

The United States National Student Association:
Democracy, Activism, and the Idea of the Student, 1947-1978

by

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Abstract

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The United States National Student Association (USNSA, or simply NSA), America's dominant national union of students from 1947 to 1978, was the locus of an extraordinary variety of student organizing over the course of its 31-year history. A confederation of student governments, NSA claimed an active membership of hundreds of colleges and universities, trained and informed tens of thousands of student leaders, and served as both a resource and a foil to the other student organizations of its era.

NSA's annual meeting, the National Student Congress, drew participation from a broad cross-section of American campuses. It was an incubator of theories and strategies of student empowerment that shaped the university, and a site of debate, consciousness-raising, information exchange, and organizing work.

NSA maintained significant relationships with a wide variety of other student activist groups, including Students for a Democratic Society, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Young Americans for Freedom, and the National Student Lobby, the last of which it merged with in 1978 to create the United States Student

Association. From the early 1950s to the mid-1960s, its top leadership was also engaged in a clandestine relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency.

Through more than three decades NSA provided one of the few sources of long-term continuity in American student activism, and its persistent emphasis on the student's role in the university and the larger society enabled it to retain its campus focus, and its student base, as other student organizations drifted, often to their detriment. NSA grew from the premise that a student organization could be both activist and representative of the nation's students. This premise was the source of much of its strength. It was also, however, a source of great internal strain, and a drag on some of the Association's grander ambitions. While NSA's grounding in student government lent it a stability, longevity, and ideological diversity that is unparalleled among American student organizations, it also often fostered a timidity and a bureaucratic mindset that often constrained it from taking bold action at moments of upheaval and opportunity.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation is the first attempt ever to chronicle the history of the National Student Association from its founding meetings in the aftermath of the Second World War to its transformation into the United States Student Association three decades later. My research, conducted in the two hundred boxes of material at the Wisconsin Historical Society and in nearly a dozen other archives, has often taken me into unfamiliar territory, and the sheer scope of NSA's story has made the project all the more challenging.

That project is by no means completed. My work on the history of NSA is ongoing. But it would not have progressed to the point it has without the assistance and support of an incredible group of people.

Jerry Markowitz, my advisor, encouraged me to conceptualize the dissertation ambitiously, and helped me immeasurably in managing the consequences of that decision. His insights and suggestions on matters large and small have been invaluable. Josh Freeman read the entire manuscript twice, offering thoughtful and challenging input each time. His responses continue to shape my thinking on this subject, and I look forward to incorporating his suggestions more fully as I move forward.

As both a gifted historian of this period and an NSA alumna, Blanche Cook has from the start of my work offered unparalleled insights into the Association and its

milieu. Michael Foley and Richard Gid Powers have provided astute commentary from their own distinct perspectives.

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My writings on American student history have appeared in the anthologies *Student Protest: The Sixties and After* and *American Students Organize: Founding the National Student Association After World War II*, and in the journal *Peace and Change*, and I thank the editors of each for working with me so thoughtfully. I have also benefited from suggestions and questions posed at a long list of scholarly conferences, and from the assistance of librarians and archivists across the country, most notably at the Wisconsin Historical Society.

I chose not to conduct oral history interviewing among NSA alumni for this dissertation, but I have talked informally about the Association with a number of alumni over the years. Connie Curry and Eugene Schwartz have been particularly generous with their time, and Curry and Donald Hoffman have shared archival materials from their personal collections.

Several NSA alumni have read some or all of this manuscript. I am grateful to William Dentzer, Francis Fisher, Don Hoffman, Gene Schwartz, and Clifton Wharton for their perceptive suggestions. Others who have read and commented on this work at various stages of its development include Adina Back, Jonathan Cohen, Margaret Duffin, Phil Edwards, Megan Elias, Christine Fecko, Joan Johnston, Steve Johnston, Ilona Nabutovskaya, Becky Rosenfeld, Kim Scheinberg, and Terri Senft, and I thank them all for their insights and encouragement.

My understanding of NSA history has been shaped by my own experiences as a student activist at the State University of New York at Binghamton, in the Student Association of the State University of New York, and in the United States Student Association. I am indebted to the students I worked with in those venues, and to the students I have worked with since, for the ways in which they have influenced my understanding of the university and of movements for social change.

I hesitate to even begin to list the friends and colleagues who have shaped my thoughts on this subject over the years, since any such list will necessarily be incomplete. But in addition to all those mentioned above, I do want to mention Abby Cohen, Tchiyuka Cornelius, Este Griffith, Kevin Keith, Kerry Ann King, Larry Leveen, Maggie Newman, Madeleine Page, and Lee Rutledge. I am also tremendously grateful for the support I have received from my parents, Joan and Steve, and the friendship of my sisters, Tyra and Lindsay.

Finally, this manuscript is for Casey and Elvis, without whom it would have been completed more quickly, and for Christine, without whom it wouldn't have happened at all. I love you guys.

Author's Note

This dissertation is part of an ongoing scholarly project. I am eager to hear from scholars, NSA, NSL, and USSA alumni, contemporary student activists, and others who may have questions, comments, or suggestions. I can be reached by email at angus@fecko.com, and if you're interested in keeping tabs on my work going forward, you can find out more at www.angusjohnston.com.

“Student government is a broken reed. If actual, it is capricious, impulsive, and unreliable; if not, it is a subterfuge and pretense.”

— Andrew S. Draper, President of the University of Illinois, 1904.

“This article is being written with the belief that our experiences can be absorbed and used, and, what is most important, the Movement can go on to higher levels, evading old mistakes in order to commit the mistakes of the future.”

— Mark Rudd, President of Columbia University Students for a Democratic Society, 1969.

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Introduction

When acquaintances learn that I am a historian of American campus activism, their first question is always the same: “Why isn’t there more student activism today?”

The question is not a surprising one. Today’s student activism is all but invisible to the casual observer. To many in the media, sympathetic observers, and even some activists themselves, student activism is not student activism if it is not self-consciously radical, if it is not concerned with large social and political questions, or if it does not otherwise follow the long-established narratives of the most culturally prominent activist movements of the 1960s.

But nearly half a century has passed since the student movements of the sixties were born, and that half-century has seen a tremendous outpouring of campus activism that does not neatly fit such narratives. At least as important, it has seen a wealth of scholarship on the activism that transpired before, during, and after the 1960s that calls many of our notions about that decade into question. This dissertation, a history of the United States National Student Association, is a continuation and extension of that work.

America’s best-known student activist organizations — the American Student Union of the 1930s and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Students for a Democratic Society of the 1960s — all burned bright and guttered quickly. The

National Student Association, in contrast, persisted for thirty-one years from its founding in 1947 to its 1978 merger with the National Student Lobby. It reached tens of thousands of student leaders during the course of those three decades, and at its 1960s apex it had a paid staff of more than fifty and offices in three American cities.

NSA's history offers new insight into student identity in postwar America, and into the interplay of forces that shaped the student role on the American campus. In spite of its longevity, its reach, and its ambition, however, the history of NSA has to date been largely absent from the history of American student activism.

The United States National Student Association was established in 1947, as a result of preparatory work begun the previous year. The conveners of the early NSA organizing meetings were in many cases representatives of national student organizations, but the meetings themselves were dominated by student government leaders who moved forcefully to establish the Association upon a membership composed exclusively of student governments. In the three decades that followed, NSA claimed an active membership of hundreds of colleges and universities, and drew hundreds of students to its annual National Student Congress in each of those thirty-one years.

NSA was understaffed but vigorous in its first years. As the excitement that had animated its founding faded, however, financial crises and leadership disputes, along with an increasing conservatism in the national political climate, left its ambitions reduced. By the early 1950s, NSA's international faction had established an ongoing clandestine financial and operational relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency, and in the years that followed, a growing preoccupation with international affairs distorted the Association's priorities and sapped its vitality.

The CIA relationship brought financial stability to NSA, however, and when the late 1950s brought the first stirrings of a new activism to the nation's campuses, NSA began to re-engage with its membership and with some of the social causes that had animated it in its earliest years. In these years the Association, and particularly its Congresses and its Atlanta civil rights office, provided material support, ideological sustenance, and untold numbers of new recruits to the nation's student activist organizations and movements.

In the early 1960s NSA's top leadership drew back from a full engagement with the nation's student activists, but as an activist sensibility grew more ubiquitous on the nation's campuses, the Association's diffidence — and the CIA relationship — became impossible to sustain. NSA developed a new responsiveness to its membership, even as it maintained an organizational stability that allowed it to weather the convulsions of the decade's end.

NSA was confronted with a series of financial setbacks in the early 1970s, most notably an Internal Revenue Service investigation that stripped it of its non-profit tax status and rendered it ineligible for the various foundation grants on which it had come to rely. It drifted and grew listless in the years that followed, until membership-initiated reform brought on a renewal that culminated in a 1978 merger with the National Student Lobby and the creation of the United States Student Association.

As USSA, the Association established itself as a major lobbying presence in Washington DC, adapted itself to dramatic changes in the demographics of American higher education, and created a funding model under which, for the first time, the bulk of its revenue was derived from its membership rather than outside sources.

Democracy, Ideology, and Activism in NSA

Breadth was always a hallmark of the Association, which sought to represent American students in all their ideological, geographical, and demographic diversity. Its politics were generally liberal – to the left, but not too far to the left, of student opinion nationally. When *Newsweek* magazine reported in 1969 that the Association encompassed a membership that extended “to the right of Bill Buckley and to the left of Tom Hayden,” it could have been describing NSA at any point in its history.¹

The Association was intermittently, and sometimes intensely, engaged with political questions, but it never established itself as a direct political force in any sustained way. In spite of this, however, NSA did see itself as advancing an ideological mission, as it had been established on the premise that there was something distinctive and unifying about student identity. There was, NSA believed, something inherent in the idea of the student that would make it possible for students of varying ideological perspectives to come together in support of a shared agenda for political, social, and educational reform, and the Association took the project of articulating and advancing such an agenda seriously.

Throughout its history, NSA was tied to the campus by its student government base, and was unusually concerned with the student’s role in the university and the place of the student in the larger society. This orientation would grant NSA a measure of democratic legitimacy, insulate it (though imperfectly) from the depredations of external factions, and serve as a tether connecting its leadership to its grass-roots.

¹ “Breaking the Rules,” *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.

In a 1946 article in *The Nation*, British political scientist Harold Laski characterized student organizations as falling into two broad categories.² They were either service-oriented groups, which existed to “make it easier for students to get the best out of their training,” he said, or political groups, created to “promote study of specific political doctrine” and to serve as adjuncts to off-campus political movements.³ As a description of American student organizations then in existence, Laski’s formulation was in its broad outlines accurate. But NSA’s founders rejected such distinctions — they believed that student identity itself might be harnessed in the aid of an effort to achieve social change, and envisioned NSA as simultaneously student-centered and activist.⁴ They saw students — young, committed, improvisational — as a potentially transformative societal force, and they sought to build an Association that would, as NSA leader Mildred Kiefer wrote, “bring to totally self-centered student bodies the realization that they are a part of the student movement.”⁵ NSA’s “practical programs,” officer Helen Jean Rogers wrote in 1949, were “the concrete expression of our faith in [the Association’s] principles,” and it would be through concrete action that NSA would “be able to hit the campus with the ideas that brought NSA into being.”⁶

² Harold Laski, “Students and Politics,” *The Nation*, December 21, 1946. Laski had then just finished a brief stint as chair of the British Labour Party.

³ If a conservative student organization, he wrote, should “attack Russia, or regret the policy of the Socialist government of Great Britain, or insist that nothing be done to expand the scope of the TVA ... they are speaking not as students but as Conservatives.”

⁴ As a newspaper editorial put it in September 1947, their image was of an organization that was “non-sectarian, but militant in support of student welfare everywhere.” [Students Emerge From Rah-Rah, Prom King Spirit; Welcome To Madison,” editorial, *Madison Capital Times*, September 10, 1947.]

⁵ Mildred Kiefer, “What the N.S.A. Can Do,” *The Student Progressive*, September 1947. The term “the student movement” here implied an agenda more ambitious than a mere service program, yet one that was inalienable from the campus and student milieu.

⁶ Helen Jean Rogers, “Report on Administration and Finances,” [April 1949], United States National Student Association Papers, Wisconsin Historical Society, 1970 accession (hereafter cited as NSA Papers), Box 16.

There was little consensus in the late 1940s about what NSA's fundamental principles were, or what concrete action it should be taking. The Association was in its nature mutable, and it developed less as the realization of a single grand vision than as the product of compromise, accommodation, and contingency. But it was animated by an idealistic, democratic, activist energy, an energy that helped create the space in which it would demonstrate the impoverishment of Laski's taxonomy.

Where most previous student organizations had claimed relatively narrow arenas of action, the Association's ambitions were sprawling and diverse — NSA was never content to be just one thing, or just half a dozen. It produced a steady stream of publications. It sponsored student film festivals, art exhibits, and sports teams. It mounted regional and national workshops and meetings, and conferences for student government presidents, student newspaper editors, and deans of students. It conducted educational campaigns, lobbying work, fundraising drives, and organizing trainings. It ran a travel bureau, a life insurance program, and book co-operatives. It drummed up American support for the Hungarian uprising in 1956, the Southern sit-ins of 1960, and the Kent State protestors in 1970.

NSA grew from the premise that a student organization could be both representative of the nation's students and activist — that, indeed, a representative student organization might *necessarily* be activist. This premise was the source of much of its strength. It was also, however, a source of great internal strain, and a drag on some of the Association's grander ambitions. When NSA's impulses toward representativity and its impulses toward activism were aligned, it could be a potent force on the campus and in the nation as a whole. When they were in tension, the Association faced some of its most serious crises.

NSA and the Problem of Democracy

From its founding in 1947, NSA was deeply concerned with questions of democracy — internal democracy, campus democracy, and political democracy at home and abroad. It crafted a democratic organizational structure that was intended to protect it from usurpation by factions of any stripe. It sought to establish student government as the legitimate, democratic representative of students on the American campus, and to empower student governments to play an active role in the governance of a more democratic university. It sought to democratize American higher education still further by breaking down walls of exclusion, particularly walls of racial prejudice, and by promoting civil liberties on the campus. And it declared itself a champion of democracy worldwide — particularly in the Soviet bloc and the developing world.

But in every arena, NSA's democratic vision was confounded by its own limitations and by the relationships in which it was enmeshed. Its claims to internal democracy were undermined by its own bureaucratization, by the questionable representativity of its member student governments, and, from the early 1950s until the mid-1960s, by its secret relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency. Its role as a champion of democratic, vibrant student government was complicated by the quiescence of student government as it existed, and by its often attenuated ties to the campus. And its advocacy of political democracy at home and abroad was constrained by membership disagreements over the proper scope of its work and by the influence of its clandestine partners in the CIA.

Internal Democracy

NSA saw itself as the voice of American students. It was founded as a confederation of democratically-elected student governments, drawing its credibility — and its coherence — from that base. The Association was from the start the subject of intense attention from external forces, particularly Catholic, communist, and liberal groups, but in one of its first official acts it barred all organizations other than student governments from membership. Only the students of NSA's member campuses would select students to represent them within NSA, and only those representatives would determine the structure, the agenda, and the leadership of the new group.

For NSA's founders, it was crucial that the Association be not just an organization *for* students, but an organization controlled *by* students in service of a student-oriented mission. To them, internal democracy was defined simply — fidelity to the wishes of the membership, as expressed in votes cast by the members' democratically-chosen representatives.⁷ In order to ensure that NSA would be responsive to its membership, the Association's founders put strong power in the hands of their annual membership meeting, the Congress. They created a geographically-based National Executive Committee to ensure that the Association's regional diversity would be reflected in its leadership's decisions. They imposed stringent term limits and eligibility requirements on their officers, and restricted the extent to which NSA could accept external funding.

Such safeguards, however, were undermined from early on by one faction within NSA — a contingent of internationally-minded students, alumni, and others associated with the Harvard International Affairs Committee (HIACOM) and with NSA's

⁷ The Association did at times claim to speak for American students as a group, but it never expended much energy in attempting to determine the mass of students' views on any particular issue.

International Commission in Cambridge. The International Commission was populated in large part by idealistic, committed students, but it was from the start an entity unto itself within NSA, and its power was enhanced over time by both the membership's lack of interest in international issues and the Commission's geographical isolation from the Association's headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin.

Elements within the International Commission coordinated closely with the federal government in the late 1940s, working in partnership with HIACOM and covert funders on a variety of projects. By the early 1950s the Commission had established an intimate clandestine relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency, and the NSA-CIA relationship would have strong effects on the Association until it was terminated in 1967. Domestic officers and staff were almost without exception unaware of the relationship, and most of the Association's work in the 1950s and 1960s was conducted outside of the direct influence of the Agency, but CIA funding and CIA influence formed a part of the underlying context of all of the Association's actions in those years.

During the CIA era, the vast bulk of the Association's funding for international projects, and an increasing portion of its domestic budget, came from the Agency, which held substantial sway over which programs would be supported and — at least with regard to international programs — for what ends. Students and alumni with Agency ties had substantial impact on the proceedings at the Association's Congresses — intervening in arguments over legislation and exerting influence over elections for the Association's presidency and international affairs vice presidency. Put bluntly, the Association served two constituencies during that time — its membership and the Agency — and though the two could often be served simultaneously without contradiction, eventually the divergence between the two sets of imperatives grew stark.

The Agency was by no means, moreover, the only counterweight to membership influence over the Association — NSA’s increasing size and bureaucratization in the 1950s and 1960s rendered it structurally resistant to dramatic transformation. At the same time, its base in student governments, many of which were far from radical, hindered the pace of change as well. Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), built on fluid and largely self-selected membership bases, would possess a dynamism in their heyday that NSA never approached. But that dynamism, that responsiveness to the mood of the moment, left each with little stability, little organizational continuity, and virtually no institutional memory. At the close of the 1960s, while SDS and SNCC were torn apart, NSA — continuing to evolve, but evolving more slowly — found a way to persist.

The collapse of the CIA relationship and the increasing radicalization of American student government served to re-invigorate NSA’s democratic roots in the late 1960s. At the dawn of the 1970s changes in the demographics of American higher education and NSA itself brought the concerns of students at community colleges and other non-elite institutions, as well as those of economically disadvantaged and other non-traditional students, increasingly to the fore within the Association, transforming NSA’s sense of its own mission and that of American higher education.⁸

NSA thrived financially in the immediate aftermath of the dissolution of the CIA relationship, but the early 1970s brought severely straitened circumstances. It struggled, and often failed, to remain responsive to its membership in this period, and by mid-decade its connection to the campus was strained to the point of near-collapse. A new

⁸ When NSA was founded, there were twice as many college students under the age of 18 than over the age of 30. By the time it merged with NSL to create USSA, the ratio was eight to one in the other direction. [Deirdre A. Gaquin, Katherine A. DeBrandt, and Mary Meghan Ryan, *Educational Statistics of the United States* (Lanham, MD: Bernam, 2003).]

form of student activism was taking shape on the campus and state level by this time, however, and the mid-1970s saw the emergence of new state student associations that would bring about a grass-roots reinvigoration of NSA and its re-emergence as the United States Student Association in 1978.

