

James Bartlett Edmonson and the Mid-Twentieth-Century Crusade against For-Profit Colleges: An Episode of Ignorance-Making in the United States.

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James Bartlett Edmonson and the Mid-Twentieth-Century Crusade against For-Profit Colleges: An Episode of Ignorance-Making in the United States

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Abstract

The nineteen-fifties—a decade of civil rights litigation, Cold War intrigue, and red scare McCarthyism—was also a period racked with controversies over for-profit colleges and universities (FPCUs) in the United States. This paper explores the work of James Bartlett Edmonson and his circle of mid-twentieth-century FPCU critics. Edmonson, a School of Education dean at the University of Michigan during the nineteen-fifties, became one of the most prominent voices against what he described as “shysters” and “sheepskinners” in proprietary higher education. His work exposing FPCU fraud, corruption, and predatory schemes at the national level won him allies at the National Education Association and the Federal Trade Commission. It also created powerful enemies among independent college associations, home study groups, and religiously affiliated institutions. This paper contributes to the literature by engaging with an underdeveloped episode in higher education history and by locating this case study within the emerging field of ignorance studies. Sources for this study were drawn from the James B. Edmonson Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan; Research Division Collection, National Education Association, Gelman Library, George Washington University; and published primary source documents in state and national periodicals.

Résumé

Les années 1950 – une décennie de litiges en matière de droits civils, d'intrigue de la Guerre froide, et de « peur rouge » maccarthyste – ont aussi été une période marquée par les controverses sur les collèges et les universités à but lucratif (FPCU) aux États-Unis. Cet article explore le travail de James Bartlett Edmonson et son cercle de critiques des FPCU au milieu du 20^e siècle. Doyen de l'École d'éducation de l'Université du Michigan dans les années 1950, Edmonson est devenu l'une des voix les plus importantes contre ce qu'il qualifiait de « shysters » et de « sheepskinners » dans l'éducation supérieure à but lucratif. Son travail révélant la fraude, la corruption et les procédés prédateurs des FPCU au niveau fédéral lui a permis de trouver des alliés au sein de la *National Education Association* et de la *Federal Trade Commission*. Il s'est également fait des ennemis puissants parmi les associations de collèges indépendants, les groupes d'éducation à domicile, et les établissements d'affiliation religieuse. Cet article contribue à la littérature en abordant un épisode méconnu de l'histoire de l'éducation supérieure et en situant cette étude de cas dans le champ émergent des

études de l'ignorance. Les sources de cette étude sont tirées des James B. Edmonson Papers de la Bentley Historical Library à l'Université du Michigan; de la Research Division Collection, National Education Association, de la Gelman Library à l'Université George Washington; de même que de sources primaires publiées dans des périodiques nationaux ou d'États fédérés.

Keywords

For-Profit Colleges and Universities; Privatization

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DCCUMENT RESUME, the stylistic game, as follows from the above, distinctively uses the subject of the power.

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