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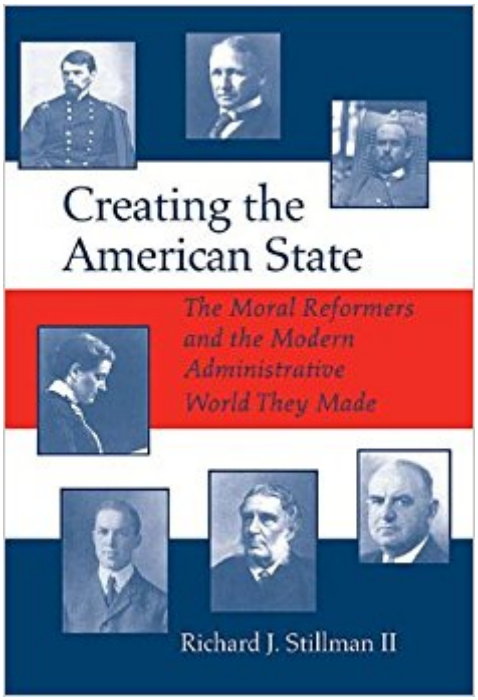
Creating The American State: The Moral Reformers And The Modern Administrative World They Made



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Synopsis

In this illuminating and provocative study, Stillman provides a new understanding of the foundation of the American state.Whether renewing a driver’s license, traveling on an airplane, or just watching in fascination as a robot probes Mars, we all participate in the everyday workings of the modern administrative state. As Stillman demonstrates in this study, however, we have not, until now, fully investigated or appreciated this administrative stateÃƒâ ¢s origins or its evolution into the entity that so affects our lives today.Stillman reveals that this modern enterprise emerged from a complex foundation of ideas and ideals rather than as a result of a simple, rational plan or cataclysmic event, as previously contended. In fact, he finds that the basis for our current administrative state lies in the lives of the seven individuals who, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, invented its various elements.Stillman also finds that although they lived at different times, these seven founders-George William Curtis, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Emory Upton, Jane Addams, Frederick W. Taylor, Richard Childs, and Louis Brownlow-had much in common: all were products of intensely Protestant, small-town America, and all were motivated by strong moral idealism. Indeed, Stillman finds that state making in the United States has been a continuation of the Protestant goal to "protest and purify."Some names are more recognizable than others, but all, through remarkable moral fervor and exceptional leadership skills, invented the administrative practices and procedures so familiar today. Ã Â

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Customer Reviews

"Anyone seeking to increase understanding of American government should read-and ponder-the account of its development in this work."Ã¢â ¬â •Dwight Waldo, The Maxwell School at Syracuse University

Richard J. Stillman II is Professor of Public Administration at the University of Colorado at Denver.Ã Â

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Hardcover from The University of Alabama Press. Cream cloth over hardback boards with a sewn binding. Released with dustjacket.207 pp. 20 pp of bibliographic and narrative End Notes. Bibliographic Essay. Indexed.TABLE OF CONTENTSFrom Whence the American State?George William Curtis: Leading Missionary for MeritCharles Francis Adams, Jr.: The Conscience of the Sunshine CommissionEmory Upton: Prophet for Public ProfessionalismJane Addams: The Call from the Inner Light for Public ReformFrederick W. Taylor: Latter-Day Puritan as Scientific ManagerRichard S. Childs: Minister for the Council-Manager PlanLouis Brownlow: Apostle of Administrative ManagementConclusion: American State Creation as Moral Transformation

To understand why the U.S. government works, and works relatively well, a bridge of understanding is needed between the principles of the founding fathers and the massive bureaucratic machine that is the modern United States. Richard Stillman’s "Creating the American State: the Moral Reformers and the Modern Administrative World They Made" provides such a bridge. Stillman builds a cogent case that seven "founders" of the modern administrative state shared and applied common Protestant values of work, duty, and idealism. These founders -- little known public officials -- essentially provided functional amendments to the theoretical skeleton of the Constitution. George William Curtis influences the adoption of a merit system over patronage. Charles Francis Adams (of the other Adams family) pioneers the sunshine commission. Jane Addams parlays her Protestant beliefs into social reforms that are ultimately rewarded with the 1931 Nobel Peace Prize. And, Frederick W. Taylor pioneers a system of scientific management that is still sending shock waves through government and industry. (Think TQM and Deming.) Combining biography and political science, Professor Stillwell provides a fascinating portrait of the emerging U.S. administrative state. Taken as a whole, his book provides an insight into why a complex bureaucracy is a necessary component of a successful modern society. This review provided by Dr. R. Kirk Jonas, who uses

"Creating the American State" in his University of Richmond class "Reinventing Government, Again." Comments to rkjona@aol.com

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