

March 8, 1967

Statement
of
FORMER NSA OFFICERS AND STAFF
on
NSA-CIA CONTROVERSY

We are outraged by our discovery that the United States National Student Association had been directed in part and financed in large measure by the Central Intelligence Agency throughout the last 15 years. We, who were active in NSA during these years, were not aware that any of NSA's funds came from the CIA, that its international programs were guided by the CIA, that selection of some officers and staff was influenced by the CIA, that programs were undertaken at the direction of the CIA, nor that information was often being transmitted by NSA officers and staff to the CIA. We object to having had an organizational commitment to the CIA forced upon us without our knowledge and consent or the consent of the representative bodies of NSA. There may be former officers and staff of the Association who believed that in working with the CIA they were acting responsibly in the highest interests of their nation. But they were hardly acting responsibly to their constituency and to the American tradition of free and independent voluntary institutions.

We do not doubt that there were some good things done in international affairs during the period when the CIA was shaping the destiny of the National Student Association, but the negative by-products--of false association, of friendships built for the purposes of informing the government, of misrepresentation to both the American and international student community--far outweigh the positive programs sanctioned by the CIA-NSA relationship. We believe that the NSA-CIA relationship, however explainable, was never defensible.

The issue is larger than the National Student Association. Every day a new disclosure reveals another CIA involvement in a supposedly independent institution in our society and abroad. The distrust emerging from these revelations cannot help but shake the faith of those whose idealism is untainted. It cannot help but shake confidence abroad in all American organizations with international programs.

The cause of this tragic situation goes beyond the CIA and those individuals in each of the organizations involved who maintained and in some cases profited by the relationship.

The tragedy of this situation is that neither public nor private institutions were willing and able to support legitimate activities at home and abroad. The tragedy is that there was not then and apparently is not now the political leadership to educate the public toward new paths of conduct. The tragedy was that our zeal to oppose a system that was not free overcame the basic necessity to protect the institutions in our country and abroad which were free. And the tragedy was that there was so little faith in democracy and the American people that a few felt called upon to decide for the majority what they and their institutions should do. Anti-communism is not a substitute for affirmative faith in the institutions of democracy. Covert action is not a substitute for creative public thought and work. Democratic institutions must not be built through undemocratic means.

The official reaction to these disclosures is either to support the actions

of the past or to sweep them under the carpet. The preliminary report of President Johnson's inquiry committee fails to deal with the important issues involved. We call for an impartial public investigation into the facts and ramifications of this affair.

--We believe further that the actions of the CIA must be sharply restricted. There is a legitimate place in any society for an intelligency operation that gathers information vital to the national defense. But the necessity for a limited intelligence operation does not imply the right to subvert organizations here or to tamper or attempt to control institutions in other societies. We believe that the powers of the CIA must be sharply and clearly limited and that the CIA must be placed under the effective scrutiny of legislative and executive authority.

--We believe that Congress should require full disclosure of all foundation financing. There is a role for foundations in our society. Often they may serve as an effective counterweight to government action; in other situations they may step in where government fears to tread. However, we firmly believe that all foundations must be subject to public disclosure laws so that the American people know where foundation funds come from and where they go.

--Most importantly, we believe in the need for strong voluntary institutions which are free from covert control--open in their purposes, honest in their approaches to individuals and the community, and separate from the manipulative tactics that have characterized the CIA affair. There is a need for a student union, for trade unions, for church groups and for civic, political and social organizations. We support those individuals like NSA Presidents Philip Sherburne and Eugene Groves who have sought to preserve the intrinsic worth of their institution while destroying the relationship that has historically corrupted it. We call upon all other organizations still involved to sever their secret relationships with government agencies. If this is not done we urge the membership of these institutions to build new organizations so that their voice may be heard forthrightly and honestly.

--The challenge to our leadership and to ourselves is to provide the necessary backing to establish and continue the open institutions of a free and honest society. We urge full Congressional study of public and private financing of voluntary institutions.

We joined NSA originally because we believed that a better society and a more enlightened and peaceful world could be created through the democratic process. The events of the last weeks have called that very process into question. The people of the United States and their elected leaders have it within their power to see to it that this situation will never happen again. They have the ability to prevent the created myths of the past from blinding us to our responsibility for present and future. And they have the responsibility to exercise the vigilance to insure that their country and their democratic institutions become and remain democratic. Our hope and our efforts will be directed to the achievement of this task.

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