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978-0-521-19363-4 - Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century

Stephen J. Rockwell

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## Indian Affairs and the Administrative State in the Nineteenth Century

The framers of the Constitution and the generations that followed built a powerful and intrusive national administrative state in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The romantic myth of an individualized, pioneering expansion across an open West obscures nationally coordinated administrative and regulatory activity in Indian affairs, land policy, trade policy, infrastructure development, and a host of other issue areas related to expansion.

Stephen J. Rockwell offers a careful look at the administration of Indian affairs and its relation to other national policies managing and shaping national expansion westward. Throughout the nineteenth century, Indian affairs were at the center of concerns about national politics, the national economy, and national social issues. Rockwell describes how a vibrant and complicated national administrative state operated from the earliest days of the republic, long before the Progressive era and the New Deal.

Stephen J. Rockwell is an Associate Professor of Political Science at St. Joseph's College in Patchogue, New York. He taught in the Political Science and Public Administration programs at the University of Michigan–Flint and worked as a Senior Research Analyst at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. He is the coauthor (with Peter Woll) of *American Government: Competition and Compromise* (2001) and coeditor (with Peter Woll) of an anthology entitled *American Political Ideals and Realities* (2000).

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STEPHEN J. ROCKWELL

*St. Joseph's College, New York*



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*To Mom and Dad*

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It does not seem a great task to attend to the business of directing the management of about three hundred thousand Indians; but when it is considered that those Indians are scattered over a continent, and divided into more than two hundred tribes, in [the] charge of fourteen superintendents and some seventy agents, whose frequent reports and quarterly accounts are to be examined and adjusted; that no general rules can be adopted for the guidance of those officers, for the reason that the people under their charges are so different in habits, customs, manners, and organization, varying from the civilized and educated Cherokee and Choctaw to the miserable lizard-eaters of Arizona; and that this office is called upon to protect the Indians, whether under treaty stipulations or roaming at will over his wild hunting-grounds, from abuse by unscrupulous whites, while at the same time it must concede every reasonable privilege to the spirit of enterprise and adventure which is pouring its hardy population into the western country; when these things are considered, the task assigned to this bureau will not seem so light as it is sometimes thought.

– Dennis Cooley, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1866,  
quoted in Gary L. Roberts, “Dennis Nelson Cooley,” in  
Robert M. Kvasnicka and Herman J. Viola, eds.,  
*The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824–1977*  
(Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 105

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