Democracy on the Campus

For NSA, the campus was properly a place where democratic values held sway. The practical implications of this stance would evolve over time, but from the Association's founding, it found expression in two basic principles — that students were entitled to respect for their civil liberties in the campus environment, and that democratically constituted student governments deserved the authority to act and advocate on students' behalf. These principles were promulgated by NSA through its Student Bill of Rights and a variety of other publications, and the Association sought to advance them through programming, training, and occasional direct intervention into campus disputes.

In spite of the centrality of NSA's campus base to its sense of identity, however, its relationship with the individual student was not at all an intimate one. It conducted almost all of its campus work through student government, and student governments were generally peripheral to the lives of most students. On many campuses, participation in student government elections was low, and interaction between student governments and ordinary students lesser still. Even where student governments were working effectively on students' behalf — mounting programming, overseeing clubs and

organizations, setting and implementing student regulations, or advocating with faculty and administration — the bulk of their work was invisible to the average student.⁹

Relations between student governments and NSA were generally closer. The Association's Congresses were large, diverse, and frequently intense affairs, and student government leaders who participated in them often bonded strongly to the Association as a result. NSA's publications, and its Student Government Information Service, which made materials and information from an NSA archive available to student leaders, were valued resources to those who took advantage of them. The Association created model programs in various areas, and its officers and staff often made campus visits, and those efforts provided constructive assistance to student governments as well. Finally, regional and national conferences provided information and skills training to a significant fraction of the membership.

Still, there were member campuses that made use of none of these resources, and campuses that, for whatever reason, found little of value in the ones they did avail themselves of. And even where one or several student government officers were putting NSA's resources to effective use on the campus, that engagement might have little visible impact on even the remainder of the student government, and far less on the student body as a whole. When students "who know nothing about educational reform before NSA go back to their campuses and start revolutions," national affairs vice president Ed Schwartz noted in 1967, "they often don't say they got it from us."¹⁰

Throughout NSA's history, then, its direct impact on the campus grass-roots was attenuated, episodic, and difficult to quantify. The attempt to rectify this situation was an

⁹ Although I address campus issues to an extent in the pages that follow, it should be noted that this dissertation is a study of NSA as a national organization, not a study of its several hundred member student governments.

¹⁰ Larry May, "From Whence Cometh the Bread, Boys??" *USNSA Congress News*, [August 16, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

ongoing preoccupation within NSA. Debates over structural reform consumed tremendous time and energy in Congresses and in the national office, with a central recurring concern being the decades-long attempt to implement an effective field organizing operation within the Association.

Some of these efforts were more productive than others — a series of incremental reforms to the Congress structure, for instance, gradually made that gathering more useful to the membership. The gradual integration of student government presidents into the work of NSA also did much to strengthen the bonds between the Association and the campus. But often structural fiddling had little effect — or a negative effect — on NSA-campus relations, and it was not until student governments themselves began to change in the mid-1960s that the Association found a true opening toward a closer relationship to American students.

American student governments in the 1950s were often moderate, even conservative, by the standards of student opinion on their campuses, and it was common for fraternities or other cliques to hold control. Student governments often exercised minimal power, and wielded what little power they did have capriciously.

As a new wave of student activism began to build in the late 1950s and early 1960s, though, a number of major American campuses saw activists create their own student government parties, organizing toward the possibility of overturning entrenched incumbents. Some of these activist parties had real success in winning campus elections, and a significant number of the early leaders of Students for a Democratic Society came into national organizing through that route — often by way of NSA.

But the project of fostering student activism through student government stalled within a few years. On some campuses entrenched cliques proved more resilient than

expected, or the student body more complaisant. On others, activists won control of student government, only to discover that such victories were not easily converted into student empowerment — that the student governments they'd taken the reins of were too weak, or too subject to administration interference, or too peripheral to the life of the student body. The students who were drawn to SDS after about 1964 — in the period of its most rapid growth — were for the most part uninterested in student government work, and uninterested, as a consequence, in NSA.

But as student activism grew more pervasive on the American campus, and the universities' ideological center shifted to the left, wresting control of student government became a less labor-intensive proposition. No longer did the campus's most politically savvy activists have to spend months or years building up electoral strength and plotting tactics. Now it seemed on many campuses that any candidate who self-identified as a student activist would find a strong constituency — perhaps even a winning majority — among students with little direct connection to any organized activist project. Suddenly it was more fun to be in the movement than not in the movement, and a new breed of *sui generis* activists began to appear at NSA Congresses.

This campus shift transformed NSA. The new breed of student government leaders overran NSA, transforming its platform and programmatic offerings. Political maneuvering at the Congress became more intense, and the officers and staff came under increasing scrutiny. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the shift doomed the CIA relationship.

Activists had won NSA's national affairs vice presidency a few times in the early 1960s, but the presidency had always gone to more moderate student government liberals — clean-cut, reasonable young men who could, through vetting, grooming, and basic predisposition, be counted upon to go along with the CIA relationship. Such men

may have been promoted as candidates by officers and alumni who were working with the Agency, but they were also representative of the Association's membership — they would not have been able to win election if they had not been. It was possible for the International Commission to install a little-known figure in the international affairs vice presidency, and they did just that on a number of occasions, but the membership's sense of its own democratic prerogatives was too strong to allow a similar maneuver to succeed in a presidential election.

By the mid-1960s, however, clean-cut, moderate young men were growing increasingly marginal within the Association's membership. The NSA Liberal Caucus, founded several years earlier as a minority faction, was by now the driving force at the Congress, and the Caucus's own radical wing was growing ever more restive. By 1965 it would have been extraordinary to find a pro-CIA candidate within the Liberal Caucus leadership, and virtually impossible to install a president who could not command Liberal Caucus support. And so it was essentially inevitable that the Association would see the election of a president who would, as Philip Sherburne did after his 1965 victory, begin the process of dismantling the CIA relationship.

NSA's ties to the CIA were thus all but eliminated by the time they were revealed in 1967, and the furor that greeted their revelation strengthened the membership's democratic impulses still further. The delegates to the 1967 Congress revelled in their freedom, and the Association explored uncharted territory in its programmatic and policy positions that year and in the years that followed. At the same time, the Association's new ideology of "Student Power" offered a vigorous rationale for an increased student role in university governance — and an increased role, specifically, for student government. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, NSA's vision of the student's role on campus and in society would flourish.

Student governments across America grew dramatically stronger in this period, as administrators ceded new authority in response to protests, demonstrations, court cases and new laws. (A significant factor was the 1971 ratification of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment, which gave 18-to-20 year olds the vote and made college students an electorally significant population for the first time in history.) Students gained seats on faculty senates and boards of trustees, won greater control over regulations and activity fee budgets, and even asserted a right to participate in employment and curricular decisions. This wave of victories represented a manifestation of NSA's ideals on the campus, and it was supported by the Association intellectual and organizing work.

The growth in student power on campus also led to the creation of an unprecedented new form of student organizing that would ultimately help to resurrect — and subsequently transform — NSA. As students gained control over their activity fees, won judicial and legislative victories on students' rights questions, and exercised their newfound electoral power, they began to form new state and regional student organizations, independent groups that aimed to take a leading role in lobbying, organizing, and university governance. These state student associations (SSAs) soon emerged as the long-absent link in the chain of democracy that connected NSA to the campus — by bridging the gap between the student government and the national student organization, the SSAs dramatically enhanced communication, effectiveness, and accountability at all levels of the Association.

Democracy, Race, and Gender

NSA had a complex, shifting, and multiple relationship to the struggle for racial equality in the United States. The Association was always internally racially liberal — its second president, Ted Harris, was African American — and it quickly crafted a fairly strong anti-discrimination platform. Anti-racism was, for many of the Association's founding members, an integral part of the democratic project. Several early officers engaged the Association as a force in anti-discrimination organizing, though no lasting projects emerged from their efforts.

In the early and middle 1950s anti-racism grew to be a more central component of the Association's rhetorical self-presentation, but it simultaneously slipped to near irrelevance in NSA's substantive agenda. To the leadership of the International Commission, then in the ascendancy, racial discrimination was a central front in the ideological Cold War. The need to present the Association as a vigorous opponent of racial discrimination was acute, particularly as the International Commission's attention turned to the struggle to win over student leaders in the developing world — to students outside the United States, democracy and racial equality were inextricably linked. It was of little use abroad, though, for the Association to actually be involved in civil rights organizing at home, and such substantive work carried with it a risk of alienating NSA's more conservative members. And so for a time in the 1950s NSA's most notable work on civil rights took the form of the printing of expensive pro-civil rights literature in a variety of languages for exclusive distribution overseas.

In 1958, however, during the presidency of liberal Texan Ray Farabee, the Association re-entered the arena of substantive anti-discrimination work. Its Southern Student Human Relations Project (SSHHP) operated an annual summer civil rights

seminar for student leaders from across the South, and in late 1959 it opened a permanent office in Atlanta. This office would be intimately involved with the civil rights organizing of the early 1960s, even as the Association as a whole drew back from a full embrace of the movement.

The SSHRP's interracial civil rights organizing model had run its course by the mid-1960s, and in the years that followed NSA confronted new challenges — embracing Black Power, sponsoring a new breakaway national black student organization, and eventually mandating affirmative action in its own Congress delegations.

Gender equality was never the priority for NSA that racial equality was. American student government at mid-century — and for a long time after — was in the main hypervocal, hypercompetitive, and male, and neither the ascension of women to positions of student government leadership on co-ed campuses during the Second World War nor the presence of a substantial minority of women's colleges among NSA's members did much to change that dynamic within the Association. Women were rarely elected to NSA national office other than in secretarial and part-time positions — the Association did not elect its first female president until 1971, and its only female international affairs vice president was the result of the sole CIA-era election in which the International Commission's designated candidate was upset.

There was often division in NSA in the 1940s about how strong a position to take in support of racial equality, but such disagreements were expressed in the context of overwhelming support for basic principles of racial equality and awareness of the importance of a vigorous stance against racial discrimination to NSA's image on the national and international stage. When the question of gender equality was raised emphatically within NSA for the first time twenty years later, feminism was denigrated, ridiculed, and obstructed in ways that anti-racism never had been.

Political Democracy at Home and Abroad

From NSA's earliest days it was embroiled in an ongoing struggle over the extent to which it would concern itself with the world beyond the campus. Often this struggle was fought in the context of the precept — expressed in shorthand within the Association as “the student as student” — that NSA should only address itself to those issues that students faced in their capacity as students. This concept was a contentious one within NSA — it faced opposition both from students who thought NSA should be engaged with “non-student” issues and from those who felt that such engagement was itself intrinsically part of the student's role. But the view that NSA should confine itself somehow to “student issues,” however defined, was frequently an influential one in the Association's deliberations.

Further complicating the question of NSA's proper stance on domestic political questions was the Association's long-unresolved tax status. Because NSA was initially organized as a non-profit, tax-exempt entity, it was subject to legal restrictions on how much and under what circumstances it could properly seek to influence the government. The contours of these restrictions remained murky, however, and the question of NSA's tax status was not definitively resolved until the mid-1970s. Until then, the ambiguity of the Association's position made it virtually impossible for NSA to mount any sustained campaign of lobbying or similar activity, even on issues — such as government scholarships and loans — that clearly fell within even the most restrictive characterizations of its “student as student” purview.

As a result, NSA took little concrete action on political questions in its first two decades, even within the educational sphere. It moved tentatively on questions of economic access to higher education, for instance, and did not endorse lowering the voting age to 18 until the mid-1960s. NSA was never at the vanguard of any off-campus political movement, and its direct significance in American political history is largely as a case study — in inclusionist anti-communism, in white liberal attitudes toward racial segregation, in the operation of organizations with clandestine links to the CIA.

NSA had a political significance beyond its own political agitation, however, not least as the object of political agitation by others. For much of its existence, it was the largest student organization in the country, and it was always the most ideologically diverse of the major national student groups. Its annual Congresses presented other organizations and individuals with unparalleled opportunities for recruitment and networking. Catholics, liberals, and Communists came to NSA in the 1940s, seeking to influence the new Association but also to build their own movements. Many of the students who founded SDS first encountered each other in NSA, and the Association introduced student leaders from outside the South to the civil rights organizing of the 1960s. The Dump Johnson movement, which organized successfully to oust a sitting president, was launched at NSA's 1967 Congress, and the Association helped to bring feminists, gay and lesbian students, and students of color together in national campus networks in the 1970s. The rise of state student associations took place in the shadow of NSA, and as such organizations gained strength within the Association their own ambition grew commensurately. As I will explore in the chapters that follow and discuss in detail in this dissertation's conclusion, this infrastructural role lies at the very heart of the Association's significance.

The Association's overseas work lies beyond the scope of this dissertation, but any assessment of the salience of democratic principles within NSA would be incomplete without a discussion of the International Commission. The student members of the Commission saw their work as advancing the cause of democracy and improving the lives of students across the globe, and as helping to create democratic alternatives to Soviet domination in the international sphere. Their critics within NSA bemoaned their "cloak-and-dagger" tactics, and once the CIA's role in the Commission was revealed external detractors would condemn the relationship's anti-democratic character in the strongest terms. But unlike many recipients of the CIA's largesse — and, indeed, many other American student organizations — NSA always retained a commitment to formal organizational democracy.

NSA has sometimes been accused of being a CIA front in these years. It was not. Between 1952 and 1967, as before and after, the Association conducted large amounts of work that were neither dependent on, nor directed by, the Agency. Whatever betrayals of democratic principle took place within the Association, its members still gathered every summer to draft a platform, elect officers, and indeed determine whether the organization would continue and in what form. The International Commission's position in NSA was maintained as much through suasion as through subterfuge, and if the power politics, gamesmanship, and deception that characterized the Congress represented a deviation from democratic ideals, in so doing it schooled NSA's members to the realities of political combat. The Association may, as Tom Hayden charged, have taught the students who were involved in it about "bloc voting, hustling people, campaigning,

becoming a monster,” but the monsters it created included a staggering list of eminent Americans — politicians, judges, business leaders ... and activists like Hayden himself.¹¹

The Historiography of American Student Activism

Although the historiography of American student activism is vigorous and growing, the field is a relatively new one. There was virtually no scholarly study of the topic until the late 1960s, and much of the work conducted in that first wave of research was written by individuals who had been active participants in, and profoundly shaped by, the movements of that decade. This intimacy between scholar and studied lent a richness and subtlety to the resultant writing, but it also tended to breed a narrowness of focus, an imbalance in emphasis, and a degree of presentism in the treatment of historical subjects. As I consider the literature that has emerged since then, I see this dissertation as engaging with three major projects with which the field is still coming to terms.

First, I see the study of NSA as a mechanism by which to focus our understanding of student activism more sharply on the campus and the student. Campus organizing around campus issues has often been given short shrift in histories of American student activism, not least because it has seldom been the focus of the most prominent national activist groups. Organizations like SDS and SNCC were tied only loosely to the campus, and over time their agendas, and their members, grew ever more distant from the educational milieu. But the question of the student’s relationship to the university, and

¹¹ Hayden quoted in James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), 49. Hayden made those remarks in 1972, four years before he first ran for public office.

that of the university's role in society, were always crucial ones for NSA and for the many campus activists in its circle.

A second project is the reconceptualization of American student activism as something more than solely a radical phenomenon. Radical student activists have always taken center stage in both scholarly and pop culture narratives of student protest. The first wave of histories of 1960s student activism, written by radical participant-observers — and in a few cases by critics of such radicals — established a template that has proven resilient. By now, though, there is a growing awareness that the radical activists of the 1960s, and those of other decades even more so, operated in the context of a campus student community that was in large part liberal or non-ideological. Many radical activists began as liberals or as reformers with no explicit ideological commitments, and much student organizing was conducted under the umbrella of coalitions with little ideological coherence. One cannot fully comprehend American campus radicalism without devoting careful attention to those complex networks of influence.¹²

A third project, closely related to the first two, is the ongoing reperiodization of American student activism. Until recently, the overwhelming focus of histories of American student activism — and a disproportionate emphasis in histories of American college students generally — was the 1960s.¹³ Gradually this has been changing as scholars have produced important work on other eras and topics, most notably the

¹² Conservative student activism has generally stood apart from the other ideological strains in American student organizing, and it has often been more beholden to “adult” political movements than its counterparts to the left. There have been moments when conservative student activists were a significant force in on-campus and off-campus struggles, however, and such activists are beginning to find their historians. See, for instance, John Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers, 1997).

¹³ This disproportionate focus on the 1960s can be seen clearly in even such recent works as Mark Edelman Boren's *Student Resistance: A History of the Unruly Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2001), which, though it takes as its subject student organizing from the Middle Ages to the present, devotes three of its twelve chapters to the 1960s, and two of those to 1968-1969.

radical student movements of the 1930s and the role that the campus struggles of the late 1950s played in shaping and inflecting the activism of the decade that followed. A panoramic view of the course of American student activism in the 20th century is beginning to emerge, and NSA's unique position as an activist organization of the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s renders it an important part of that picture.¹⁴

These three projects — foregrounding campus-centered student activism, exploring the ideological diversity of student movements, and reperiodizing student activist history — are all intertwined, perhaps nowhere more so than in the study of the student activism of the 1970s. Much of the organizing that dissipated after 1970 — anti-war activism and domestic “revolution” particularly — was both radical and oriented away from the campus, while much of what flourished — governance struggles, the rise of lobbies, ethnic and gender studies, attempts to render the university more accessible to traditionally marginalized groups — was campus-centered and more ideologically complex. The study of campus-centered student activism, like the study of feminism before it, calls into question many of the conclusions of a historiography of 1960s protest that puts the New Left at its center.¹⁵

¹⁴ Robert Cohen's *When the Old Left Was Young: Student Radicals and America's First Mass Student Movement, 1929-1941* (New York: Oxford, 1993) is the most thorough examination of the student activism of the 1930s now extant, and a number of works on the student activism of 1960s take the latter part of the previous decade as their starting point. Philip Altbach's *Student Politics in America: A Historical Analysis*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1997) is the most serious attempt at a synthetic history of American student activism, but it, like other similar works, is severely hampered by the lack of available original research.

¹⁵ On feminism and the historiography of 1960s activism, see Alice Echols, *Shaky Ground: The Sixties and its Aftershocks* (New York: Columbia, 2002), particularly chapters three and four. There has been a recent surge of writing on the activism of the 1970s, but much of it — Ron Jacobs' *The Way the Wind Blew: A History of the Weather Underground* (London: Verso, 1997) was an early and in many ways representative example — has focused on the Weather Underground and similar groups. The student activism of the 1970s has still received very little attention.

