

It took the governor but five days to prepare a reply to the advance report, and it was not a pleasant one. The report was "so remarkable," he said, "as to give me great concern"; nothing but "very plain speaking" was justified in response. About the only recommendations suitable to the governor were those pertaining to his filing system; virtually everything else he found deficient. With respect to the comments and suggestions concerning the Board of Public Works, he said:

No mention at all is made of what is perhaps the board's most important work, the issue of millions of dollars of State bonds, and the application of the proceeds.⁸ . . . The survey states that the routine work of the Board of Public Works is a minor item in the work of the force as a whole, which is, of course, far from the truth. . . . I refer to these matters simply because they indicate quite clearly to me that the writer of the survey really knows very little about the work of the Executive offices.⁹

In light of the many errors in the report dealing with the executive office, Ritchie questioned whether the survey with respect to other agencies ought to continue. He warned the consultant that if future reports concerning other agencies were no better, he would publicly attack them.¹⁰

Undaunted by the gubernatorial criticism, Griffenhagen rendered the full and final report on 15 April 1921, making no change in its recommendation that the board be abolished and its functions divided between a department of public works and the hybrid treasury council.¹¹

The governor's response to this final report, which he had commissioned, was to consign it to oblivion by creating a commission to study it. The commission—entitled the Reorganization Commission of Maryland—was the epitome of a "blue ribbon" panel. Created in June 1921, it consisted of more than one hundred persons from every part of the state, including a liberal sprinkling of legislators, former congressmen, judges, and political, business, and community leaders. It was chaired by N. Charles Burke, formerly a judge of the Court of Appeals. In his letters of appointment the governor noted that the Griffenhagen recommendations followed the plans adopted in a number of other states, but he added pointedly, "The problems involved differ in the different States, and I would not be willing to recommend to the Maryland Legislature any reorganization plan which had not first received the approval of a commission of representative Maryland men."¹²

Considering the size of the commission, it worked with remarkable speed, rendering its report in September 1921—three months after its creation. It expressly rejected the Griffenhagen plan (as expected), which, it found, "did not take sufficient account of the experience, conditions and usages of this State." "This was not at all unnatural," said the commission, "and would almost inevitably be the case with any plan drafted by outside experts."¹³

In terms of the Board of Public Works, the commission observed:

The Board of Public Works is one of the recognized institutions of the State, its members are the three most important executive and financial officers of the State, they can quickly assemble at all times and whenever needed, and the board fills an important place in the

8. Gov. Albert C. Ritchie to Griffenhagen and Associates, 15 March 1921, pp. 1, 2, Governor (Subject File), MdHR 8070. Between 1910 and 1920 state bonded indebtedness nearly quadrupled—from \$7.5 million to \$28.1 million—and the board, of course, was responsible for selling the bonds and, except for highway projects, superintending the expenditure of the proceeds. The dramatic increase in state debt, both in relative terms and in actual dollar volume, made this aspect of the board's function increasingly important, and that, no doubt, is what prompted Ritchie's comment.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

11. Griffenhagen Report, pt. 2.

12. Governor Ritchie to Commission Appointees, 31 May 1921, Governor (Subject File), MdHR 8055-12, folder 88.

13. Reorganization Commission of Maryland, *Plan for the Reorganization of the Administrative Departments of the State Government of Maryland* (Annapolis, 14 September 1921), p. 16, MdHR 805995 (hereafter *Reorganization Commission Report*).