



# **Department of Education Battle, 1918-1932: Public Schools, Catholic Schools, and the Social Order (Cushwa Studies in American Catholicism)**

*Douglas J Slawson*

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Between World War I and the Great Depression, progressive educational administrators at Teachers College of Columbia University joined hands with the National Education Association (NEA) to establish a federal department of education and a national system of schooling. This carefully researched book recounts their efforts and the resistance mounted by Catholics who feared that this reform movement would spell the end of parochial education. The efforts of the educational trust were supported by a number of organizations that fostered civic progressivism, including two organizations not usually associated with reform: the Southern Jurisdiction of Scottish Rite Masonry and the Ku Klux Klan. Both of these groups advocated a federal department of education, a national university, and compulsory public schooling. Although the NEA never went on record as favoring compulsory public education, its close association with the Southern Scottish Rite and its failure to distance itself from the KKK convinced Catholics that the NEA intended to use a department of education to drive parochial schools out of existence. the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC). Douglas J. Slawson's fascinating look at a relatively unexplored episode in American history recounts fourteen years of maneuvering and counter-maneuvering by the NEA and NCWC over attempts to establish a federal department of education and compulsory public schooling. This detailed study will appeal to historians, educators, and anyone interested in the history of federal participation in education, American society in the 1920s, or Catholic civic engagement.

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