Broadening our field of focus beyond the 1960s also encourages us to broaden our definition of activism itself. To the students of the 1940s and 1950s, holding integrated meetings and developing teacher evaluation programs were activist projects. In the 1970s, lobbying and litigation came to the fore. NSA was often more akin to the NAACP than to SNCC, and at times more like AAUP than SDS. There was, for the Association, no bright line between activism and advocacy, and in that it was more representative of campus student activism than is generally recognized.¹⁶

NSA thus presents a challenge not only to chroniclers of American student activism, but to dismayed observers of the contemporary campus as well. When we go looking for the sixties of popular imagination on the campus of today, we come back empty-handed. (When today's activists seek to recreate that mythic sixties, they set themselves an impossible task as well.) But as we come to see the activism of the past clearly, in all its diversity, and our vision of student history becomes more discerning, we find ourselves looking on today's activism with fresh eyes.

The Historiography of NSA

If the modern historiography of American student activism began with the participant-observer accounts of the late 1960s, the modern historiography of NSA rests on just two documents — the February 1967 *Ramparts* article that revealed NSA's

¹⁶ In his memoir, SDS leader Carl Oglesby lists a number of projects that local SDS chapters undertook in the late 1960s. These include fundraising for food aid for Vietnamese children, organizing against transit fare hikes, and campaigning for lower ticket prices at school football games. [Carl Oglesby, *Ravens in the Storm: A Personal History of the 1960s Antiwar Movement* (New York: Scribner, 2008), 149.]

relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency, and the accounting of the CIA's financial support that Association president Gene Groves compiled that summer.

The *Ramparts* article was an exposé of the web of connections between the CIA and NSA, and of the mechanisms employed to keep the relationship secret. It was careful to distinguish between the domestic and international wings of the Association with regard to their entanglement with the CIA, but it necessarily, given its focus, emphasized the international — of 92 paragraphs in the article, just two addressed NSA's domestic activities. Although the article was well-researched and well-written, moreover, it was necessarily a preliminary account, one that mischaracterized NSA and its CIA ties in a number of important ways.

Groves' account of CIA funding, distributed to the NSA membership at its Congress that summer, was an attempt to quantify the Agency's support for the Association. It consisted of a single-page chart listing NSA's total revenues for every fiscal year since 1947, specifying how much, if any, had come from the Agency. Groves concluded that the CIA had provided as much as 90% of NSA's funding some years, and nearly 70% of its total revenue over the life of the relationship. His chart, however, underrepresented NSA's non-CIA revenue, and in so doing dramatically overstated the Association's dependency on the Agency.

Between them, these two documents have provided much of the context in which NSA has subsequently been understood by historians and other observers. Because the CIA relationship has cast such a shadow over the Association's other work, no comparable discussions of NSA's domestic activities have emerged as correctives, and the deficiencies in these analyses — assembled in haste, and with incomplete information, have never been rectified.

Even today, NSA is generally present in studies of student activism only at the margins — as the subject of anecdote rather than sustained analysis.

Todd Gitlin's *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* is representative of the literature. *The Sixties* contains a total of twelve references to NSA. Gitlin mentions Tom Hayden's participation in the 1960 NSA Congress, and notes that Paul Potter of SDS and Tim Jenkins of SNCC each served terms as NSA vice presidents. He states that NSA sponsored southern voter registration drives and student trips to Cuba in the early sixties. He argues that the NSA-CIA revelations contributed to a "sea change" in the student movement, and describes Allard Lowenstein as a driving force behind both Freedom Summer and the Dump Johnson movement. In his closing pages, he notes that NSA called for a national student strike to protest the invasion of Cambodia two days before the shootings at Kent State, and declares that NSA was one of the organizations that "kept up the pressure" for an end to the war in Vietnam in the years that followed. These anecdotes provide the outlines of a significant story, but Gitlin never brings them together. NSA surfaces again and again in his narrative, but he never shapes that material into a coherent whole.¹⁷

And where historians have attempted to sum up NSA's role in the activism of the 1960s their efforts have generally been disappointing. In *Democracy Is in the Streets*, James Miller's history of SDS, for example, Miller devotes several paragraphs to a capsule history of the Association. Although he says that NSA was "the most important and prestigious student organization in the country" at the start of the sixties, he also

¹⁷ For similarly fragmented treatments of NSA in classic works of sixties history, see for instance Sara Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*, and Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*.

declares flatly that it was “controlled by the CIA,” a contention that he sources to the 1967 *Ramparts* piece.¹⁸

The sole scholarly article on NSA’s domestic operations, Philip G. Altbach’s “The National Student Association in the Fifties: Flawed Conscience of the Silent Generation,” is now more than twenty-five years old. In it, Altbach suggests a distinction between organizations that provide “leadership” and those that are “reactive,” and concludes that NSA was a member of the latter camp. He measures the Association’s activities in the 1950s by the yardstick of what other groups achieved in the 1960s, and finds NSA lacking. Although the article is not without insight, Altbach’s analytical framework is inadequate to address the complexity of NSA’s role in student organizing, and fails to engage the crucial question of the interrelationship between leadership and membership in the Association itself.¹⁹

Two relatively narrow dissertations on NSA precede mine. The first — an EdD dissertation on the Association’s “implications for student personnel administrators” — dates from 1965. In it, Stephen Clements Schodde provides a brief narrative of NSA’s origins followed by capsule descriptions of the Association’s structure, finances, and relations with students and administrators, and a review of NSA’s stands on student rights and desegregation. The dissertation is a rich source of data, but it makes virtually no attempt at critical historical analysis. Writing in the mid-1960s, Schodde is, of course, ignorant of the CIA relationship.

Robert George Kranz’s 1992 “International Education and Co-curricular Activities: The Origins of the United National Student Association International Program” is limited in both breadth and scope — it confines itself to international issues, and to the period between 1946 and 1949. In it, Kranz argues that the struggle for control

¹⁸ Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 48-49.

¹⁹ Altbach’s analysis anticipates his treatment of NSA in *Student Politics in America*.

of NSA's international posture had been decisively won by anticommunist "centrists" by 1949, and that the Association's International Commission — the primary beneficiary of the CIA's largesse — was largely autonomous from NSA's domestic leadership as early as 1948. Kranz sees NSA's primary importance during the early period as residing in the transformations that participation in the Association wrought in its individual members and, particularly, leaders. The narrowness of Kranz's source base is disappointing, as his brief dissertation is based almost entirely on previously published sources and on materials held at the Wisconsin Historical Society and at Harvard.²⁰

Two biographies of Allard Lowenstein, NSA's president in 1950-51 and an influential figure in the Association for decades afterward, bear mention in any discussion of NSA historiography. William H. Chafe's *Never Stop Running: Allard Lowenstein and the Struggle to Save American Liberalism* is silent on most questions of NSA's significance, often treating the Association as little more than a backdrop to the narrative of Lowenstein's life. Chafe is most engaged on the question of NSA's early international posture, and he presents a compelling argument, contra Kranz, that the question of anticommunism was a vital and contested arena of struggle within the group well into the 1950s. Richard Cummings' *The Pied Piper: Allard K. Lowenstein and the Liberal Dream* argues that NSA was a creature of the American intelligence community, but Cummings asserts the claim far more forcefully than he documents it, and pursues his thesis to the detriment of other important issues in the group's history.

The story of NSA's relationship with the CIA has garnered growing scholarly attention in recent years, as part of a new interest in the Agency's clandestine

²⁰ One non-scholarly source bears mention in any discussion of NSA historiography: Eugene Schwartz's edited volume, *American Students Organize: Founding the National Student Association After World War II*. A 1200-page anthology of primary source documents, memoirs, and other materials, *American Students Organize* is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the Association's first half-decade.

relationships with American citizen groups more generally. The relationship is the subject of a chapter in Hugh Wilford's *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America*, whose conclusions on the subject for the most part parallel my own, and of ongoing research by Karen Paget. A number of books on international student organizing, mentioned in my bibliography, have also addressed themselves to NSA-CIA relations.

The Historiography of the American Student

As I have suggested, I approach NSA as a route through which the study of American student activism may be better integrated with the study of the American student. The Association can, I believe, perform a similar function in the history of higher education as well, advancing the project of more fully integrating the history of the American student into the history of American higher education.

The study of the American student, like that of American student activism, languished until the late 1960s. As Frederick Rudolph's 1965 article, "Neglect of Students as a Historical Tradition," noted, academics had long tended to treat students, "the most creative and imaginative force" in American higher education, as merely a group that "flow aimlessly in and out of our picture of the past."²¹

The subsequent wave of campus protest transformed the historiography of higher education, of course, just as it did that of student activism. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw a tremendous outpouring of scholarly and popular literature on the past of the

²¹ Frederick Rudolph, "Neglect of Students as a Historical Tradition," In *The College and the Student*, Lawrence E. Dennis and Joseph F. Kauffman, eds. (Washington DC: American Council on Education, 1965.)

American student. Even where activism was not the explicit focus of such work, though, treatments of the student's role in the university often gave disproportionate emphasis to moments of upheaval. The effect of this on the general literature of higher education is often that students appear in the narrative at moments for which there is an established capsule story of the student experience, and then make way for stories of faculty and administrative concerns. Thus, the tendency Frederick Rudolph decried four decades ago to treat students as a population that flows "aimlessly in and out" of the remembered campus still persists in much writing on American higher education today. It was not until 2004, with the publication of John R. Thelin's *A History of American Higher Education*, that the first modern synthetic history of American academia to fully integrate student life into its narrative appeared.²² Even many worthy monographs marginalize students in their treatment of higher education — in Ellen Schrecker's *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism in the Universities*, for instance, "the universities" are conceptualized as consisting of faculty and administration almost exclusively, and the ways in which students protested against, and were targeted by, McCarthy-era attacks on campus civil liberties receive little attention.²³

An apparent counter-trend to this tendency to push students to the edge of the frame is represented by arguments that the modern campus is excessively student-centered. David Riesman's *On Higher Education: The Academic Enterprise in an Era of Rising Student Consumerism*, for instance, describes the post-1960s milieu as one of "student hegemony," in which students' "market power" dominates the American

²² John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2004).

²³ Ellen Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities*. (New York: Oxford, 1986.)

university scene.²⁴ Many conservative commentators, similarly, have contended that the campus takes its contemporary character from the radical revolutions of the 1960s. Few scholars have found much basis for such claims, but some modern studies of the campus deploy student history primarily as a refutation to arguments such as these, as in Rebecca Lowen's *Creating the Cold War University*, which restricts discussion of student history to a brief final chapter which argues that "students responded to, rather than initiated, the politicization of the university," and that very little of the activists' agenda was ever realized."²⁵

Lowen's argument that student activists in the 1960s achieved few of their goals in transforming the university is one that has been made in many quarters. But it is an argument that construes the relevant question too narrowly. It is true that many of the demands of late-1960s student radicals were never acceded to (though many others were), but it is also true that the university was forced to accommodate itself to changes in student attitudes in ways that are not encompassed by a determination of which side "won" a particular standoff at a particular campus.

The effect of students on the shaping of the university has often been subtle and indirect, and to date it has been local studies that have been most successful in presenting the interplay between students and other forces in a way that recognizes the student role without caricature. Perhaps the strongest of these, to my mind, is Beth Bailey's *Sex in the Heartland*, a treatment of the sexual revolution in and around the University of Kansas. Bailey is sensitive to the ways in which administrators and elected officials responded not just to the exhortations of self-conscious radicals, but also to the challenges posed by students who resisted or bypassed campus authority in less

²⁴ David Riesman, *On Higher Education: The Academic Enterprise in an Era of Rising Student Consumerism*, 2nd ed., (Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), xxix.

²⁵ Rebecca Lowen, *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 234.

confrontational but often more potent ways. Bailey is also attuned to the breadth of student resistance to authority — the passage in the book in which she explores the sexual and power politics of the panty raid is but one acute example.²⁶

The story of the United States National Student Association is a story of American politics and American social movements. It is a story of American liberalism and of American anti-communism. It is a story of American foreign policy and of international covert operations. It is, I believe, a crucial story in the history of American student activism. But it is also an important story in the history of American higher education, a field into which the student as historical actor has yet to be fully integrated, and in telling its story in that way I hope to advance that project.

²⁶ Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 45-8.

Chapter One Precursors: Before 1946

Introduction

As long as there have been colleges there have been students who resisted institutional authority and times when that resistance has flared into protest, but early American higher education had little in common with its latter-day counterpart. Colleges were small, exclusive, and peripheral to society. Student protests tended to be local and unfocused, and they generally garnered little attention beyond the community in which they took place. It was not until after the Civil War that the American academy began to take on its modern character, as social change and educational reform spurred increased enrollment and a newly prominent collegiate role in national life.

American student culture began to take on *its* modern character at the turn of the century, as an independent, self-directed extracurriculum took shape and organized protest began to displace inchoate violence as the dominant form of student agitation. In the decades that followed, administrators sought to tap this energy for their own institutional ends, bringing student activities under their oversight and control. Student governments became far more common in this period, and though some were little more than puppets, others took on real responsibilities and accrued significant, though circumscribed, power.

National student organizations that tapped this vein of activism were slow to emerge — though some radical students joined the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS), founded in 1905, and a significant number of student government leaders participated in the conferences of the National Student Federation of America (NSFA), launched in 1925, neither group was much of a presence on the campus or a significant force for activism. The first organizational attempt to build a mass national student movement would not come until the 1930s, with the work of the American Student Union (ASU), founded in 1935.

The depression decade was a time of immense ferment on the nation's campuses, but that activity left a minimal institutional legacy when it came to an end. The ASU imploded with the Popular Front at the end of the decade, while NSFA, eclipsed by ASU's radicals, folded during the Second World War. The ISS, by then known as the Student League for Industrial Democracy, persisted, but just barely. Wartime efforts to fill the gap had little success, and when the National Student Association was founded in 1947 it stepped into a near-vacuum in American student organizing.

NSA was the immediate product of domestic and international political developments after the Second World War and of the transformations in the American campus that accompanied the GI Bill, but its character was also shaped by less-immediate history — by the major national student organizations that came before it, and more generally by the evolution of the student's role on the American campus.

American Student Cultures Before 1900

The American colleges of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, organized along the model of Britain's universities, emphasized classical education and served a

largely elite student population of young white men. Over time students began to establish clubs to fill in the gaps in the formal course of study. Many of the earliest of these were religious in focus, but soon literary and theatrical societies became popular, as well as societies to facilitate scientific study among the studentry.¹

Regulations were strict and comprehensive in the colonial era, and discipline was harsh. Tensions over the restrictions of college life grew as the nation's campuses began to draw an older, more experienced student body.² In the run-up to the Revolutionary War student protest became increasingly widespread, as the words and deeds of patriots gave students new ideologies of opposition — the collegians of the era proved quick to apply the lessons of colonial resistance to their own domestic situation.³ Harvard, the oldest American college, was the first to erupt into open rebellion. In the autumn of 1766, incensed by the serving of rancid butter in the dining hall, the students staged a walkout, setting the stage for a decade of protests, confrontations, and rioting that spread to campuses throughout the colonies, all of it cloaked in the rhetoric of liberty and revolution.⁴

American higher education experienced dramatic institutional expansion in the antebellum era — where the colonies had supported fewer than ten colleges on the eve of revolution, by 1860 there were more than two hundred colleges in the United States.⁵ But despite this growth, the cultural influence of the American college actually declined.

¹ Rodolph L. Schnell, "National Activist Student Organizations in American Higher Education, 1905-1944" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1975), 7-9.

² John S. Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition: A History of American Colleges and Universities* 4th ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1999), 8-10, 50-1; Sheldon S. Cohen, "The Turkish Tyranny," *The New England Quarterly* 47, no. 4 (December 1974), 581.

³ Willis Rudy, *The Campus and a Nation in Crisis: From the American Revolution to Vietnam* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 5.

⁴ Sheldon Cohen, "Turkish Tyranny," 567-9; Rudy, *Campus and a Nation*, 10-11.

⁵ Jurgen Herbst, *From Crisis to Crisis: American College Government, 1636-1819* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 247-9; Christopher J. Lucas, *American Higher Education: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1994), 117.

Most colleges were tiny and underfunded, with archaic curricula and restrictive governance policies, and as in the Revolutionary era, serious disciplinary problems were common. Brawls — between students and faculty, students and locals, students and police — were frequent, and sometimes fatal.⁶

Even those colleges that experimented with more liberal discipline in the antebellum era were not immune from student violence.⁷ When Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia in 1819 he envisioned a university governed jointly by its various constituencies, with disciplinary infractions adjudicated by an autonomous student court.⁸ But student riots erupted almost immediately after the school opened, and after two faculty members were assaulted by a masked gang midway through the first semester, the self-government plan was largely abandoned.⁹ By the mid-1830s the students of the university had gone so far as to organize and arm a militia to resist the school's "tyrannical" faculty.¹⁰

As the nineteenth century progressed, the increasingly elastic social and economic structures of a modernizing America rendered traditional curricula ever more irrelevant to personal advancement. By midcentury a degree provided neither useful instruction nor credentialing for any lucrative profession, and only one percent of white

⁶ At Princeton in 1807, when students relieved their boredom and frustration by neglecting their studies, drinking, and setting fires, the administration suspended several of the offenders and threatened to expel even more. In response, the students erupted into riot, occupying a campus building and forcing the administration to close the college entirely. [Mark A. Noll, "Before the Storm: Life at Princeton College 1806-1807," *Princeton University Library Chronicles* 42 no. 3 (Spring 1981), 161-3.]

⁷ For a compelling discussion of university reform in the early republic, and of the role of student rebellion in stifling such reform, see Steven J. Novak, *The Rights of Youth: American Colleges and Student Revolt, 1798-1815* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), particularly chapter six.

⁸ Brubacher and Rudy, *Higher Education*, 52-3; Novak, *The Rights of Youth*, 125.

⁹ Virginius Dabney, *Mr. Jefferson's University: A History* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1981), 8-9.

¹⁰ Oscar Handlin and Mary F. Handlin, *The American College and American Culture: Socialization as a Function of Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970), 40.

American men would attend college.¹¹ But the closing decades of the century would see a revolution in American higher education. The nation's small, underfunded, intellectually vague colleges began to give way to modern universities — centers of advanced research and specialized professional instruction. Federal land grant legislation fostered the creation of a new class of public colleges providing both technical training and a liberal arts curriculum — practical education for working people. Colleges for women and blacks burgeoned and coeducation grew dramatically after the Civil War. Though the numbers of blacks, women, and the poor able to avail themselves of higher education remained small, the college population grew — and grew more diverse — with each passing year.

This explosion in higher education brought with it a new kind of student, and a new kind of student life. Undergraduate society matured from the defiance of the early nineteenth century into an independent, self-possessed subculture standing apart from, rather than at war with, the institutional structure of the university.

