

Assembly may confer upon them the power to decide," and giving a broader meaning to what constitutes the "Public Works of the State," the legislature gradually expanded the jurisdiction of the board into dozens of areas wholly foreign to its original purpose—public contracting, economic regulation, public finance, and, as we shall soon see, the state personnel system and distribution of the state largesse. Some attention was given to the board in the context of the debate in 1921-22 over executive reorganization, but it was not until the mid-1950s that anyone took a serious look at what had occurred. Once having taken that look, it was decided that what had occurred—the radical transformation of the board—was a good thing, and all that was done as a result was to clear the tracks for more of the same.

The last sixty years have been the period of most rapid expansion for the board. That expansion has closely paralleled—indeed followed—the expansion in state government itself. For convenience, it is well to divide this modern era into parts. The first decade—the 1920s—was, perhaps more than any other period, a watershed for the board, a time when it teetered on oblivion but was rescued by Gov. Albert C. Ritchie and given substantial new responsibilities of an ongoing, institutional nature. The 1930s, of course, saw the Great Depression—a forge from which the board emerged as the most powerful agency of state government.

The last forty years saw a more structured expansion of the board's role—not so much in reaction to traumatic external stimuli such as war or depression as the product of deliberate reorganization of a rapidly expanding state government apparatus. This recent expansion, however, has been the most dramatic, both in quantity and in quality; and, again for purposes of organizational clarity, it seems appropriate to split off the final two decades (1960-83) for consideration in a separate chapter.

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The rocking back and forth of the board's fortunes actually commenced in 1915. In that year, due to the lack of a rational budget system and the haphazard way in which state funds were appropriated, the state once again found itself facing insolvency. The legislature had appropriated some \$2 million more than the state had in revenue, and fiscal disaster was averted only by an emergency treasury relief loan. The budget, such as it was, was balanced with borrowed funds.

At its next state convention the Democratic party, in righteous indignation, adopted a platform pledging an executive budget system for the state. "The basis of the system," said the platform, "shall be a report made either by the Governor or by the Board of Public Works to the Legislature of the estimated income of the State during the succeeding two years, together with recommendations as to the appropriations or expenditures to be made for all purposes during the same period of time." The recommended appropriations included in that report could be reduced by the General Assembly, but not increased. The party platform also pledged creation of a commission "charged with the duty of devising and recommending a detailed plan for the budget system."<sup>2</sup>

Such a commission was appointed by the convention. It was thus a political committee. It was chaired by Dr. Frank J. Goodnow, then president of Johns Hopkins University, and it has since become generally known as the Goodnow Commission.

The Democratic party platform, as noted, suggested either the governor *or the board* as the primal authority in putting together the state budget, and the commission considered both alternatives. Ultimately it opted for placing that responsibility in the

2. "Report of the Commission on Economy and Efficiency on a Budget System" (Goodnow Commission), *S. Jour.* (1916), p. 129.