delegates was appointed to see if the legislature could "lay aside our prejudices and to unite in some plan by which the pecuniary resources of the state may be applied in just and reasonable proportions to the several canals proposed to be made." The *House Journal* of the 1824 session of the General Assembly contains a message from the Senate rejecting a "bill to incorporate the president and directors of the board of public works" but no other action with respect to such a board.³⁵

This chapter of the state's history was thus marked by an intense interest in various canal and turnpike projects, but because of the legislature's inability to agree on a unified approach to internal improvements, no substantial commitment of state

33. *Maryland House Journal* (1818), p. 67 (hereafter *H. Jour.*); Acts of 1818, res. 74.

34. *H. Jour.* (1821), pp. 51, 106-11; (1822), p. 16.

35. *Ibid.* (1823), pp. 13, 105-6; (1824), p. 162.