

CHAPTER 8

The Overburdened Board: 1960-1983

The 1960s and 1970s are, by far, the most difficult decades to chronicle in the history of the Board of Public Works. Not only did the board's operations become more complex, they became more extensively documented and reported. The sheer paperwork routinely generated by the board's monthly (more recently twice monthly) meetings is simply immense.

That burgeoning paperwork has had two effects. It quite naturally inhibits the ability of a researcher to review in depth, or to correlate over a period of time, the myriad of individual items coming before the board. More important, it has required the three members of the board, each of whom has other important and time-consuming duties to perform, to spend an increasingly large portion of their time on board business and/or to rely increasingly on the advice of staff or administrative personnel.

In a real sense the 1960s and 1970s witnessed a paradox in terms of the board's functions. At the same time that most political scientists and management consultants were consistently recommending a retraction of the board's functions and activity, the legislature was piling ever more duties on it. The expanded delegation, moreover, was not merely a quantitative one; it served as well to thrust the board into wholly new domains that in many respects proved to be overrun with political thickets. This paradox forms the central theme of this penultimate chapter.

The Sobeloff-Stockbridge Commission, it will be recalled, recommended in 1952 that some of the more routine duties of the board be transferred or delegated to other agencies. Little or nothing, however, was done to implement that recommendation. The next serious study of the board was made in connection with the effort at overall constitutional revision in 1965-67. In June 1965 Gov. J. Millard Tawes appointed a study commission "to conduct an inquiry into the necessity for, and extent and nature of any amendment, modification or revision of the Constitution of Maryland, with particular respect to whether a constitutional convention should be held."¹ The Constitutional Convention Commission met over a two-year period and in the end not only recommended the convening of a constitutional convention to rewrite the existing century-old charter but drafted a proposed new constitution for the convention to consider.

1. Gov. J. Millard Tawes, statement of 16 June 1965, *Report of the Constitutional Convention Commission*, p. 419.