Student-run extracurricular activities flourished in this period. The fraternities of the antebellum era — secret societies that asserted students' independence and aloofness from the institutional structures of the university — came out into the open, joined by an ever-increasing number of sororities, social clubs, and other organizations.¹²

As such groups expanded and matured, student-created institutions came to play an ever more central role in collegiate life. Sports teams evolved from ad hoc clubs to organized squads with professional coaches chosen and paid by alumni.¹³ Fraternities

¹¹ See Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 67-70 for an analysis of the ambiguities of the historical record in this area of inquiry, however.

¹² Schnell, "Student Organizations," 10; Brubacher and Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition*, 127-128.

¹³ College athletes and university officials had a vexed relationship from the start. The first intercollegiate football game, between Rutgers and Princeton in the fall of 1869, took place upon the invitation of an informal group of Rutgers students, but what would have been the third — a rematch between those same two schools a few weeks later — was cancelled on the order of the faculty at the two colleges. [Mark F. Bernstein,

and sororities provided housing and meals to a growing segment of the student population. Student publications — newspapers, humor magazines, yearbooks — grew in aspiration and off-campus influence, explaining the campus to a nation hungry for information about the new student breed. And the “campus” they were explaining was a web of student activities and institutions — as Princeton president Woodrow Wilson put it in 1909, “so far as the colleges go, the sideshows have swallowed up the circus and we in the main tent do not know what is going on.”¹⁴

The Extracurriculum and the University in the Early 20th Century

After the turn of the century, administrators, recognizing that much of their students’ education was now taking place outside of the classroom, took steps to assert new control over the social and moral life of the campus. They moved to regulate intercollegiate athletics, putting teams under the leadership of coaches hired by the college rather than alumni and creating an ever-more comprehensive system of rules through the National Collegiate Athletic Association, founded in 1905.¹⁵ In the 1910s they embarked on a wave of dormitory-building, seeking to shape student culture by controlling the campus residential environment, and in the 1920s and after they increasingly deployed the admissions process as a mechanism for influencing the character of the incoming class.¹⁶

Football: The Ivy League Origins of an American Obsession (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001), 6-11.]

¹⁴ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 188.

¹⁵ Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996), 257-59.

¹⁶ Reuben, *Making of the Modern University*, 260-62.

In conjunction with such reforms, and in support of them, a new professional cohort appeared in the university — the student personnel administrator. When Yale hired its first-ever Dean of Students in 1919, the university’s president announced that the new dean would “deal with all the collective problems of public morals and public order which confront the University as a whole.”¹⁷ No longer would students be permitted to create and maintain a collegiate culture separate and distinct from the institutional culture of the university. Going forward, administrators would press to integrate curriculum and extracurriculum into one coherent project.¹⁸

It would not be possible, however, for student affairs personnel to do all the work of managing the extracurriculum on their own, and even if it were, the point of the new approach to student life was to channel students’ energies, not to stifle them. Accordingly, administrators in this period sought to nurture the more wholesome student endeavors and redirect the less savory ones. Student newspapers and magazines would continue to publish, benefiting from the guidance of their new faculty advisors. Student athletes would continue to compete, learning fair play and good sportsmanship from their coaches. Residential hijinks would continue, but under the watchful eye of dormitory staff.

As one college president had declared as early as the turn of the century, students themselves would play a crucial role in maintaining new standards of behavior. “Give the seventy-five or more per cent of orderly students a voice in the determination of college conduct,” Ethelbert Warfield of Pennsylvania’s Lafayette College wrote, “teach them how to use that voice, encourage them to think that their reputation and the reputation of the

¹⁷ Reuben, *Making of the Modern University*, 254.

¹⁸ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 198.

college are at stake, and by an energetic public opinion they will more effectively suppress the disorderly element than any law that can be applied will ever do.”¹⁹

There had been a number of experiments of student self-government at 19th century American colleges, though they were generally short-lived. A 1900 survey of 32 prominent colleges and universities found some form of student involvement in campus governance at 15 of them, but most were either student judiciaries or advisory committees with no authority of their own.²⁰ The author of that survey did note, however, that there was a new trend in the field — “the student-body organization, which has recently become popular in the West.” As the exemplar of this novel approach to student government, he cited Stanford University.

Stanford University was founded in 1885, and its student association was established in 1891. The association consisted of an elected slate of executive officers and a seven-member student legislature who jointly “exercise[d] control of the general policy of all student concerns,” including a daily and weekly student newspaper and a campus benevolent association, supervising “most closely the athletic organizations, and the musical and debating clubs.” The finances of the association were managed by a salaried treasurer, and any decision of the elected representatives could be overturned by vote of a mass meeting of the student body.²¹

Stanford’s student association was an anomaly in 1900, but in the three decades that followed, as administrators sought to harness and divert students’ energies for their institutions’ benefit, such robust student governments became more common. Hard data is scarce, but one 1928 study of twenty-three prominent colleges and universities found that eleven had either a functioning student government or significant faculty-student

¹⁹ Henry D. Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs* (1901; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1969), 256.

²⁰ Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs*, 260-61.

²¹ Sheldon, *Student Life and Customs*, 268-69.

cooperation in institutional governance. (At the other twelve, student affairs was found to be a “paternalistic” endeavor in which “college authorities ... retained all the basic decisions and ultimate control to themselves.”)²² A much larger but less detailed survey conducted at about the same time reached similar conclusions — of 508 colleges and universities surveyed, 346 had “some form of student government.”²³

As the 20th century progressed, more and more colleges and universities empowered elected or appointed student councils to manage student activities and adjudicate rules violations, putting students’ hunger for power and relevance to work in the service of the status quo.²⁴ In this period students’ demands for self-government were less likely to be opposed outright and more likely to be channeled in directions that did not threaten the fundamental relations of power in the university.

The Intercollegiate Socialist Society

In the midst of these transformations in student life and campus culture, a group was founded which has been called America’s “first national left student association.”²⁵ The history of that group, the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, reveals the extent to which the students of the early 20th century were still marginalized, both politically and in the realm of organized social activism.

²² Richard Henry Edwards, Joseph Manson Artman, and Galen Merriam Fisher, *Undergraduates: A Study of Morale in Twenty-three American Colleges and Universities* (Garden City: Doubleday Doran and Co., 1928), 222.

²³ A. O. Bowden and Ida Clyde Clarke, *Tomorrow's Americans: A Practical Study in Student Self-Government* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), 55.

²⁴ One contemporary overview of student government at the high school and college level concluded that such endeavors became much more common after 1920, but its evidentiary grounding was less than conclusive. (Harry C. McKown, *The Student Council* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1944).

²⁵ Schnell, “Student Organizations,” 12.

The American campus of the early 20th century was one in which the politics of the outside world were a muted presence. Most undergraduates were under the age of 21, and thus ineligible to vote. Others were denied the franchise on the basis of gender or race, or by laws or customs that prevented students from claiming residency in their campus communities. The major political parties were a peripheral influence in the ideological life of the student body, and even student agitators often remained ignorant of, and uninterested in, radical ideology. The history of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS), a decidedly peripheral actor on the American campus, reflects this estrangement.

In an autobiographical reminiscence published decades later, Upton Sinclair, a founder of the ISS, said the inadequacies of his own college education had provided the impetus for his efforts. “Since the professors refused to teach the students about modern life,” he wrote, “it was up to the students to teach themselves.”²⁶

Sinclair’s suggestion that the ISS was created to allow “students to teach themselves” was somewhat disingenuous, however. The original call for the creation of the ISS, which proposed

organizing an association ... for the purpose of promoting an intelligent interest in socialism among college men and women ... through the formation of study clubs in the colleges and universities, and the encouraging of all legitimate endeavors to awaken an interest in Socialism among the educated men and women of the country,

was sent not to students but to prominent faculty members and off-campus personages.

When it was later published in sympathetic newspapers with a list of signatories attached, the list included no students.²⁷ Membership in the ISS was open to students,

²⁶ Upton Sinclair, *American Outpost: A Book of Reminiscences* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1932), 159-60.

²⁷ Max Horn, *The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921: Origins of the Modern American Student Movement* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1979), 3.

yes, but also to professors and indeed to any graduates “of a college or education of similar rank.” The ISS’s first organizational meeting, held in mid-1905, drew only two students, and only one student was chosen for the Society’s initial ten-member executive committee.²⁸

In its early days, the ISS arranged speaking engagements, distributed literature and reading lists, and encouraged the staging of debates.²⁹ Its leadership urged students to create campus chapters that could assist in the mounting of such events. But such chapters were slow to emerge — it was not until 1908, when the organization hired its first full-time campus organizer, that hardy chapters began to take root.³⁰

Even then, however, and later, the ISS declined to grant much power to its student members. Individual alumni chapters gained representation on the group’s executive committee, but student chapters, though consistently more numerous and more active, were excluded.³¹ There was no move to add another student to the executive committee when its founding student member, Harry Laidler, graduated in 1907, and when in 1911 Laidler, now an ISS staffer, suggested inviting a few students to attend the executive committee’s meetings, his proposal was rejected.³² In 1912 the ISS convention passed a resolution urging that students be given voting rights in executive committee elections, but the proposal was referred to a committee which rejected it on the grounds

²⁸ Philip G. Altbach, *Student Politics in America: A Historical Analysis* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 23; Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 9-10. That student was only nominated because the other undergraduate present at the meeting argued that any collegiate organization should count at least one student among its leaders.

²⁹ The ISS also held small summer “institutes” in which selected members received intensive education in socialist topics. These institutes would seem to prefigure the summer seminars that NSA would later conduct on civil rights and international affairs. [Altbach, *Student Politics*, 24.]

³⁰ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 18-19, 22-25. Pre-existing socialist clubs at Wisconsin and Berkeley did affiliate with ISS early on.

³¹ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 60, 85. In 1910, there were 15 campus chapters and only two alumni chapters. By 1916, the number of alumni chapters had risen to 15, while the number of campus chapters stood at 71.

³² Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 61, 78-9.

that the ISS's student members were an ephemeral presence in the organization and "irresponsible financially," and thus could not be trusted with real power.³³

In most respects, the Society's campus chapters had far more in common with the nation's collegiate literary clubs and debating societies than its student governments or the activist student organizations that would follow.³⁴ When ISS's chapters moved beyond study, it tended to be in the realm of off-campus practical work. The Vassar chapter, for instance, helped to establish a public library and fire department in Poughkeepsie, and worked to secure improvements to the city's roads and sidewalks.

Occasionally some ISS chapters did manage to apply theory to their own lives, as when the University of Michigan ISS organized the student workers in the college's dining halls, forming a union that pressed for improved working conditions.³⁵ But such activities received little support at the national level. A proposal to the 1916 convention called upon chapter members to teach classes to Socialist Party members, serve as mentors to the Young People's Socialist League, the party's youth affiliate, and even do volunteer work for unions and strike committees, but it was never adopted. Jay Lovestone, then the head of the ISS chapter at the City College of New York, was one of

³³ Schnell, "Student Organizations," 37. The non-student members' disinclination to vest students with financial power may have been a reflection not just of the students' perceived "irresponsibility," but also of their relatively minor financial contribution to the ISS. In 1916-17, for instance, dues — including those paid by both students and non-students — amounted to just 12 percent of the Society's operating budget. The bulk of the ISS's funds came from donations made by non-student supporters of the Society. [Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 79-80, 89-90.]

³⁴ The ISS's mission was "to promote an intelligent interest in Socialism among college men and women by the formation of Study Chapters in universities and colleges, and among alumni; by providing speakers, and placing books and periodicals on Socialism in college libraries and reading rooms; by holding public meetings, and by publishing or otherwise providing such literature as may be required." [Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 225. Quote is from 1914 constitution.]

³⁵ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 25.

those who spoke against it, declaring that college was the time for studying theory and the years after graduation were the time to put theory into practice.³⁶

Yet still the collegians persisted. When the First World War got underway in Europe, some campus ISS chapters organized against it — Yale’s chapter co-sponsored “a monster anti-militarist meeting” in early 1915, while Harvard’s Socialist Club held an anti-war rally on the Boston Common after the sinking of the *Lusitania*.³⁷ But the national organization again held back — the ISS itself issued no statement on the war, and in a 1917 speech its president went so far as to both deny pacifists’ right to refuse induction into military service and endorse the government’s prerogative to curtail freedom of speech in time of war.³⁸

Such maneuvering did little to shield the ISS from repression as the United States entered the conflict, however. College administrators restricted ISS activities far more severely than they had in the past, and active participation in the Society declined precipitously. After 1918 the Society’s magazine stopped carrying lists of extant chapters.³⁹ Attacks on the organization continued after the war — in a 1921 article provocatively titled “Enemies of the Republic: Are the ‘Reds’ Stalking our College Women?,” Vice President Calvin Coolidge denounced ISS’s lectures and discussions as the “principal method of propagating radicalism” in the nation’s colleges.⁴⁰ By then, the ISS had ceased publication of its journal, and was reduced to perhaps a dozen campus chapters, most of which were moribund or nearly so.

The ISS was neither student-led nor student-funded. It was not notably directed toward transforming the institutional structure of the university or students’ role within

³⁶ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 76-78.

³⁷ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 138-39.

³⁸ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 149-51.

³⁹ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 171.

⁴⁰ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 178.

it, nor toward mobilizing students to transform external institutions. It was not even, its leadership insisted, a political organization.⁴¹ And yet the title of the one book-length treatment of the ISS bears the subtitle *Origins of the Modern American Student Movement*, and there is an argument to be made for such a characterization. Some of the individual chapters of the ISS were indeed activist, and the existence of the national body served to put such students in contact with each other. Furthermore, the mere fact of the ISS's existence gave the often-inchoate student left a focus — it provided, as one scholar has aptly put it, “an ethos for campus radicalism” at a time when role models were scarce.⁴²

The interaction between the ISS and college administrations was also significant, though perhaps not in the ways that either side intended. Where chapters faced administration interference, students were sometimes impelled by circumstances to assert a student-rights perspective. At Harvard, the trustees ruled that university property could not be used “for persistent or systematic propaganda on contentious questions of contemporaneous social, economic, political, or religious interest,” and the campus ISS chapter had to make special petition to the university to allow a lecture by Rabbi Charles Fleischer on “social religion” to go forward.⁴³ At New York's City College, the trustees made the local chapter's charter conditional on its agreeing to “avoid the use of any name which would tend to imply connection with any political party,” so the chapter abandoned the name “Socialist Study Club” in favor of “Social Problems Club.”⁴⁴ Most campus ISS chapters fought with administrators at one time or another, and once

⁴¹ When speakers at the 1913 convention urged ISS to declare itself forthrightly to be a socialist organization, the group instead reaffirmed that the Society existed to study socialism, not to promote it. [Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 74-75.]

⁴² Altbach, *Student Politics*, 22.

⁴³ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 126-27.

⁴⁴ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 141-42.

the United States entered the First World War, outright suppression of such chapters was commonplace.

Simply to advocate socialism on campus in this period, in other words, or even to assert right of others to do so within its walls, was to take a contentious position regarding the proper role of the university and of the student. The “first task” of the student members of the ISS, an undated letter from the national office declared, was

to resist all attempts to muzzle professors and to provide a forum in the college for all who have a real message to give. The right to know all sides is your birthright, and if you and your fellow students are deprived of that right you will be unable to wrestle with the problems which you must face in the future.⁴⁵

The Intercollegiate Socialist Society may have been oriented toward mere study, but there were moments when it recognized that student agitation was the only way to secure the freedom to study without interference. In this way, the ISS seemed to arrive at a students’ rights perspective almost in spite of itself.

National Student Cultures Between the First World War and the Crash

As the Great War got underway in Europe and American involvement loomed ever more likely, the federal government created the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), a new national program that brought the military presence onto the American campus to a degree never before seen.⁴⁶ Protests against both ROTC and the prospect of American entry into the European war were widespread in the mid-1910s, with one

⁴⁵ Horn, *Intercollegiate Socialist*, 121.

⁴⁶ Rudy, *Campus and a Nation*, 107-8. Although land grant legislation had included provision for military education, ROTC — directly supervised by the War Department and made mandatory at many schools — brought about a dramatic expansion and centralization of such programs.

national poll finding nearly four students in five opposed to on-campus military programs. But virtually all such dissent evaporated in early 1917, when Germany began sinking American ships bound for Britain, and what little opposition remained was stifled when the United States entered the war.⁴⁷

In the aftermath of the war, with the ISS in full retreat, there were few institutional outlets for the student left. The newly-created Communist Party was actively hostile to campus activism — it viewed students as untrustworthy reactionaries, and declined to organize in their ranks. The Party's youth group, founded in the early 1920s, was dubbed the Young *Workers'* League (YWL), and maintained no campus chapters. And organized socialism was hardly more visible. The Socialist Party regarded academia as at best peripheral to its struggle, and its Young Socialist League, like the YWL, had no presence on campus.⁴⁸

But the nets of the 1918-19 Red Scares were cast wide, and student activism of many different political orientations was subject to repression. As would happen so many times subsequently, opposition to “communism” stifled all manner of left-of-center thought and practice. Local campus radicalism of every stripe was silenced, and national movements never had the opportunity to develop.⁴⁹

Anti-communism thus became a serious force in American student life before communism had the chance to become one. On many campuses, non-communists were the sole targets of “anti-communist” campaigns, and students who were thus targeted often came to see the anti-communist crusade as not just destructive or overly broad but as fundamentally fraudulent. For them, the Red Scares themselves were the spur for a new politicization, as they came to see the repression of the age as an attack on students, and on free inquiry itself.

⁴⁷ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 26.

⁴⁸ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 44.

⁴⁹ Rudy, *Campus and a Nation*, 117-19.

The 1920s saw a new attention to civil liberties concerns generally in the United States — it was the decade of the founding of the American Civil Liberties Union — but civil libertarian arguments found a particularly warm welcome among students. They chafed under the restrictions of *in loco parentis* and rebelled against the infantilization that it implied. As members of university communities they were cognizant of the importance of academic freedom. And as young people, less likely than their elders to be committed to a single ideological perspective, they regarded curtailment of the free exchange of ideas as a direct and practical impediment to their ability to chart the course of their intellectual development. The stifling of radicalism on the campus roused non-ideological students to a principled defense of the left — a response that would resurface again and again in the years to come.

A 1922 editorial from the Amherst College student newspaper, reprinted in the national journal *New Student*, expressed this emergent civil-libertarian perspective concisely.⁵⁰ It characterized campus attempts to “force people to think and feel alike” as symptomatic of a broader assault on individuality, one which “countenanced ... free thought and discussion” only so long as the ideas expressed reflected the opinions of those in power. In such a climate, ideas which came in conflict with those of “the majority or reigning minority” were, however cogent, “termed pernicious or bolshevistic” and “eradicated from sight and hearing.”⁵¹ In this editorial, as in so much subsequent student writing, a principled commitment to the free exchange of ideas was married to a deep skepticism regarding the motivations of those who sought to stifle open debate.

Civil liberties concerns notwithstanding, the students of the 1920s were better known among contemporary observers for high-spiritedness than for political

⁵⁰ The *New Student* was published by the National Student Forum, which would a year later declare free speech to be the “only ... plank in its platform.” [Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 337.]

