

Equally significant, however, was the fact that for perhaps the first time the board was called upon to consider priorities among *local* projects, in terms of both making recommendations for legislative action and, with respect to school construction projects, actually distributing state bond proceeds.

On 16 March 1944 the commission made its first report to the board, recommending a number of projects, and the board immediately selected architects for seven of those projects. Five and a half months later the board selected architects for ten more. Indeed, a good bit of the board's time during the last two war years was taken up with postwar construction planning.⁶⁷

When the legislature convened in 1945, it gave the go-ahead to some of these projects, and the board was back in the construction business in a big way. In one act the General Assembly directed the board to consider *and approve* a host of projects, ranging from a piggery for the state penal farm to new office and hospital buildings, and much in between. To finance these projects the General Assembly authorized an initial bond issue of \$4,625,000, followed in 1947 with another issue of \$11,695,000, and in 1949 with \$16,373,000 more.⁶⁸

During the summer and fall of 1945 the board approved over \$22 million in state projects, as well as 782 local projects totaling nearly \$230 million. It authorized payment of \$175,000 in state assistance for the preparation of plans and specifications for fifty-seven of the local projects, most of these being school construction and road repair items.⁶⁹

The board's role in school construction, which had always been a county concern, emanated from this reconstruction program. In 1949 the General Assembly authorized \$70 million in state bonds to supplement the financing of local school construction. Fifty million dollars of this was, in effect, merely a lending of the state's credit to the counties; the state contributed bond funds to the counties, but the counties had to repay the contributions, plus the interest paid by the state, out of their share of certain taxes. The other \$20 million was to be allocated as direct grants on a matching basis.⁷⁰

The State Board of Education was given an initial role in the allocation of the loan funds by determining for the Board of Public Works "a priority of need for school buildings" among the counties; however, the acts provided that "no grant of financial assistance . . . shall be allowed until such grant has been finally ratified and approved by the Board of Public Works." The decision of the board was declared to be "final and conclusive upon all parties concerned." Similarly, with respect to the grant funds, although certain findings had to be made by the State Board of Education, the actual allocation to the counties and the terms of the grants were subject to determination and approval by the Board of Public Works.

This frenetic construction activity was to occupy the board's attention for quite a few years. Projects continued to roll in for consideration and approval; architects and engineers had to be selected, contracts let for construction, bonds sold, and construction work superintended. In 1947 the legislature gave the board some measure of relief when it created the Department of Public Improvements, to be headed by the chief engineer of Maryland, and charged it with carrying out most of the routine duties associated with public construction. Although the board still retained full ultimate control and responsibility over the superintendence of public works projects, the department was empowered, among other things, to select architects and engineers (subject to board approval), represent the board at bid openings, advise the board with respect to all matters pertaining to public improvements, and "perform the duties and

67. BPW Minutes, 16 March, 31 August 1944, 25 January, 15 May, 1 June, 10 July 1945, 6:290-91, 326, 364, 382-84, 395, 404-7.

68. Acts of 1945, chs. 994, 747; 1947, ch. 694; 1949, ch. 277.

69. BPW Minutes, 1 June, 10 July, 20 August, 25 September, 28 November 1945, 6:395, 404, 419-25, 438-43, 455-61.

70. Acts of 1949, chs. 488, 502.