

The agreement for the acquisition of Morgan was subject to board approval, and, if approved, the board was empowered to appoint the first public board of trustees of the college. An agreement was, of course, negotiated, and in November 1939 the board approved it and appointed the governing board.⁵³

It was not long before some friction developed over the new state college. Apparently there was an unexpended surplus of \$125,000 left from the sum appropriated for the acquisition of Morgan College, and the new board of trustees wanted to use it to build a dormitory. The trustees made the mistake of selecting an architect to design the new building without conferring with the Board of Public Works, however, and when that fact surfaced, the board was quite upset. It expressed its sentiments at a meeting in January 1940, issuing a stern warning to the college not to select any more architects, but it approved the project then at issue.⁵⁴

The outbreak of war in Europe prompted a quickened pace of rearmament here, and although that helped to hasten the end of the Great Depression, it also created a number of new dislocations. This became more apparent, of course, after Pearl Harbor, but it was evident before.

One major effect of the outbreak of World War II was a sharp decline in civilian construction projects as both men and materiel were diverted to defense efforts. The General Assembly recognized the problem in its spring 1941 session when, in the 1941 general construction loan, it recommended to the Board of Public Works that the expenditures authorized by the bill be "delayed and postponed if the labor conditions are such as to interfere with the defense program or if the commodity prices are such that construction would result in very high costs compared with normal conditions." The board followed that recommendation. It ordered a study of what projects could be eliminated and ultimately decided to defer selling some of the authorized construction bonds. In 1943 the legislature reappropriated the funds for other, more important, projects.⁵⁵

There was, in the beginning, some direct war-related activity for the board, but most of the impact was indirect. In its first two meetings after Pearl Harbor, the board discussed with the adjutant general how the "home guard" could best be used, finally deciding to have it guard the state's water supply (Pretty Boy and Loch Raven dams), but to leave the protection of industrial plants to "special" policemen commissioned by the governor. The board's role in deploying the guard was primarily fiscal. The soldiers had to be paid and covered by workmen's compensation insurance. In what was obviously an overabundance of caution, the board allocated \$5,000 to prepare abandoned mines in western Maryland for the temporary storage of the state archives, although it is not clear whether any archives were actually moved. Finally, the board patriotically rejected a suggestion by the state forester that the state acquire title to employees' private automobiles in order to enhance their ability to get tires and other automotive products rationed by the federal government.⁵⁶

The most significant new activity of the board during the war years was extending its control over the state bureaucracy and personnel. In February 1942 the board imposed an across-the-board hiring freeze, declaring that no vacancy in state service was to be filled without board approval. It then delegated the approval power to the director of budget and procurement, Walter Kirkman, with the understanding that

53. Acts of 1937, ch. 506; 1939, ch. 331; BPW Minutes, 9, 20 November 1939, 5:320-21, 327.

54. BPW Minutes, 23 January 1940, 5:358.

55. Acts of 1941, ch. 854; BPW Minutes, 12 December 1941, 16 January 1942, vol. 6 (1941-46), pp. 74, 80-81; Acts of 1943, ch. 668.

56. BPW Minutes, 12 December 1941, 16 January 1942, 6:74, 80-81, 84.