

Shadow of the Racketeer



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出版者:

出版时间:2009-4

装帧:

isbn:9780252076664

"Shadow of the Racketeer: Scandal in Organized Labour" tells the story of organized crime's move into labour racketeering in the 1930s, focusing on a union corruption scandal involving payments from the largest Hollywood movie studios to the Chicago mob to ensure a pliant labour supply for their industry. The book also details the work of crusading journalist Westbrook Pegler, whose scorching investigative work dramatically exposed the mob connections of top labour leaders George Scalise and William Bioff and garnered Pegler the first Pulitzer Prize for reporting. From a behind-the-scenes perspective, David Witwer describes how Pegler and his publisher, the politically powerful Roy W. Howard, shaped the news coverage of this scandal in ways that obscured the corrupt ties between employers and the mob while emphasizing the perceived menace of union leaders empowered by New Deal legislation that had legitimized organized labour. Pegler, Howard, and the rest of the mainstream press pointedly ignored evidence of the active role that business leaders took in the corruption, which badly tarnished the newly reborn labour movement. Pegler's continuing campaign against labour corruption framed the issue in ways that set the stage for post-war political defeats, culminating with the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act, which greatly limited the power of labour unions in the United States.

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