⁵¹ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 32.

commitment. The few campus political organizations that did exist were small, and when the masses of students did act in concert, it was most often in displays of apolitical exuberance or of frustration with Victorian social restrictions. Pockets of local activism existed, but social criticism took the form of bohemian freethought or Menckenesque critique more often than explicitly political analysis.⁵² Political dissatisfaction was muted in part because student leaders on most campuses were well-off — though the percentage of young Americans attending college tripled in the first three decades of the twentieth century, the American academy was still in the main an elite one.

The National Student Federation of America

By the 1920s the student personnel model of campus administration, and with it the modern hierarchy of campus power — administration-faculty control, with peripheral responsibilities delegated to student government or other representatives of the student body operating under administrative supervision — had taken hold throughout the nation, and it was in this context, at mid-decade, that the nation's first confederation of student governments, the National Student Federation of America (NSFA), was founded. At its first full meeting in 1926, nearly two hundred colleges and universities were represented.⁵³ In bringing together representatives of the nation's student governments on such a large scale, NSFA represented a real milestone in the

⁵² Ralph S. Brax, *The First Student Movement: Student Activism in the United States During the 1930s* (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1981), 19-20; Patti McGill Peterson, "Student Organizations and the Antiwar Movement in America, 1900-1960," *American Studies* 13 no. 1 (Spring 1972), 135; William F. Mugleston, "The Press and Student Activism at the University of Georgia in the 1920s," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 64 no. 3 (Fall 1980), 247.

⁵³ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 39-41.

development of American student activism — the establishment of the country's first nonsectarian national association of students.⁵⁴

NSFA had been founded at a December 1925 National Collegiate World Court Congress, and from the start it maintained a strong interest in overseas affairs.⁵⁵ It operated a travel service and facilitated international student exchange, and participated in the Confédération Internationale des Étudiants (CIE), a federation of national unions of students that had been founded after the First World War.⁵⁶

Domestically, NSFA passed resolutions in support of student civil liberties and the loosening of parietal rules, and sought to strengthen student government, but it was unable to do much to advance these goals on the campus.⁵⁷ It had no local chapters, no salaried officers, and only minimal paid staff.⁵⁸ Its member student governments,

⁵⁴ No comprehensive scholarly study of NSFA yet exists. The group's organizational records disappeared decades ago, and are presumed destroyed. They were apparently placed in storage at a Manhattan garage after the group folded, and lost when the garage was demolished in the 1940s or early 1950s. [A.M. Sperber, *Murrow: His Life and Times* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1986).] A brief informal history of NSFA by Marguerite Kehr was published in the *NSA Student Government Bulletin* in 1964, and later distributed in pamphlet form by the Association. Another essay by Kehr on NSFA, apparently from an earlier issue of the *Student Government Bulletin*, appears on pages 22-24 of Schwartz, *American Students Organize*.

⁵⁵ The National Student Association would have roots in similar international organizing efforts. I discuss some of the reasons for this parallel development in chapter two.

⁵⁶ At its founding in 1919, the CIE — then the Réunion des Etudiants Alliés — was constituted as a confederation of student unions from the victorious Allied nations of the First World War. It became the CIE in 1924. Largely apolitical, the CIE emphasized service projects including travel, international student sporting events, and the promotion of student films and writing. [Philip Altbach and Norman Uphoff, *The Student Internationals* (Metuchen, New Jersey: Scarecrow Press, 1973), 11-12.]

⁵⁷ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 41-2.

⁵⁸ Several of NSFA's annual budgets appear in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection (SCPC) and of these, the one for 1931-32 is typical. Setting aside a travel service and a college debate program, each of which operated on a largely revenue-neutral basis, it records revenue of about \$6800 for the year, of which about \$4000 came from dues. [NSFA *Annual Report, 1931-32*, NSFA File, SCPC.] NSFA's officers were unpaid, and until at least 1930 tended to remain enrolled at their home campuses during their terms of office. [Sperber, *Murrow*, 30.]

moreover, were in most cases themselves constrained and limited by paternalistic campus administrations.⁵⁹

NSFA's national and regional conferences offered networking and training opportunities to the student government leaders who attended, and Federation leaders like Edward R. Murrow were articulate advocates for students' interests. Though NSFA reached some students beyond its immediate circle with publications and radio broadcasts, however, it engaged in little or no direct organizing or advocacy work.⁶⁰ The scope and limits of its ambitions can be seen in a slogan from one of its recruitment pamphlets: "Student Government is a Profession ... We are a trade association."⁶¹ NSFA's weakness reflected the weakness of student government in its era, though, and its platform and public pronouncements would come to strike a more activist note over the course of the 1930s, it would be eclipsed in the depression decade by organizations with grander reach and ambition.⁶²

The American Student Union

The United States saw an unparalleled wave of student activism during the Great Depression. Where prior protests and student organizing had, even at their height, involved small minorities of students and left the broader society largely undisturbed, the activists of the 1930s convulsed the campuses and challenged the nation as a whole in upheavals that prefigured the movements of the 1960s. At the center of this activity

⁵⁹ Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 108. For an anecdotal discussion of administrative paternalism on the NSFA-era campus, see John Younger, "Student Self-Government," *Journal of Higher Education*, April 1931.

⁶⁰ "NSFA" threefold pamphlet, NSFA File, SCPC.

⁶¹ NSFA pamphlet [nd], SCPC. Capitalization and ellipses in original.

⁶² Schnell, "Student Organizations," 203-6.

stood the American Student Union (ASU), by far the most potent student activist group the nation had ever seen.

The depression came slowly to the American campus. Only about seven percent of America's young people were matriculated at the time of the crash, and as noted above, that minority was still disproportionately drawn from the ranks of the wealthy. In 1929 fewer than half of all college men — and fewer than one in five of their female counterparts — made any contribution to the cost of their support while at school, and perhaps one in five students was entirely self-supporting.

Most collegians were insulated from the worst of the economic devastation for the first few years of the depression, as their parents spent their way through their savings, and indeed American college enrollment actually rose slightly early in the wake of the crash.⁶³ But then enrollment began to fall and tuition revenue, state funding, and alumni giving went into decline, and schools responded by raising fees, cutting budgets, and laying off faculty.⁶⁴ Soon the depression reached the campus, the campus press began to discuss the plight of unemployed and underemployed students, and the rowdiness of the 1920s began to give way to a more politicized activism. Faced with deteriorating campus conditions and an uncertain future after graduation, students began to organize, first locally, then nationally.⁶⁵

The first mass student organizing of the 1930s came out of New York City's three public campuses — Hunter College, City College (CCNY), and Brooklyn College. Tuition-free and predominantly working class, these colleges served communities that had little cushion from the depredations of economic reversal. Their students were

⁶³ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 9-12.

⁶⁴ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 10-16.

⁶⁵ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 59.

disproportionately Eastern European and Jewish, and many came from backgrounds of working-class radicalism.⁶⁶ Indeed, CCNY and Hunter had been among the few American colleges to boast a detectable communist presence in the 1920s, and CCNY's students had fought successfully against compulsory ROTC before the depression hit.⁶⁷

In early 1931 the President of City College blocked distribution of *Frontiers*, an anti-ROTC campus newspaper, suspending the leader of the club that published it and ten students who protested the censorship. His action sparked a series of citywide protests, a reversal of his decision and, of more lasting importance, the forging of links between student activists from New York's various colleges. The activists formalized their ties as the protests wound down, creating the New York Student League late that year and refashioning themselves as the National Student League (NSL) in time for a spring 1932 convention.

In the beginning NSL was national in name only, but the timing of its establishment was fortuitous and its leadership showed a real knack for emphasizing issues of broad concern. Where the ISS had deployed "adult" experts to lecture students about political theory and labor policy, the NSL adopted a campus-centered platform titled "For a Student Movement." Where NSFA had not been notably engaged with off-campus issues, NSL dove into such controversies with gusto. The League's platform combined students' rights, anti-discrimination, and anti-war goals with an endorsement of economic palliatives — an agenda with appeal to a wide range of left and liberal students.⁶⁸ Never particularly large itself, NSL was quickly able to draw significant numbers of non-member students into its campaigns, as in 1932 when it mobilized

⁶⁶ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 23-4. Brooklyn and CCNY were co-educational, while Hunter was a women's college. Brooklyn was the newest of the three — chartered in 1930, it did not begin operations on its permanent campus until 1937.

⁶⁷ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 28

⁶⁸ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 34.

hundreds of protestors in a successful campaign against new fees at New York's public colleges.

Some of NSL's founders had been involved with Communist Party youth organizing before they arrived on campus, but although they took cartoons from the *New Masses* and tactics from William Foster's *Strike Strategy*, they received little encouragement from the Communist Party, which in 1931 was still disinclined to cultivate students and opposed to "big tent" organizing efforts.⁶⁹ From the start the well-organized student members of the city's chapters of the Young Communist League (YCL), the youth auxiliary of the Communist Party, played a leading role in NSL, however, and while most of NSL's members were not communists, the breadth of the organization's following was never reflected in its leadership. In the beginning, at least, this disjuncture was a source of little tension. The YCLers showed little devotion to the Communist Party line, and the less-sophisticated of NSL's adherents paid little attention to the political affiliations of the group's leaders. Indeed, many of NSL's more savvy non-communists admired the YCLers' dedication and organizational sophistication.

The memory and prospect of war hung over the college scene in the early 1930s. Many students — having grown to maturity in the shadow of the First World War — saw that conflict as pointless and horrific, an instrument of capitalist imperialism sold to the nation with empty platitudes about democracy. They feared being called to serve in the next war, and a great number resolved not to go.⁷⁰

In February of 1933 Britain's Oxford Union, a prestigious conclave of student leaders, declared by a lopsided margin that they would "in no circumstances fight for ... King and country." The Oxford Pledge, as it came to be known, was quickly adopted by

⁶⁹ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 26-7, 35-7.

⁷⁰ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 81-4.

students throughout Britain, and drew great attention from the American press. In the months that followed, campaigns for home-grown versions of the Pledge sprang up at nearly a hundred US campuses. One poll found that 39% of American students were unwilling to go to war under any circumstances, with another 33% intending to refuse unless the United States was itself invaded.⁷¹

NSL was not the only national student organization seeking to mobilize such students. The ISS, which had in 1921 changed its name to the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), had not been particularly active on the campus in the 1920s, but the advent of the depression had spurred it to action and by 1932 its campus chapters, newly organized as the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), had begun to rouse themselves.⁷² SLID and NSL both spent the spring of 1933 building support for domestic versions of the Oxford Pledge, and NSL soon proposed a merger of the two groups. SLID declined, wary of NSL's ties to YCL, but the two groups continued to work together — that December they joined NSFA and a host of other student organizations in sponsoring a “National Conference on Students in Politics.”⁷³

NSL and SLID joined forces again the next April to mount a National Student Strike Against War. Tens of thousands of students — most of them in the Northeast — walked out of classes to participate in rallies, marches, and meetings, making the strike the largest coordinated student protest in American history.⁷⁴ The following April, 1935, they held another. This time they garnered co-sponsorship from the NSFA, the American Youth Congress, chapters of the YMCA and YWCA, and student governments across the

⁷¹ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 79-80.

⁷² Schnell, “Student Organizations,” 100-111; Altbach, *Student Politics*, 42-3.

⁷³ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 90-1; Altbach, *Student Politics*, 89.

⁷⁴ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 92. The *New York Times* reported that some “15,000 students cut classes to hold demonstrations, which in some cases were addressed by faculty members.” [Eunice Fuller Barnard, “Students Lay a Barrage Against War,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1934.]

country, and more than a hundred thousand students took part — a sixfold increase, by some estimates, from the previous year.⁷⁵

Although some SLID officials remained skeptical about alliances with communists, the organization's membership — less doctrinaire than their leaders, and less aware of the Communist Party's partisan anti-socialism in the 1920s and early '30s — overwhelmingly supported consolidation. In 1935, in the wake of their second joint student strike, NSL and SLID merged to create the American Student Union (ASU).⁷⁶

Unaffiliated students, mostly liberals, accounted for nearly half of ASU's membership, but though independents were allowed to fill one-third of the seats on the ASU Executive Committee, NSL and SLID retained control of staff positions for themselves, dividing the pie by mutual agreement and reserving real power for the initiated.⁷⁷ Neither faction subsumed its identity into that of the new group — each remained a more-or-less undigested element, and the ASU never developed a democratic organizational culture.⁷⁸

Student protest grew at a tremendous pace after the founding of the ASU — protest organizers claimed that five hundred thousand students, nearly half of the college population of the United States, participated in the 1936 anti-war strike.⁷⁹ But events overseas would soon cast fundamental precepts of anti-interventionism into doubt, and rupture ASU's communist-socialist alliance.

⁷⁵ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 93. Christian student organizations flourished on the campus of the 1920s, with YMCA and YWCA chapters in the forefront. Though these were not primarily student organizations, and though most student members of these groups were apolitical, some collegians did use them as vehicles for campus-based social and political activism. [Altbach, *Student Politics*, 49-51.]

⁷⁶ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 137-9.

⁷⁷ Though ASU sought ties to NSFA that would have given liberals an institutional base in the organization, its efforts were rebuffed by the older group. [Schnell, "Student Organizations," 204.] NSFA did, however, participate as a member of the similarly situated American Youth Congress.

⁷⁸ Kranz, *International Education*, 16; R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 144-5.

⁷⁹ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 152.

By 1938 five hundred American students and graduates had gone to Spain to fight the fascists, and those who stayed behind were confronted with the example of those who had gone. Pacifists, isolationists, and some SLID socialists would continue to oppose American involvement in European conflicts, but the masses of American students were no longer so resolute.⁸⁰ ASU abandoned the Oxford Pledge in a 282-108 vote at its Christmas 1937 conference, and the following spring's ASU-affiliated student strikes were overwhelmingly oriented toward anti-fascist solidarity.⁸¹

By the time war began in Europe in 1939, something close to a consensus of student opinion had coalesced around the anti-fascist cause. With the Nazi invasions of the spring and fall and the British and French declarations of war on Germany, off-campus attitudes were beginning to follow. But when Germany and the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression treaty that August, ASU's communist faction abandoned anti-fascism in favor of neutrality, sparking a bitter struggle within the organization.

Few of the non-communists in ASU's national leadership had ever organized students. They had depended on the communists and the local chapters for that. As WH Auden would note that year in a letter announcing his resignation from another Popular Front group that had turned isolationist in the wake of the pact, "in most such organizations, the Liberals were lazy, while the Communists did all the work and, in consequence, won the executive power they deserved."⁸² ASU would not be an exception.

The unaffiliated majority of ASU's members had never been encouraged to develop an infrastructure that might allow them to help shape the direction of the movement, and they had never pressed the leadership to create one. ASU had never been

⁸⁰ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 153-59.

⁸¹ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 179-81.

⁸² Letter of resignation from the League of American Writers, quoted in Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On? The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), 38.

a democratically structured organization. It had always been administered by an elite in an arrangement that had remained largely invisible to outsiders as long as the agenda dictated from above roughly coincided with the sentiments of the student masses below.

And so, though anti-fascists maintained a majority position in the ASU national office, they were quickly outflanked by organized communists in leadership and the local chapters.⁸³ These activists worked assiduously after the Pact to win ASU approval for a new line on fascism, and where they failed to convince their fellow students of the rightness of their position, they often succeeded in dampening enthusiasm for ASU itself. The group's anti-communist faction made strategic blunders as well, culminating in their decision to call a vote at the December 1939 ASU convention on a condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Finland. In framing the issue in that way they united communists, non-communist anti-interventionists, and those who opposed ASU taking any stand at all on divisive foreign policy questions, and they lost in a humiliating 322-49 vote.⁸⁴

ASU's membership plummeted in the months that followed, as it devolved into what it had long been accused of being — a communist front. The slide accelerated after Young Communist League leader Bert Witt was elected to succeed socialist Joseph Lash as Executive Secretary, and by the time ASU took up the interventionist banner again after Germany's June 1941 invasion of the Soviet Union, the organization was little more than a shell. It formally dissolved a few months later.⁸⁵

⁸³ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 279-87.

⁸⁴ Eileen Eagan, *Class, Culture, and the Classroom: The Student Peace Movement of the 1930s* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), 209; Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Friend's Memoir* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), 21-2. It is unlikely that ASU's anti-communists would have prevailed at the conference even if they had chosen firmer ground on which to take their stand — more than half of the convention's delegates were from New York, the birthplace of the NSL and a bastion of communist student organizing. [Irwin Ross, "The Student Union and the Future," *The New Republic*, January 8, 1940, 48-9.]

⁸⁵ R. Cohen, *Old Left*, 294-7; Robert George Kranz, "International Education and Cocurricular Activities: The Origins of the United National Student Association International Program," (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1992), 17.

Student Organizing Between ASU and NSA

In the absence of national leadership, interventionist students did little large-scale organizing in 1940 and 1941. Campus isolationists were more active, but deeply divided — they spanned the political spectrum from the ASU to the hyper-patriotic “America First” crowd, with no shortage of mutually hostile factions in between. SLID tried to re-establish itself, but with little effect. NSFA — underfunded, disorganized, and going through its own leadership crisis — stood on the verge of folding. Impressive local demonstrations were still mounted, as when Columbia drew nearly a thousand students to its 1940 anti-war strike — but ASU’s dominance of student organizing had been so complete, and its collapse so precipitous, that no substantial national organizations survived its implosion.⁸⁶

Campus-based activism was virtually non-existent after Pearl Harbor. The college population dropped by nearly a third as male students went off to fight, wartime rationing severely restricted the travel necessary for regional or national coordination, homefront volunteerism occupied time and energy which might have otherwise been devoted to organizing, and the national climate was hostile to dissent.⁸⁷ The nation’s campuses were depopulated, quiet, and focused on the war.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ The Union for Democratic Action, a liberal group, established a student liaison committee and a youth division in the spring of 1941, but neither project bore fruit — the youth group was dissolved for lack of interest by early fall. [“Youth Division Report,” May 28, 1941, ADA Papers, Series 1 Number 304; Letter from Bill Refsky to Nathan Glaser, October 9, 1941, ADA Papers Series 1 Number 304.]

⁸⁷ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 110-12.

⁸⁸ To the extent that American students were engaged in organizing, it was through organizations like the patriotic, pro-Allied Student Defenders of Democracy or in war relief efforts coordinated by campus religious organizations and Student War Councils. [Peterson, “Student Organizations,” 141. Kranz, “International Education,” 18.]

In 1940 ASU alumnus Joseph Lash, now past thirty and long out of college, joined a high-profile effort to rejuvenate American student organizing on a national level.⁸⁹ Enconced as the head of the American Committee of the International Student Service (ISS), a small relief-oriented organization, he attempted to effect a merger with the nearly moribund NSFA.⁹⁰ After that effort failed — NSFA turned down the merger proposal by a vote of 69 to 52 — Lash and his allies used the ISS as the launching pad for an entirely new organization, the United States Student Assembly (USSA).⁹¹ USSA was a top-down organization like the ASU had been.⁹² ASU hadn't failed, Lash and others argued, it had been betrayed, and so the few communist students who attended USSA's founding convention in 1943 were denied credentials from the outset.⁹³ The communist delegates were thus silenced as the plenary permanently disenfranchised them on the somewhat curious grounds that USSA was to be "organized democratically."⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Lash, *Eleanor Roosevelt*, 220-25.

