

# Labor Market Politics and the Great War: The Department of Labor, the States, and the First U.S. Employment Service, 1907-1933

William J Breen



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The Department of Labor seized the opportunity provided by the chaotic labor market conditions during World War I to expand the US Employment Service (USES) and to establish control of the national labor market. That attempt provoked a reaction on the part of states that had created their own employment services and were suspicious of the administrative capacity of the USDES. A prolonged administrative and political struggle ensued, involving not only the Department of Labor and the states but a number of government departments and agencies and the major interest groups involved in the labor market. William J. Breen's Labor Market Politics and the Great War is the first detailed study of the way in which federalism influenced the development of government labor market policy in the early twentieth century. For those interested in the continuing debate over the unique development of the American State, it suggests one reason why that development diverged from the European model. It also suggests the crucial role of Washington bureaucrats in promoting a powerful centralized state.

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