

hyperbole. There are instances when his efforts to tie Lincoln's thought to economic roots seem contrived and artificial (as when Boritt finds the "right to rise" in the president's military policies, a discovery which Boritt himself found startling). Boritt tends to view Lincoln's development in isolation from the intellectual and cultural currents of early nineteenth-century America, a lack of perspective that easily tempts him to exaggerate Lincoln's uniqueness. Still, this is a valuable study if only because it fills out a dimension of Lincoln's thought that has received little emphasis before now. Lincoln's early support of Whig economics is given careful analysis; the economics that directed his stance on slavery, his concept of the Union, and his view of the nature of the Civil War are revealed. Appended to Boritt's study is an extended essay in which the author seeks the "historiographical ancestry" of his book. Why, he asks, had not Lincoln scholars before him discovered the essential importance of economics to Lincoln's thought and action? The answer, he suggests, is found in the persistent and overpowering duality of the Lincoln image, Lincoln as man and Lincoln as god. His book, Boritt feels, not only explodes the "myth of the noneconomic Lincoln" but also provides "the sturdiest support for the bridge between man and god" (p. 304). That Boritt has made a contribution to Lincoln studies is unquestioned; that he has succeeded in his aim "to find a more real, more believable, Lincoln" is less certain.

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*R. E. Olds: Auto Industry Pioneer.* By George S. May. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977. Pp. viii, 458. Illustrations, appendix, bibliography, notes, index. \$13.95.)

Ransom E. Olds has long remained an enigmatic figure in the history of American automobiles. George S. May's richly detailed biography indicates that Olds shared much with Henry Ford: age and Michigan residency, an aversion to farm life, mechanical training, and early experience with automobiles. Olds built his first car a decade before Ford and was even better equipped to dominate the new industry. From the 1880s he had superintended the manufacture of nationally known steam and gasoline engines in his father's firm. His experience and reputation helped him found the Olds Motor Vehicle Company and capture one third of annual industry sales before Ford was firmly established.

Yet his initial success marked Olds' peak influence. In 1904 he split with his backers, Samuel and Fred Smith, and left the firm. And although he quickly founded another company (the REO, an acronym of Olds' initials), it never ranked higher than third in the industry. After 1906 Olds became less active as his company fell behind the new industry leaders, Ford and General Motors. May's more abbreviated coverage of Olds' later career describes only an ineffectual return to active management shortly before Olds left REO in 1936.

Why then did a man of such obvious capabilities and advantages fail to achieve the leadership and stature of a Ford? May answers that Olds was an early leader but not the towering pioneer of legend. Olds did not build the first gasoline automobile, and he produced an insignificant number of cars before settling on his famous curved-dash model just prior to his disastrous factory fire in 1901. That car, which made Olds' reputation, was neither the only cheap model nor the first automobile produced in quantity. Olds' swift departure from the Olds Motor Vehicle Company resulted not from a stubborn conviction for inexpensive, mass-produced vehicles but from a power struggle with Fred Smith. And Olds' diminished role at REO was by choice. After pioneering two firms he had little patience with administrative routine and less taste for such controversies as the Selden patent fight.

May's evidence could have carried him further. Olds was a production man of limited vision, not an entrepreneur of boundless confidence. While he forecast industry sales of a quarter million, Ford and William C. Durant foresaw a market twice as large. Olds was slow to improve his original engine and his frail runabout. For him, producing a dependable car meant building a bigger, more expensive automobile. Ironically, he began to miss the challenge of innovation just when Ford began modifying technology to produce cheap, dependable vehicles.

A more focused account would have sharpened May's analysis of a pioneer who stopped pioneering too soon, a genial fellow who fought bitterly with close colleagues, a critic of his father's docility who was prematurely content, and an independent who truckled to the Selden group. Yet while Olds remains an elusive figure, May's well-written book has much to offer. Unless new material is uncovered, scholars will not have a better history of Olds' early career. Along with Glenn Niemeyer's 1963 study, May has filled gaps and helped demythologize an important precursor's story. More importantly

the sharp contrast of Olds with Ford and Durant illuminates the role of personality and individual choice in business leadership.

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*Reform and Regulation: American Politics, 1900-1916.* By Lewis L. Gould. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978. Pp. ix, 197. Notes, suggested readings, tables, index. Clothbound, \$10.95; paperbound, \$6.95.)

American political history, like other fields, has been influenced by historians using social science methodology and emphasizing general patterns, state politics, electoral behavior, and legislative roll-call voting. By this standard Lewis L. Gould's *Reform and Regulation* is clearly a traditional work. Of course, as his bibliography and footnotes indicate, Gould is familiar with much of the "new" political history, especially the literature on the 1890s. Thus, he quite rightly begins in 1896 instead of 1900, the date apparently chosen by the series editor. (This is one of eight projected volumes entitled *Critical Episodes in American Politics*.) Gould's reading has failed him, however, with regard to elections. While his descriptions of platforms, speeches, and party organization are insightful, he appears to view election results as essentially referenda on national, and largely economic, issues. Such a view neglects the role of social and moral questions evident in many states, including Indiana. Moreover, Gould ignores almost entirely the importance of political socialization. He mentions the decline of party loyalty and voter turnout but fails to appreciate the broader significance of these developments. Finally, his suggestion that the Democratic victory in 1916 was only an "interruption" (p. 178) in a Republican era ignores the pattern of elections from 1908 to 1918, a pattern which Indiana well exemplifies. Despite its subtitle, however, this book covers not American politics but presidential politics. Judged by this narrower standard, *Reform and Regulation* is both useful and significant. Gould has read widely in manuscript collections and periodicals. His evaluations are perceptive, and his noting of long-range consequences is valuable.

Gould is very critical of Theodore Roosevelt. He argues convincingly that TR's initial policies, especially regarding trusts, were common Republican doctrine. Although admitting Roosevelt's astute assessment of public opinion and his successful self-advertisement, Gould claims that the president was