⁹⁰ Schnell, "Student Organizations," 211.

⁹¹ Schnell, "Student Organizations," 206-7; Kranz, "International Education," 22-3. Between February 1, 1943 and January 31, 1944, USSA had \$13,890 in income, of which \$11,000 was "contributed or raised by" Eleanor Roosevelt and Trude Pratt. (The two women were both close Lash allies — Roosevelt was his mentor, and Pratt would marry Lash in late 1944.) ["Sources of Financial Support," [1945?]. ADA Papers Series 2 Number 339.]

⁹² A contemporary observer contended that Lash and two of his allies (one a fellow ASU veteran) "exercised unofficial but actual control" over the USSA board of directors. [Martin McLaughlin, "Political Processes in American National Student Organizations," (PhD diss., Notre Dame, 1948), 23.] USSA's first president later wrote that the organization's staff was assembled "from persons who had worked under Joe Lash at ISS." (Mary Lou Rogers Munts, "Origins of the United States Student Assembly (1943-1947)," in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 36.)

⁹³ Kranz, "International Education," 24-5. According to USSA's first president, the organization received "a flood" of applications for delegate status from communist graduate students in New York City in advance of the convention, and restricted membership to undergraduates as a result. (Munts, "Origins of the United States Student Assembly," in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 36.)

⁹⁴ Kranz, "International Education," 24-5.

USSA was, like the NSFA before it, interested in international student affairs. But by 1943 the CIE, NSFA's primary venue for international outreach, no longer existed — it had been crushed in the German invasion of Belgium, its offices sacked and its organizational records destroyed by Nazi troops.⁹⁵ European efforts to establish a CIE successor proceeded along two parallel tracks during the war, with Western- and Soviet-aligned groups jockeying for position, and the USSA inserted itself into the process almost from its inception.⁹⁶

In March 1945, students from thirteen countries met in London to begin formal planning for the creation of a successor to the CIE.⁹⁷ They announced a major organizational conference to be held in London that November, and though their plans were disrupted somewhat when the Czech national union of students called its own international conference for the following week, the two meetings' conveners were eventually able to hammer out complementary agendas.⁹⁸

One hundred and fifty students from nearly forty countries attended the November 1945 London meeting, and together they began to flesh out the contours of their new group. It would be organized along the broad lines of the CIE, with membership limited to a single national union of students (NUS) from each country. Debate over whether the new organization should involve itself in political matters was heated but inconclusive, with the more conservative of the Western European national

⁹⁵ Gert van Maanen, *The International Student Movement: History and Background* (The Hague: International Documentation and Information Centre, 1967), 37.

⁹⁶ The story of international student and youth organizing during and immediately after the Second World War is a convoluted one, and the following account is greatly condensed. For more detailed treatments see Altbach and Uphoff, *Student Internationals*, van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, and Paul F. Magnelia, "The International Union of Students," (thesis, Université de Genève, 1966).

⁹⁷ Participation at the London meeting was broad-based — the delegates elected an executive committee composed of representatives of Canada, China, France, the USSR, the UK, the US, and Yugoslavia. I have not yet been able to determine who the US member was, or what organization he or she represented. [Altbach and Uphoff, *Student Internationals*, 18.]

⁹⁸ Magnelia, "International Union of Students," 48.

unions of students opposing any political involvement and the Soviet delegates pressing for an aggressively activist orientation.⁹⁹ At the end of the meeting, the task of drafting a constitution was delegated to an elected preparations committee, with a constitutional convention slated for Paris the following year.¹⁰⁰

Where no one faction had dominated in London, the much larger Prague meeting the following week was disproportionately populated by Eastern European delegates and other communist students.¹⁰¹ That shift was reflected in the post-conference actions of the preparatory committee, which relocated the 1946 conference from Paris to Prague and adopted a provisional structure and agenda for the new organization that comported with the proposals put forward by the Soviet delegations in London and Prague.¹⁰²

Three American students had attended the 1945 Prague conference — one representative each from the liberal USSA, the Christian YWCA, and the communist AYD. Together they made up the nucleus of the preparatory committee for Prague 1946, choosing a USSA representative as their chair.¹⁰³ The United States had been granted 25 delegate seats for the 1946 conference, and the Prague 1945 delegates set about assembling that delegation upon their return to the United States, structuring it as a mix of campus and organizational representatives. Ultimately 24 American students would

⁹⁹ Altbach and Uphoff, *The Student Internationals*, 19-20.

¹⁰⁰ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 39-40.

¹⁰¹ Altbach and Uphoff, *The Student Internationals*, 21; Magnelia, "International Union of Students," 48.

¹⁰² The United States sent no representative to the meetings of the preparatory committee, though it was entitled to do so. Magnelia ["International Union of Students," 74-75] identifies six of the nine most active members of the committee as either avowed communists or members of communist organizations. At least one of the other three, Tom Madden of Britain, has been subsequently so identified.

¹⁰³ Russell Austin, "Keynote Address by Russell Austin for Committee for Chicago Student Conference," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; Martin L. McLaughlin, "Conference In Chicago," *America: A Catholic Review of the Week*, March 29, 1947, 711; Kranz, "International Education," 41.

make the trip to Prague, and on their return these students would conduct the initial organizing for the National Student Association.

Conclusion

Three factors came together in the mid-1940s to create an unprecedentedly congenial environment for an American national union of students — the expansion of higher education, the maturation of student government, and the advent of student political organizing at the national and international level.

Between the founding of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society in 1905 and that of the National Student Federation of America in 1925, the proportion of American young people attending college doubled.¹⁰⁴ Between ISS's founding and NSA's founding forty-two years later the nation's college enrollment rose sevenfold.¹⁰⁵ As the nation's student population exploded, moreover, the working class began to enroll in significant numbers for the first time. The GI Bill, enacted in 1944, accelerated both of these trends.

With the growth of the student body, as we have seen, came a dramatic expansion of the extracurriculum generally and of student-run institutions in particular. The 19th century's tentative forays into student self-governance had by the 1940s given way to a broad consensus within academia that the American university functioned best when students were given responsibility for the direction and oversight of student activities. The shape and limits of such oversight remained fiercely contested, however. On many

¹⁰⁴ Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Lucas, *American Higher Education*, 140, 204, 227-28. Total American college enrollment stood at approximately 244,000 in 1900, 355,000 in 1910, and 2.3 million in 1947.

campuses — it is impossible to say just how many — student government was still radically circumscribed in its authority, its democratic structure, or both.

Despite the gains made by student governments in previous decades, however, and the extraordinary surge in student organizing in the 1930s, there was a profound vacuum in American national student organizing at the end of the Second World War. The most prominent student organizations of the interwar period had collapsed or gone into sharp decline after the outbreak of hostilities, and the war years had seen no viable successors emerge. In 1946 and 1947, that vacuum would be filled by members of an American student cohort that was not merely more numerous than any that had gone before, but also, with its ranks swelled by veterans of the Second World War, more independent, more worldly, and more diverse.

These veterans were older and more seasoned than their fellow students, more assertive in their relations with campus administrators, and disinclined to accept restrictive campus regulations meekly. They possessed a strong international perspective — their experiences abroad had left them with a concern for foreign events and an awareness of the powerful role that national unions of students played in other countries' political lives. Many of those who would gather in Chicago and Madison to create the National Student Association brought strong allegiances with them — political, religious, ethnic, sectional — but no one faction would dominate either of those gatherings and no organization or tendency would wield controlling influence.

This cohort of students, veterans and non-veterans working together, would create a National Student Association that was something novel — more engaged with the world than NSFA had been, more committed to internal democracy than ASU, and more dedicated to students' rights and interests than any previous American institution.

Chapter Two

Nascence: 1946-1947

Introduction

The postwar period was an auspicious time to launch a new American student group. The GI Bill, enacted in 1944, had given veterans unprecedented economic access to higher education, and by 1947 2.3 million Americans were enrolled — one and a half times as many as before the war, and twice as many as just three years earlier.¹ Nearly half of these students were World War II veterans, and at co-ed campuses such veterans studied alongside women who had themselves taken on new student leadership roles during the war.²

There had been attempts to create national student organizations of various kinds in the United States in the four decades before the end of the Second World War, but none of these groups had established itself as a true national union of students — an organization that could plausibly claim to speak on behalf of the country's collegiate population. And as we have seen, by the end of the Second World War none was a significant presence on America's campuses.

¹ Lucas, *American Higher Education*, 232; Altbach, *Student Politics*, 109.

² Keith W. Olson, *The GI Bill, the Veterans, and the Colleges* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), 44. Less than two percent of American servicemembers during the Second World War had been women, and 97% of veterans who went on to college after the war ended were men. Miriam Haskell Berlin, "American Society and American Students: A Historical Perspective," *American Students Organize*, 7.

In 1946 and 1947 this new generation of American college students would create a new National Student Association. Initial planning began after the August 1946 international student conference in Prague, and culminated in an organizational meeting in Chicago at the end of that year. After Chicago an elected National Continuations Committee took up the burden, and their work led to an August 1947 constitutional convention at which NSA was formally established.

The early organizing for the new group would be undertaken primarily by a few pre-existing organizations, many of which were controlled by non-student permanent staff. But by the time of the constitutional convention students from the Association's member campuses were asserting themselves in NSA, and providing much of its direction. Elites would continue to wield strong influence, particularly over international operations, but in its early years the Association would be more democratic, and more responsive to its membership, than any previous American student organization.

Veterans on the Campus

The GI Bill transformed the American college. Enrollment ballooned, and many of the new arrivals were students who had not been anticipated by their colleges before the war — older students, married students, students who were the first in their families to go to college, students who had returned from the conflict with physical or mental disabilities.

The postwar put extraordinary stresses on American colleges, and on individual students themselves. Shortages in housing and classroom facilities were endemic, and

many veterans found their stipends inadequate.³ Because this was a college cohort more likely than any before to have spouses and children, such deficiencies were particularly disruptive. Social friction was also common, as when newly-enrolled veterans were confronted with student rituals of hierarchy and subservience — in 1946 the *New York Times* reported on the phenomenon of freshman veterans' refusal to participate in traditional displays of deference to upperclassmen.⁴

The GI Bill was structured in the form of tuition grants to individual students, so colleges had a financial incentive to woo veterans. And for those administrators who had, as discussed in chapter one, begun before the war to use admissions as a mechanism for shaping student culture, the Bill presented other opportunities as well. As a Harvard recruitment brochure distributed to GIs at the end of the war put it,

the veteran of this war will expect something else from education than the ordinary peacetime student. Clearly the man who has been making life and death decisions at sea, in the air, and on the ground has other ideas than the man who comes direct from high school. The University is bending every energy to meet the needs of these men.⁵

It was not just energy that the universities bent to accommodate the veterans. A substantial number of GI Bill veterans were then entering college without any first-hand experience of the university environment. Some, those for whom college would not have been an option without the GI Bill, had never contemplated, or been contemplated by, the institutional structure of the university, and had not been socialized to its mores.⁶

³ In Iowa City, home of the University of Iowa, it was reported that student veterans comprised eighty percent of the postwar janitorial labor force. [Olson, *GI Bill*, 76-8.]

⁴ Edith Efron, "The Two Joes Meet — Joe College, Joe Veteran," *New York Times Magazine*, June 16, 1946, 21. Efron took particular note of veterans' refusal to wear freshman beanies and resistance to fraternity hazing.

⁵ Quoted in Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 264.

⁶ It was not clear how many GI Bill students would otherwise not have enrolled in college — one study suggested that the number was on the order of twenty percent. But the Bill also made it possible for many veterans to attend more elite institutions than they

Many schools suspended major requirements for such veterans, offered college credit for military experience, or crafted new classes with a more practical focus than those previously offered.⁷ Others offered new remediation, counseling, and advisement programs. Such innovations rendered the immediate postwar period a moment of new national experimentation with student-centered education.⁸

Though some veterans completed their studies as quickly as possible, concentrating their energies exclusively on academics and employment, others dove into campus life — varsity athletic tryouts, for instance, attracted huge numbers of hopefuls in the immediate postwar years.⁹ A significant number believed that experience had given them perspectives that would be of value to student organizations or university governance bodies, or chafed at campus regulations and sought to alter them. Tens of thousands joined the American Veterans Committee (AVC), a liberal activist veterans' group, founded in 1944, that had a strong campus base. AVC's first national chair and vice-chair were both former student newspaper editors, and at many of the AVC's campus chapters work to improve local conditions for student veterans went hand-in-hand with organizing legislatively for changes to the GI Bill and — under the slogan “Citizens First, Veterans Second” — around such causes as racial discrimination.¹⁰

The principle of *in loco parentis*, under which universities claimed a right to act in the place of students' parents, was subject to new challenges in this period — GI Bill veterans had long since left their parents' care, and more than a few had children of their own. Many administrators welcomed veterans' participation in student activities and

otherwise would have. [Michael J. Bennett, *When Dreams Came True: The GI Bill and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Brassey's Inc, 1996), 242-44.]

⁷ Olson, *GI Bill*, 34-36; Bennett, *When Dreams Came True*, 239-40.

⁸ Olson, *GI Bill*, 34-36.

⁹ Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 266.

¹⁰ Robert L. Tyler, “The American Veterans Committee: Out of a Hot War and Into the Cold,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (Autumn 1966), 420; Bernard Bellush, “The American Veterans Committee,” *American Students Organize*, 707-11.

governance, at times ceding new responsibilities to students they perceived as more mature than their fellows and predecessors. One dean of students put the case to his colleagues forcefully:

This is the moment to strengthen student government and to expand its responsibility. Mature men are crowding back to the college campus and they have come from an experience of external control and regimentation which, however necessary it may have been, was uncongenial to the point of being intolerable. To invite their participation in discussion and decision to a degree they have never known before will be a contribution to their restoration to civil life.¹¹

Planning for the International Union of Students

The United States Student Assembly (USSA) was, as discussed in chapter one, acutely interested in international student affairs. Its president, recent Wellesley graduate Alice Horton, had attended the 1945 London and Prague conferences that had begun preparations for a new International Union of Students (IUS). On her return to the United States Horton assembled an *ad hoc* American preparations committee for the IUS's founding convention, to be held in Prague in August 1946.¹²

The United States had been granted twenty-five delegates to the convention, and Horton's preparations committee allotted ten to individual campuses and fifteen to student and youth organizations. The committee proffered campus invitations with an

¹¹ Harold E.B. Sleight, addressing the National Association of Deans and Advisors of Men in April 1946. Quoted in Kranz, "International Education," 30-1.

¹² Alice Horton Tibbets, "Organizing the US Delegation to Prague," *American Students Organize*, 68-70. The Federal Bureau of Investigation kept close tabs on the planning for the IUS and NSA from the start, as will be discussed in detail in chapter three. A July 1947 FBI report passed on an informant's statement that the convener of the preparatory committee had invited AYD to participate because she wanted the committee to be "representative of all youth groups no matter what political sympathies." [FBI field office report NY 100-82655, July 7, 1947, FBI File on the National Student Association, FOIPA No. 0977353-001, (hereafter referred to as NSA FBI File), Section 3.].

eye to demographic diversity — the final list of participating schools featured colleges from every region of the country, and included one women’s college and one black college.¹³

The fifteen organizational seats were apportioned among nine American student and youth groups. Four — the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC), the National Intercollegiate Christian Council (NICC), the Student Volunteer Movement (SVM), and American Unitarian Youth (AUY) — were religious in nature.¹⁴ Three others — the liberal USSA, the communist AYD, and the moderate internationalist Student Federalists — were expressly political.¹⁵ The Association of Interns and Medical Students (AIMS)¹⁶ and the high-school-oriented Youthbuilders¹⁷ rounded out the list.

¹³ The committee extended invitations to ten geographically dispersed campuses, and if a school declined the invitation or failed to respond, an invitation was sent to another college in the same part of the country. [Jewel Lubin Bellush, “How the Prague Delegation Was Chosen,” *American Students Organize*, 73-75.] The campuses represented in the delegation were UCLA, the University of Chicago, Fisk, Harvard, Hunter College, the Universities of North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin, and Wayne State. Eight were public, and two were private. Each chose its own representative, either through campus-wide election or a student government selection process. [Austin, “Keynote Address,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.] Counting both the organizational and campus contingents, four of the Prague delegates were women and three were black. [Austin, “Keynote Address,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

¹⁴ The Student Volunteer Movement (SVM) was an organization dedicated to the support of Christian missionary work. The Jewish student organization Hillel was originally one of the sponsors of the Prague delegation, but it was unable to send a representative to the conference. Jews would be present in significant numbers in NSA’s early meetings, but they would not be organized on a religious basis. [Schodde, “Certain Foci,” 12 note 2; Committee for the Chicago Student Conference, press release, November 11, 1945 (actually 1946), ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

¹⁵ The Student Federalists had 1941 co-sponsored an attempt to create an umbrella organization of non-communist “pro-democracy youth.” [“The American Youth Institute, Inc.: Outline Plan of Foundation for Pro-Democracy Youth Organizations,” May 1, 1941. ADA Papers, Series 1 Number 305.]

¹⁶ AIMS was a pre-professional organization with a left-wing tilt. Its Prague representative, Bernard Lown, was later a founder of Physicians for Social Responsibility and of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, on whose behalf he accepted the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize. [Irwin Abrams, *The Nobel Peace Prize and the Laureates: An Illustrated Biographical History, 1901-2001*. (Sagamore Beach, MA: Science History Publications USA, 2001), 263-65.]

¹⁷ Because Youthbuilders was an organization of high school students, not collegians, it chose not to participate in NSA’s founding meetings. [Sara Holbrook, Youthbuilders, to

Each of the campuses and seven of the organizations were allotted one representative each, but two organizations were granted four slots apiece.¹⁸ The first of these latter groups was the NICC, the organizational umbrella under which the collegiate chapters of the YMCA and YWCA operated. It was a large and venerable organization, and it had provided the American Prague preparations committee with institutional support. The other four-person delegation was awarded to the Catholic NCYC, a newcomer to national student organizing.¹⁹

American Catholics and Postwar Student Organizing

In the early decades of the 20th century, American Catholics' involvement in non-sectarian organized social action was underdeveloped, and often discouraged by the church hierarchy.²⁰ The coming of the Great Depression had been a spur to action by some, however, and when Pope Pius XI published the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* in 1931 the ground shifted further. *Quadragesimo Anno* addressed itself to both issues of economic justice and the perils of communism, giving cautious support to Catholic participation in non-sectarian labor unions so long as such participation was matched with involvement in "associations which aim at giving their members a thorough

Alice Carter, United States Student Assembly, December 12, 1946. ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 305.]

