



Rethinking the Red Scare: The Lusk Committee and New York's Crusade Against Radicalism, 1919-1923 (Studies in American Popular History and Culture)

Todd J. Pfannestiel

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Using New York as a lens, this book examines the Red Scare that gripped America between 1919 and 1923, and the pattern it established for future episodes of political repression. It also presents the first in-depth study of the Soviet Bureau, the unofficial Bolshevik embassy that attempted to establish commercial ties with American businessmen, as well as the development of the Rand School as one of the nation's first working class oriented schools. The Lusk Committee, established to investigate the threat posed by radicals, first utilised physical raids and arrests to harass the Soviet Bureau. As public criticism of their strong-arm tactics grew, the committee used ineffectual public hearings and judicial proceedings to tackle its next target, the Rand School. Eventually, the committee resorted to legislation to combat the greatest threat, public school teachers suspected of radical leanings. The shifting of targets and tactics reflected two forces at work: the effort to perfect methods of political repression, and changing perceptions of civil liberties. The question of which force weighed more heavily is explored throughout the book. Was America becoming a society genuinely tolerant of extreme political differences, or had effective methods of repression become so discrete that the appearance of genuine intolerance was attained?

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