

Bill 369, specifically requiring the return of the roads to the Counties, except certain designated ones, this bill is no longer necessary, and will be vetoed.

HOUSE BILL 438

AN ACT to repeal and re-enact, with amendments, Section 7 of Article 89B of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1943 Supplement), title "State Roads", providing that said section shall not apply to those counties or county road departments desiring to do construction or improvement work on county roads with their own forces, nor to county road maintenance, construction or reconstruction by the State Roads Commission in those counties where the duty of maintaining, constructing or reconstructing county roads is imposed upon the State Roads Commission.

The main purpose of this bill is to authorize the County Commissioners, by resolution, to determine to make improvements to county roads with their own forces, regardless of the source of funds that are to be used, to pay the cost of such road construction or improvements. It would empower the County Commissioners, in certain instances or in all cases to have road improvements made by what is known as force account, without public bidding, instead of by contract open to public bidding.

There are persuasive arguments both for and against the bill. I am sympathetic with the view that the County Commissioners should be authorized, whenever, it appears for the best interests of the public, to make road improvements with their own forces, but I cannot avoid the feeling that such authority, without any restriction or supervision, may be open to grave abuse. Inasmuch as the State is distributing large sums of money to the counties for road purposes, the State has a deep interest in the manner of expenditure. It would seem to me to be wisest, under the circumstances, to give the matter further consideration, with the idea that, if such authority is to be granted, the County Commissioners ought to be required, whenever the power is exercised, to keep such accounts and records as would give the State, and any others concerned, complete information as to how the funds were expended, and as to the results obtained.

The State Roads Commission is required under the provisions of Senate Bill No. 359 (now Chapter 560 of the Acts of 1947) to keep accounts according to the requirements of that law, and I would think that the counties should be required to follow similar procedures, so that there would be an opportunity for comparisons, county by county, so that any abuse could be promptly revealed. I have been informed that in-