

fully indexed, although there will be a general index in the final volume. Any Clay papers that are discovered too late for inclusion in the proper chronological volume will be published in the last volume. The book-making and editing are superb, and the editors have introduced their voluminous annotations at the end of each entry for easy reference. Historians will anticipate with pleasure the appearance of future volumes in this impressive undertaking.

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The Congress Founds the Navy, 1787-1798. By Marshall Smelser. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959. Pp. ix, 229. Appendices, bibliographical note, index. \$5.00.)

After reading Dr. Smelser's preliminary articles on the founding of the navy in the *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* and in *Military Affairs*, this reviewer awaited publication of the full work with great anticipation. He was not disappointed, for *Congress Founds the Navy* is the definitive study of the establishment of the United States Navy during 1787 to 1798. It is, moreover, a carefully reasoned and well-researched study written with touches of dry wit.

The book is basically a study in the politics of the Federalist period. As such, it corrects several common misconceptions. For instance, it demonstrates the inaccuracy of the frequently repeated claim that Congress wished to do more than it did about the Algerine depredations before 1793, but was frustrated by the country's weakness. As Dr. Smelser points out, the problem was generally overlooked and its rival claimants for Congressional attention "had the advantage of being in some congressional constituency" (p. 44).

Dr. Smelser's thesis is not unique but seems to this reviewer to be both apt and accurate. "In the Federalist Period," he says, "naval policy was made in Congress. . . . Only the most technical details, such as the exact dimensions of ships and the precise tables of organization, were left to the executive. The policy which was enacted was the policy of congressional Federalists" (p. 200). Since these statements infer a lack of direction by Federalist administrations, particularly that of George Washington, it would have been worthwhile for Dr. Smelser to have pointed out the then current concept of the division of powers between the executive and legislative branches. In this connection it is useful to remember the words used by George Washington in his first inaugural address: "It will be . . . far more congenial with the feelings which actuate me, to substitute, in place of a recommendation of particular measures, the tribute that is due to the talents, the rectitude, and the patriotism which adorn the characters [of the congressmen] selected to devise and adopt them."

It can be argued that the United States Navy came into existence more from force of circumstances than from design. This contention is amply supported by *Congress Founds the Navy*. In it Dr. Smelser points out that during Washington's first administration there was no attempt to create a navy because Congress saw no immediate need for

one and assigned the task a low priority. The first halting steps were taken because something had to be done to protect American shipping heretofore shielded by Portuguese warships which kept the Algerians confined to the Mediterranean. It remained for the depredations of French privateers during 1797 and 1798, combined with national infuriation at the XYZ Affair, to force a reluctant Congress to send a navy to sea.

This study was written by Dr. Smelser while he was a Forrestal Fellow in naval history at Annapolis. It is the first study published under that grant. If other studies approach this one in merit, it is to be hoped that they too will soon be published.

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Nicholas Biddle: Nationalist and Public Banker, 1786-1844. By Thomas Payne Govan. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959. Pp. xii, 428. Illustrations, note on sources, bibliography, index. \$7.50.)

In the annals of American biography, the 1950's may go down in history as the "be kind to businessmen decade." John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford were favorably reinterpreted in full-length studies by Allan Nevins. Even Jay Gould found an able apologist in Julius Grodinsky. Finally at the close of the decade this revisionist trend reached a culmination in the book under review, Thomas Payne Govan's adulatory biography of Nicholas Biddle.

In his Preface Govan says: "I began the research upon which this book is based, with the intention of writing an objective, impartial biography that would do justice to Biddle and his opponents alike. This ambition has not been fulfilled. I have written an apologia, a defense . . . but I could do nothing else and remain loyal to the evidence." Even this candid statement hardly prepares the reader for what follows. In the first chapter, Govan states his belief that as a boy Biddle did not inherit privilege or status. He then provides an account of Biddle's distinguished ancestry, his father's career as a leading citizen of Philadelphia, his boyhood home "in the fashionable section of the city," and his education at both the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton.

Throughout Biddle's struggle with Jackson over the rechartering of the second Bank of the United States and his later attempt to play the role of central banker after his institution had been chartered by the state of Pennsylvania, Govan defends his hero with unquestioning devotion. Neither omitting nor playing down the aspects of Biddle's career which have been most criticized, Govan finds that Biddle's course was uniformly wise, his purpose always to promote the national welfare, and his interpretation of that welfare enlightened. Biddle's thoughts seem almost to become those of the author. Even Biddle's megalomaniacal rationalizations during his last desperate years are accepted without question. Thus, when Biddle (or is it Govan? One is seldom quite sure.) contended that Jackson and Van Buren were really responsible for the near insolvency of the state of Pennsylvania, that he (Biddle) bribed