¹⁸ According to one source, organizational seats were allocated in proportion to organizational membership. ["Events that Have Led to the Chicago Student Conference" [no author or provenance], 1946. NSA FBI File, Section 3.]

¹⁹ Four of the organizational representatives — one of the NCYC delegates, two of the NICC delegates, and the SVM delegate — were no longer students at the time of the Prague conference. [William Ellis and Joyce Roberts, Report on the World Student Conference at Prague, 1946, reprinted in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*.]

²⁰ David J. O'Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform: The New Deal Years* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 46; Robert L. Frank, "Prelude to Cold War: American Catholics and Communism," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol 34, Issue 1.

religious and moral training, that these in turn may impart to the unions to which they belong the upright spirit which should direct their entire conduct.”²¹

The year 1937 would see the founding of the most significant such association in the US labor movement — the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU), which claimed a “direct mandate” from the Pope.²² In March of that same year, a month after the founding of the ACTU, Pius XI issued an encyclical, *Divini Redemptoris*, which declared that “bolshevistic and atheistic Communism ... aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization.” He called upon “associations of workmen, farmers, technicians, doctors, employers, students and others of like character” to “dedicate themselves to” the anti-communist cause, “a cause which today transcends all others in vital importance.”²³

When *Divini Redemptoris* appeared, the United States had no student analogue to the ACTU. Student organizing had generally been circumscribed on American Catholic campuses — one 1930 survey of five hundred United States colleges and universities found that no Catholic institution had so much as a functioning student government.²⁴ After the publication of the *Divini Redemptoris*, however, that absence would soon be remedied. In mid-December students from 16 colleges were brought together in New York City to form the National Federation of Catholic College Students (NFCCS), whose declared mission was to “organize and unite the Catholic college students of America, that they may cooperate on both national and international issues.”²⁵ The following

²¹ Douglas P. Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals: The Association of Catholic Trade Unionists and the American Labor Movement, from Depression to Cold War* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1981), 103.

²² Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals*, 56.

²³ The ACTU, which addressed itself to a variety of issues early in its existence, became more exclusively oriented toward anti-communist organizing as the decade wore on. See Seaton, *Catholics and Radicals*, chapters three and four.

²⁴ Bowden and Clarke, *Tomorrow's Americans*, 55.

²⁵ “Catholic Students Organize New Group,” *New York Times*, December 13, 1937.

autumn a similar organization, the National Catholic Youth Council (NCYC), was created under the aegis of the National Catholic Welfare Council.²⁶

The establishment of the NFCCS and the NCYC made organized Catholic involvement in national — and international — student organizing possible for the first time, and soon Catholic leaders were exhorting the nation's students to enter the political fray.²⁷ In a January 1939 article in *America*, a widely-read Catholic weekly, John Eoghan Kelly, a prominent American supporter of Spain's fascist Franco regime, derided the "little red schoolboys" of the American Student Union. Describing the ASU as "a bitter group, holding apart from the normal healthy life of their fellows, to brood on 'injustice' and imaginary wrongs," Kelly called for the creation of a "militant American undergraduate movement, organized on a nationwide basis, to provide a rallying point for patriotic students, to expose the falsity of radical arguments, to drive Communism from the campus."²⁸

In early 1946, as the Prague delegation was being assembled, an article appeared in *America* that made the church's stance on US Catholic involvement in the IUS project explicit. That article was entitled "Operation University," and its author, Jesuit theologian John Courtney Murray, pointed to the nascent international youth movement as a crucial battleground in the postwar era. "There is no doubt," he wrote, "that Moscow understands the power of youth." The only question was whether and how

Catholic youth can be put on the move, in the international field, in a solidly organized movement, with a truly conquering spirit, that will carry through a positive program and also combat communist influence.

²⁶ "Catechism Change Goes to Hierarchy," *New York Times*, October 4, 1938.

²⁷ A few Catholic students had participated in the conferences of the American Student Union over the course of the 1930s, but organized involvement by Catholic youth in national student organizing had been discouraged by church leaders. [Martin L. McLaughlin, "Political Processes in American National Student Organizations" (PhD diss., Notre Dame, 1948), 66.]

²⁸ John Eoghan Kelly, "Little Red Schoolboys," *America: A Catholic Review of the Week*, January 14, 1939, 344.

To begin this process, Murray, an adviser to the international Catholic youth organization Pax Romana, urged that a contingent of twelve American Catholic students be “selected, carefully and intensively trained, and sent over to the Prague meeting” with “the quite sober and entirely feasible intent of ‘taking it over.’”²⁹

The National Catholic Youth Conference had been invited to join the Prague delegation earlier that year, but it did not accept the invitation until after Murray’s exhortations appeared in print. Murray himself then chose the members of the NCYC delegation, and arranged for the four to receive “an intensive ten days of training” before joining the rest of the delegation for the full group orientation sessions and the journey across the Atlantic.³⁰

Founding the International Union of Students

The full American delegation to Prague assembled in New York City in mid-July to get acquainted with one another, to assimilate the conference materials they had been given and to try to find common ground on issues that were likely to arise at the conference.³¹ A majority of the delegates were politically liberal, with most of the Catholic organizational delegates standing apart on the right end of the spectrum and

²⁹ John Courtney Murray, “Operation University,” *America: A Catholic Review of the Week*, April 13, 1946, 28-29; Edward J. Kirchner, “Preparing the Catholic Delegation,” Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 76-78.

³⁰ Kirchner, “Preparing the Catholic Delegation,” in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*; McLaughlin, “Political Processes,” 65. Kirchner, one of the four NCYC delegates, was at the time of the Prague conference a former president of Pax Romana.

³¹ Kranz, “International Education,” 44-45.

two avowed communists on the left.³² (Martin McLaughlin of Notre Dame was likely the most liberal of the Catholics, and he wielded significant influence among the delegates.) The group elected Russell Austin, a University of Chicago student in his early thirties who had impressed them with his quiet manner and instinct for consensus, to serve as their chair, and the delegation continued to caucus informally on the trip to Czechoslovakia.³³

Prague was a city of great symbolic importance to the student activists of the 1940s. On November 17, 1939, German troops in Prague had shot and killed nine Czech student leaders in one of the first and most widely publicized acts of Nazi anti-student violence, an event that had been commemorated ever since as International Students' Day.³⁴ But Czechoslovakia was also a nation with strong ties to the Soviet Union — the Czech Communist Party was the leading force in the country's coalition government, which had provided extensive funding and logistical support for the conference.³⁵

³² McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 66. delegate Douglass Cater said after the conference that there had been "a great diversity of opinion among us, but no hard division into cliques." [Douglass Cater, "New York Session of Delegation to Prague," *Harvard Crimson*, October 17, 1946, excerpted in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 95.]

³³ McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 48 note 12; Douglas Kelley, "Students Organize," *The Progressive*, September 1, 1947, 10. Austin was, according to the Chicago conference conveners, a disabled veteran of World War II, but I have not found any documentation of the nature of his disability. [Committee for the Chicago Student Conference, press release, November 11, 194[6], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.] The delegates traveled to Europe on two separate ships. [Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 96.]

³⁴ Altbach and Uphoff, *Student Internationals*, 17.

³⁵ Altbach and Uphoff, *Student Internationals*, 24. Post-conference support for the IUS came largely from the Eastern Bloc as well. [Jim Smith to NSA executive committee, December 18, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.] The most thorough analysis of the Soviet role in the early IUS appears in Magnelia, "International Union of Students," Part Two, particularly 77-82. Douglass Cater reported to the NSA constitutional convention that Czechoslovakia, Finland, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia were the only nations to pay their IUS dues in full in 1946-47, and that the Soviet Union's contribution of 1,669,000 Czech Crowns amounted to well over half of total dues received during the year. [FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 5.]

The conference opened in the House of Music in Prague on August 18. After a rousing speech from Prime Minister Klement Gottwald, the chairman of the Czech Communist Party, a workers' choir performed an anti-fascist song written for the occasion. A telegram from Marshall Tito, Prime Minister of Yugoslavia, was read, and met with cheers.³⁶

When the credentials committee reported, a pattern in its decisions quickly became obvious. Three Indian student unions were present, but only the one affiliated with the Indian communist party was granted credentials. Austria's national union of students was given one seat, while its communist student organization was given two. Italy's delegation was reduced from twenty seats to ten, with four of the ten granted to communist students, and the non-communists on the Italian delegation withdrew from the conference in protest.³⁷ In all, one American delegate estimated, 185 of the 308 seated delegates — including 14 of Britain's 20 representatives and 12 of France's 20 — were reliably pro-communist.³⁸

On the eve of the conference's first substantive meetings, its preparations committee scrapped the agenda they had circulated months earlier, replacing it with one that foregrounded political questions, shunting non-ideological matters to the end of the meeting.³⁹ (The first item on the revised agenda was "The Task of the Student in the Elimination of Fascism."⁴⁰) At the first working session of the conference the head of the Soviet delegation moved the new agenda, which passed as written, and the body formally constituted itself as the International Union of Students (IUS).⁴¹

³⁶ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 43; Altbach and Uphoff, *Student Internationals*, 21-2; Jones, *Student Internationals*, 12.

³⁷ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 44; Magnelia, "International Union of Students," 779.

³⁸ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 44-45.

³⁹ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 46.

⁴⁰ Martin McLaughlin, "Student Congress at Prague," *America*, December 14, 1946.

⁴¹ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 46.

Conference proceedings went smoothly for the most part, but there were moments of pointed conflict. The most acrimonious debate of the conference concerned the question of member national unions of students' obligations to the IUS on matters of policy. As presented to the plenary, the proposed constitution obligated IUS member organizations to "abide by the Constitution of the IUS [and] carry into practice the decisions of its Congress and other governing bodies and support organizations."⁴² An American delegate's counter-proposal, under which national unions would have been granted discretion in choosing which IUS stands to support, was rejected in a 160-71 roll call vote.⁴³

The Dutch national union of students withdrew from the IUS in the midst of all this maneuvering, denouncing "the policy of domination that some groups have shown at this congress" and declaring that "democratic procedure ... is not complete without" respect for "the rights and privileges of the minority."⁴⁴ The next day a Czech communist student was elected to the group's presidency.⁴⁵

Though it was clear to all that communist students had held the upper hand in Prague, few national delegations left the IUS as a result of events at the founding conference.⁴⁶ Commitment to the idea of an international student organization was strong among non-communists — there were certainly areas of common ground to be developed, and the extent to which any one faction would dominate the IUS going

⁴² van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 47.

⁴³ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 48.

⁴⁴ Jones, *Student Internationals*, 23.

⁴⁵ It was reported that communists won between nine and twelve of seventeen seats on the IUS executive committee, and four of seven seats on its governing board. [van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 49; McLaughlin, "Student Congress in Prague," 292; "Red Heads Student Union," *New York Times*, August 30, 1946.]

⁴⁶ "Red Heads Student Union," *New York Times*, August 30, 1946.

forward was still not clear.⁴⁷ One American delegate noted that the non-communist minority at the conference had grown more unified as the meeting progressed, and predicted that it “could be molded into something very significant.”⁴⁸ What’s more, though the Soviet delegation had never lost a vote at the conference, they had demonstrated a willingness to compromise on some important issues.⁴⁹

Bill Ellis, an NICC representative, had been elected to an IUS vice presidency, and he saw the new group as potentially susceptible to amelioration or transformation. American students, he said, had the potential to make the IUS “what we so desire — namely, a truly representative and democratic organization.” He concluded with an exhortation: “We must not fail!”⁵⁰ Even among those Americans who demurred from Ellis’ analysis, moreover, there was near-consensus that continued engagement with the IUS was desirable, at least in the short term. Some argued that participation in even a pro-communist IUS could help them to forge connections with non-aligned students from other countries, while others relished the opportunity to confront communist students with an opposing perspective.⁵¹

⁴⁷ A complicating factor was the fact that Catholic delegates had alienated many others with attacks on the non-communist left and defenses of fascist Spain — indeed the Catholic youth group Pax Romana had held a conference in Spain not long before the Prague meeting. [Magnelia, “International Union of Students,” 76; Kirchner, “Preparing the Catholic Delegation,” in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*.

⁴⁸ McLaughlin, “Student Conference at Prague.”

⁴⁹ Magnelia, “International Union of Students,” 79-80. A plan to give the IUS and the World Federation of Democratic Youth interlocking governance structures was dropped at the request of non-communist delegates, and the powers of the IUS executive committee were scaled back. [Magnelia, “International Union of Students,” 61, 65.]

⁵⁰ Jones, *Student Internationals*, 28. An FBI document reported that “although the Communist interests may presently control two-thirds of the executive staff of the IUS, the Student Division YMCA believes that the aims and purposes of the IUS are essentially wholesome and that as the organization grows it will take on a more representative democratic character.” [FBI field office report, NY 100-82655, New York City July 7, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 3.]

⁵¹ Altbach and Uphoff, *Student Internationals*, 24. In a report on the conference, McLaughlin and Briefs said debates had been conducted according to democratic principles, and that no inappropriate limitations had been placed on organizing among

Whether American involvement in the early postwar international student meetings was encouraged by any elements in the United States intelligence community remains an open question.⁵² It is clear, however, that the American students' international work in this period received little if any material support. In a 1947 interview in the Association's monthly newspaper the *NSA News*, NSA's delegates to that year's World Youth Festival in Prague complained bitterly about the lack of resources that had been made available to them:

We had nothing, absolutely nothing — no nails, no little pieces of wood, no paint ... Here we were from the richest nation on the earth borrowing nails and trying to put up little tiny snapshots of little tiny things. We finally ended up by putting up an exhibit which was quite amateurish.⁵³

They had asked the State Department for help, they said, but had been rebuffed. "We couldn't even borrow things like American flags from them ... We ended up by borrowing a small bust of Franklin Roosevelt from the Prague public library," while the Soviets had mounted a "magnificent" display, and had been represented at the festival by "their best ballet dancers, their best athletes, their best students."⁵⁴

Initial Preparations for an American National Student Organization

Because the IUS had been structured as a federation of national unions of students, American students would not be able to participate fully in the international

the attendees. [Quoted in Magnelia, "International Union of Students," 67. For more on non-communist students' investment in the IUS, see Magnelia 68-71.]

⁵² As we will see in chapter three, it is known that the FBI took a dim view of such involvement.

⁵³ Eleanor Roberts, quoted in "US Democracy Has 'Rough Time:' WYF Delegates Air Views," *NSA News*, November 1947.

⁵⁴ Eleanor Roberts and student leader Harris Wofford, later a United States Senator from Pennsylvania, quoted in "US Democracy Has 'Rough Time.'"

group unless they created a national student organization of their own. The American delegates' experiences in Prague had, moreover, left them impressed by the effectiveness of other countries' national unions of students, and by the prestige that attached to participation in them.⁵⁵ And so the founding of the National Student Association, like that of the National Student Federation of America before it, would owe its existence to the spur provided by the example of an international student organization.

The Americans had begun serious discussions about the possibility of establishing a domestic National Student Organization (NSO) even before Prague, and their talks continued during the long boat ride home.⁵⁶ Upon their return to the United States they established a planning committee for such an organization, and issued a call for a preparatory meeting to be held that December — just four months hence.⁵⁷ Russell Austin, the chair of the Prague delegation, offered to host the preparatory meeting at his home campus, the University of Chicago, and planning proceeded under his direction.⁵⁸ Martin McLaughlin took a semester's leave of absence to organize at Catholic colleges, and Douglass Cater, Harvard's representative in Prague, set up a satellite office to conduct campus outreach in New England.⁵⁹ (Cater, who had been a Russian specialist in the Office of Strategic Services during the war, would go on to an eclectic career as a Washington journalist, political advisor, and college president.)

⁵⁵ McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 25.

⁵⁶ Austin, "Keynote Address," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; McLaughlin, "Conference in Chicago," 711. In early conversations and planning for NSA, a variety of names were used to refer to the proposed group. The most common of these was "the National Student Organization," or NSO, and for clarity's sake I have used that nomenclature to describe the nascent NSA prior to the 1947 constitutional convention.

⁵⁷ Austin, "Keynote Address," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. Although several sources date the decision to establish a new national student organization to the voyage home from Prague, the idea had been discussed by the delegates before the trip.

⁵⁸ Kranz, "International Education," 52; "Plans for New Student Group Set at Chicago," *Students International Activities Bulletin*, March 1, 1947.

⁵⁹ Jones, *Student Internationals*, 29.

A call for the Chicago conference was sent out to student government presidents and deans of students at nine hundred American colleges and universities.⁶⁰ Recent experiences, the conveners declared, had

brought home ... the fact that a new segment of society is emerging — a group with recognizable characteristics of its own which often transcend national differences. Having recognized the existence of this INTERNATIONAL STUDENT COMMUNITY, we are further drawn to the conviction that each individual student has a responsibility to this community of his fellow students — not only on the international but also on a national and a local plane.

They were calling, therefore, for

the establishment of a non-partisan organization, representative of all students of the United States, democratic in principle and practice, and devoted to the needs and problems of students.⁶¹

This declaration was followed by a list of potential projects for the new organization. The list, the NSO's first statement of its intended mission, was striking in its emphasis on domestic tasks, its student-centeredness, and its unabashed political liberalism:

1. The stimulation of active, democratic, student-controlled student governments on the campuses of colleges and universities;
2. The elimination of racial discrimination on campuses;
3. The extension of equal educational opportunities to all;
4. The advocacy of lower tuition fees and the increase of scholarships and government aid to qualified students;
5. The encouragement of such student-operated institutions as hostels, dormitories, dining halls, etc.;
6. The stimulation of student dramatic productions, art exhibitions, concerts, sports events, etc.;

⁶⁰ McLaughlin, "Conference in Chicago," 711.

⁶¹ Second call for Chicago conference ["New Date: December 28, 29, 30"], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

7. Facilitation of student exchange and travel.⁶²

After describing some of the panels that would be held in Chicago and explaining registration policies and procedures, the call assured potential attendees that “there will be parties too!”⁶³

Voting status at the conference was to be limited to campus delegates and representatives of national organizations. So that the conference would not be dominated by paper organizations created for that purpose, only groups with a substantial campus presence would be given voting credentials.⁶⁴ To limit non-delegate influence over the proceedings, only students and “persons directly concerned with student affairs” would be permitted to attend, only student delegates would be granted speaking privileges in plenaries and panel sessions, and each organization or campus would be granted only a limited number of observers.⁶⁵ In an effort to balance the interests of small and large campuses and organizations, the conference established sliding scales of representation for each delegation type.⁶⁶

⁶² Second call for Chicago conference, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁶³ Second call for Chicago conference, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁶⁴ Organizations were required to have at least twenty chapters dispersed over at least five states, although convening organizations were exempted from this provision.

⁶⁵ Pre-conference packet [“Chicago Student Conference: December 28 to 30”], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁶⁶ Campuses of fewer than a thousand students would receive a single delegate, those with between one and five thousand two, those with between five and ten thousand three, and those with more four. National organizations would receive between two and four delegates according to a similar algorithm. Branches of the same institution that had separate student governments could count the various units separately. (The New York Metropolitan region was particularly adept at using such rules to its advantage — CCNY sent nine delegates to Chicago and NYU sent seven.) [McLaughlin, “Political Processes,” 28 note 9.] The NSFA had maintained a one-delegate-per-campus representative structure, but I have found no significant support for such an approach in early negotiations over the NSO. [On NSFA see Schnell, “Student Organizations,” 202.]

The Demographics of the Chicago Conference

The conference itself was held over three days between Christmas and New Year's Eve, 1946. Campus interest in the event had been strong from the moment of the first announcement, but attendance was far higher than the conveners had planned for — seven hundred students from three hundred colleges and universities were present, making the gathering the largest establishing convention of an American student organization up to that time.⁶⁷ This turnout left the organizational representatives wildly outnumbered on the plenary floor — more than two dozen national and regional groups sent representatives to Chicago, and most were granted voting seats, but campus delegates dominated organizational delegates by an eighteen-to-one ratio.⁶⁸

A solid majority of the delegates in Chicago represented private colleges and universities, and private institutions would remain well-represented in NSA through the late 1960s. In part this precedent was set because the Catholics' organizing efforts over the previous months had paid off — it was estimated that nearly one in three of the

⁶⁷ McLaughlin, "Conference in Chicago," 711.

⁶⁸ "Reports of the Chicago Student Conference," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. "List of Delegates and Observers," NSA Papers, Box 1. With the exception of Youthbuilders and the SVM, all of the American organizations that had sent delegates to Prague sent voting delegates to Chicago. The Christian groups were the best represented — the NICC had four voting delegates, and the Catholic NCYC, by registering at its constituent organizations (the NFCCS and the Newman Clubs) was able to claim eight. No other organization had more than two. Eight organizations that had not been in Prague sent voting delegates, and another twelve sent observers. All told, there were about thirty voting delegates representing organizations present in Chicago, and another thirty observers. Some organizations did, it should be noted, make efforts to enhance the ranks of sympathetic delegates. For instance, local chapters of the YMCA and Hillel underwrote the expenses of two of the University of Washington's three delegates. [FBI field office report SE 100-18834, Seattle, Washington, July 16, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 4.]

Chicago delegates was Catholic, making them the largest faction at the meeting.⁶⁹ They were the best organized as well, as Martin McLaughlin and several other students had put together a cohesive network of delegates, with about a dozen priests on hand to observe and provide additional guidance.⁷⁰

Under the direction of a substantial contingent of USSA leaders, a sizeable liberal bloc quickly established a working relationship with the Catholics in Chicago. The liberals' participation in this coalition was, one Prague delegate wrote, intended to build a united front against the communist left, and it was premised on the belief that Catholics were unlikely to hold any power they won in the NSO for long, while any communist gains would be consolidated and strengthened over time.⁷¹

But communists, for all the attention they were paid, were a relatively insubstantial force in Chicago. (The national director of the Party's Council of Student Clubs optimistically estimated that perhaps ten percent of the delegates had previously "had any previous contact with the organized progressive movement.")⁷² With US-Soviet relations souring, and HUAC's investigations heating up, the conference's communists were not merely small in number, but embattled as well.⁷³

The conveners of the conference went to considerable lengths to ensure geographic diversity. Most notably, they imposed a five dollar "tax" on each delegate who

⁶⁹ Martin McLaughlin estimated that Catholics accounted for about 125 of 500 voting delegates at the conference. [McLaughlin, "Conference in Chicago."]

⁷⁰ For more on the various non-student advisers at the Chicago conference, see Don Willner to "Jim" [James Loeb, Jr.] March 25, 1947. ADA Papers, Series 2 Number 299.

⁷¹ According to John Curtis Farrar, who had attended Prague as a representative of the Student Federalists, the organizations involved in conference planning saw the new group as a "sort of over-all body" that could help them "coordinate their activities." [John Curtis Farrar, "American Students Talk It Over," *Nation*, January 11, 1947, 46.]

⁷² Marvin Shaw, "The Reawakening Student Movement," *Political Affairs*, February 1947, 135.

⁷³ For a discussion of the tactics employed by "the more radical left-wing groups" in Chicago, see Clifton R. Wharton Jr., "The Chicago Student Conference," in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 112-17.

had traveled less than 750 miles to attend, with the money to be distributed to those who had come from farther away.⁷⁴ Ultimately the conference drew students from colleges in the District of Columbia and 41 of the nation's 48 states, though the Midwest and the Northeast made up a solid majority of delegates.⁷⁵

No records of the racial composition of the conference were kept. More than a dozen black colleges were present in Chicago, and their delegates and observers combined amounted to about 4% of the gathered students. At least some other colleges' delegations were of course integrated as well — several of the more prominent delegates at the conference were African Americans from predominantly white schools, and the official list of delegates indicates that a few students of Asian and Latino descent were present as well.⁷⁶

Women were actually over-represented at the Chicago convention — the 36% of the delegates that was female constituted a significantly larger percentage than that of women in the collegiate population of the country as a whole. This was in part a reflection of the Catholics' success in recruiting, since many of the Catholic colleges present were all-female schools. But it also reflected the demographic effects of the war — because fewer women had seen their studies interrupted, and many veterans were enrolling in college for the first time, women made up a larger portion of the junior and senior years at American colleges than their overall enrollment would have predicted, and were thus more likely to fill the student government positions from which NSO

⁷⁴ Pre-conference packet, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. It's not clear what conference fees, if any, were charged beyond this tax. The constitutional convention's conference fee was \$20 per participant. [FBI Field Report BU 100-10053, Buffalo, NY, November 10, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section Six.]

⁷⁵ "Reports of the Chicago Conference," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. Only Delaware, Rhode Island, and five states of the Mountain West — Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Utah, and Arizona — were absent.

⁷⁶ "List of Delegates and Observers" [1946 Chicago conference], NSA Papers, Box 1.

participants were generally drawn.⁷⁷ The higher one rose in the NSO's ranks, however, the fewer women one found. Women made up more than half of the non-voting observers at the Chicago conference, but barely a third of the delegates and less than a fifth of the Executive Committee that was elected there.⁷⁸

Events at the Chicago Conference

The mood of the more than seven hundred participants in the Chicago conference was electric. Few had ever been involved an event like this before, and they would have to learn, and work, quickly — the Chicago conference had an ambitious agenda, and from start to finish it was scheduled to last less than 50 hours.

It began on Saturday night, with a welcoming speech from a University of Chicago dean and a keynote address by Russell Austin, the soft-spoken chair of the Prague delegation. In his speech, Austin traced the challenges confronting American higher education in the postwar era, giving particular attention to the problems attendant to expanding enrollment and to the need for increased governmental assistance to student veterans. “As students,” he declared, “it is our right, our privilege, and our duty to assist in the settling of these problems and the grasping of these opportunities.” There were, he said,

⁷⁷ Also, at many campuses women actually had a more well-developed tradition of participation in student government than men. The restrictions of *in loco parentis* fell harder on female students than on male (at single-sex and co-ed colleges alike), giving women more of a stake in student government.

⁷⁸ There was ample precedent for female leadership in American student organizations, even discounting the example of the wartime USSA — Molly Yard had served as national chair of ASU for two years, and NSFA had elected several female presidents. But NSA would not see its first woman president until 1971.

many ... needs for which a national student organization might well attempt a solution. How can we express our desires, our viewpoints on these problems if we do not have college newspapers free to express our will, to present the arguments pro and con on which our action will be based? How can we know what our students really want if there are no free, student-controlled student governments through which those needs can be expressed? How can we say that educational opportunity is really broad if our schools are not open to all regardless of race or religion or economic status? These are problems for which we may find unified action necessary and possible despite our differences in religion, race or politics.⁷⁹

He then outlined the work that lay ahead, and closed with a rousing call to action that was inflected with the language of the International Union of Students:

Long live the unity of the students of the United States! Long live the NSO which is to be conceived here!⁸⁰

The work of the conference would be conducted in four “panels,” each reporting to the plenary. Panel I would address the structure and responsibility of the National Continuations Committee (NCC) — the body that would organize the NSO’s constitutional convention in the summer of 1947. Panel II, III, and IV would consider organizational structure, international issues, and “the aims and activities” of the new organization.⁸¹

The conference planning committee had, as noted earlier, been dominated by organizational representatives. Its proposal for the NCC’s structure reflected that fact, offering up a 30-member NCC that would be evenly divided between organizational and campus members.⁸² The conference’s organizational delegates would determine which

⁷⁹ Austin, “Keynote Address,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁸⁰ Austin, “Keynote Address,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁸¹ Pre-conference packet, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; “Reports of the Chicago Conference,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁸² The major outside student organizations that were involved in the NSO in 1946 had all been established with considerable non-student involvement, and that history may have influenced organizational representatives’ thinking. Many in USSA, for instance, felt in 1945-46 that that organization was suffering from an insufficiency of non-student

organizations would hold each of their fifteen seats, and each organization would choose its own representatives after the conference. The executive committee would then elect officers and a “staff committee” of Midwesterners who would conduct the day-to-day work of preparing for the constitutional convention.⁸³

Several campus delegations had prepared alternative proposals for the NCC’s structure, but only one — the Texas delegation’s plan, circulated in draft form before the conference and finalized at a Saturday open meeting — caught the imagination of the delegates.⁸⁴ Under the Texas Plan the NCC’s executive committee would consist wholly of representatives chosen in regional caucuses, and the plenary itself would elect officers and staff. Organizational delegates would be eligible to run for regional seats on the executive committee, as well as for officer and staff positions, but organizations themselves would have no role in the NCC.⁸⁵ To campus delegates, distrustful of national “student” organizations run by and for non-students, the Texas Plan was an appealing one.⁸⁶

The Texas Plan’s primary author was Jim Smith, the president of the University of Texas student government. Smith, a former labor organizer and shipyard worker in his early twenties, had gained a national reputation by dint of his support for the

involvement. [USSA “Staff Report Number One to 1945-46 Executive Committee,” [1945], ADA Papers Series 2 Number 339.]

⁸³ “Chicago Student Conference: December 28 to 30,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁸⁴ McLaughlin, “Political Processes,” 29 note 11; Martin McLaughlin, “Spotlight on Students,” *The Catholic World*, November 1947. The Texas plan also incorporated a proposal for the structure of the NSO itself.

⁸⁵ “The Texas Plan,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. I cannot speak to the officer structure proposed under the original Texas Plan, as the only copy of the Plan that I have found to date omits the discussion of that structure.

⁸⁶ McLaughlin, “Political Processes,” 46, note 9; McLaughlin, “Conference in Chicago,” 712. Organized Catholics, confident of their strength in campus delegations and concerned about communist inroads, supported the Texas Plan. [Jim Smith to Arno Nowotny, January 5, 1947, excerpted in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 119-20.]

integration of the University of Texas law school.⁸⁷ He impressed the delegates in Chicago with eloquent statements from the floor and effective organizing behind the scenes, and emerged as the most powerful and charismatic personality at the conference.⁸⁸

Conference participants worked on their various proposals far into the night after Saturday's opening sessions, and the panels began meeting on Sunday morning.⁸⁹ The plenary was scheduled to reconvene at seven that evening, but by mid-afternoon it was clear that the conference had fallen hopelessly off its pace. Panel I, on the structure of the NCC, was ready to present its report as planned, but the other panels were not. A special meeting was called for 5 pm, at which the plenary ceded most of its remaining time to additional panel sessions and empowered the NCC, rather than the plenary itself, to receive the reports of Panels II, III, and IV. It soon became clear that a quorum no longer existed, and the plenary was forced to continue meeting informally as a Committee of the Whole as it considered the report of Panel I.

Panel I had used the Texas Plan for the NCC as its starting point. The panel members had made a few wording changes, and added some new details, but in its spirit and in most of its language, the Panel I proposal *was* the Texas Plan. On every substantive question upon which the Texas Plan had diverged from the convening committee's proposal, the panel had sided with the Texans. The plenary sided with the Texans as well, passing the Panel I proposal with just one amendment — in a concession to the national organizations, they added three organizational seats to the NCC executive

⁸⁷ Farrar, "American Students Talk It Over," 45; "National Organization of College Students Planned at Conclave," Washington DC *Evening Star*, August 29, 1947; "To Form Nation-Wide Student Organization," Sheboygan *Press*, August 28, 1947. Smith had not served in the Second World War, for reasons that I have been unable to determine.

⁸⁸ McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 50, note 16; "Report on the Chicago Student Conference," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁸⁹ McLaughlin, "Conference in Chicago," 712.

committee.⁹⁰ (Under the plan as adopted, the nation was divided into thirty regions, with each region granted a seat on the executive committee.⁹¹)

In his keynote, Russell Austin had envisioned the NSO as “a representative and democratic student organization” with a “complete reliance on democratic procedure and practice,” one that would as a result “speak with authority and accuracy for all the students of the United States.”⁹² Rebuffing the conveners of the conference, the Chicago delegates had concretized this rhetoric in an NSO that would have its base on the campuses, not in organizational offices.

On Monday, the final day of the conference, Panels II, III, and IV reconvened to finish their work and regional meetings were held to select regional officers and executive committee representatives.⁹³ The organizational representatives met as well, though the result of their election was a foregone conclusion — the leaders of the liberal and Catholic factions had already agreed on a slate of candidates for the three organizational seats, parceling them out to the three the most prominent anti-communist organizations present — the Catholic Newman Clubs, the Protestant NICC, and the liberal USSA.

⁹⁰ “Report on the Chicago Student Conference,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; “Reports of the Chicago Conference: December 28 to 30, 1946,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. The organizational seats on the executive committee were to be elected by and from the organizational representatives present in Chicago, rather than apportioned among the organizations as the conference planning committee had proposed.

⁹¹ This structure assured the committee’s geographic diversity, but it severely limited the power of the most well-represented regions at the conference. The largest region, the New York Metropolitan, accounted for 54 of the conference’s 350 delegates, while the Florida region’s sole delegate, Manuel Alvarez, won his seat on the executive committee by nominating and voting for himself. [“List of Delegates and Observers Attending the Chicago Student Conference (Dec. 28-30, 1946),” NSA Papers, Box 1.]

⁹² Austin, “Keynote Address,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁹³ Organizational delegates had been eligible to run for the regional seats, but only campus representatives won election.

The region that incorporated North and South Carolina, whose delegation had a black delegate majority, took it upon itself to send two representatives to the executive committee — one white and one black. Although this accommodation was later pointed to with pride by some NSA leaders as evidence of Southern students' ability to compromise across racial lines for the greater good of all, it should be noted that such a gesture was only made in the one region that otherwise would have, if delegates had voted along racial lines, elected a single black representative. None of the majority-white delegations in Chicago made provision for the representation of their regions' black minorities on the NCC, and only one, the New York Metropolitan region, chose a black representative — Walter Wallace of Columbia, who had represented Youthbuilders in Prague.⁹⁴

After the executive committee met to craft officer election procedures and conduct other business, the plenary reconvened and formally passed a resolution establishing a National Student Organization.⁹⁵ But one item remained to be considered before the officers and staff could be elected — a few delegates were demanding a plenary review of the report of Panel IV, charged with establishing the scope of the NSO's "Aims and Activities."⁹⁶

Panel IV's mandate had included the question of the NSO's stance on racial discrimination. The panel had been forthright in its opposition to segregation in higher education, and explicit in its advocacy of direct NSO action to combat it — too direct, in

⁹⁴ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, March 1947, NSA Papers, Box 1.

⁹⁵ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, December 30, 1946, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. Although some Americans had criticized the IUS leadership in Prague for hesitating to provide a secret ballot in that organization's first elections, the executive committee decreed that the NSO's officer and staff committee elections would be conducted by hand vote. This practice was not abandoned until the reorganization of NSA as the United States Student Association in 1978. ["Election Results," *USSA Coalition Daily*, August 11, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.]

⁹⁶ John Curtis Farrar, "Students Map the Future," *The Nation*, September 20, 1947, 279.

the eyes of some white Southern delegates.⁹⁷ They insisted that the language in the panel report, which had sketched an agenda for combating Jim Crow laws, would doom the NSO in the white South, and they succeeded in convincing the plenary to strike the most explicit anti-segregation passages.⁹⁸

In a nod to anti-racist sentiment the plenary added the word “equal” to the statement of the NSO’s aims, which now read, “To secure *equal* rights and possibilities for primary, secondary, and higher education regardless of sex, race, and religion,” but this language hardly made up for the programmatic statements that had been removed — ‘separate but equal’ was in 1946 the prevailing fiction deployed in defense of segregation in the Jim Crow South, and the NSO’s formal position on racial issues contained nothing that challenged it.⁹⁹

After dispatching the question of racial discrimination, the plenary moved on to elections. The officers chosen in Chicago would set the NSO’s course over the eight months that followed, and would — given the plenary’s failure to complete consideration of the conference agenda — have considerable latitude in doing so.

The presidential candidates were Jim Smith of Texas and Prague delegation chair Russell Austin. Smith beat Austin in the presidential race, and Austin then won the vice presidency by a 100-vote margin.¹⁰⁰ Clifton Wharton, a black Harvard student who was a

⁹⁷ Farrar, “American Students Talk It Over,” 46. See also Clifton R. Wharton, Jr., “The Chicago Student Conference,” in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 115.

⁹⁸ Farrar, “American Students Talk It Over,” 46; McLaughlin, “Conference in Chicago,” 713.

⁹⁹ Farrar, “American Students Talk It Over,” 46; “Reports of the Chicago Student Conference,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

¹⁰⁰ Farrar, “American Students Talk It Over,” 46; “Report on the Chicago Student Conference,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. I have not yet been able to identify Austin’s opponent. In a post-conference letter Jim Smith said that Austin’s election had been unanimous. [Jim Smith to Arno Nowotny, January 5, 1947, excerpted in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 119-20.]

member of the Protestant NICC, was elected secretary, and John Simons, a prominent anti-communist Catholic from Fordham, was chosen as treasurer.¹⁰¹

Although the organizations and the Prague delegation clearly wielded considerable influence in Chicago, the elections demonstrated the delegates' disinclination to cede power to the "old guard." Of eight students elected to positions in the NCC by the entire conference — the four officers and the members of the staff committee — only two had been to Prague and none were organizational representatives in Chicago.¹⁰²

The NSO also showed little inclination to coronate a permanent "professional student" leadership clique. In the race for the presidency, the Prague delegation chair had lost to a student who hadn't attended the international meeting. A solid majority of officer and staff positions had gone to students whose formal relationship with the NSO had begun with the Chicago conference, as had all but three of the seats on the executive committee. The new NSO thus saw more leadership turnover in the course of its first conference than the old top-heavy ASU had experienced in its first half-decade.

¹⁰¹ McLaughlin, "Conference in Chicago," 713; McLaughlin, "Spotlight on Students," 133. Wharton would go on to a distinguished career in education, philanthropy, and government that was capped by a six-year stint as CEO of the financial services company TIAA-CREF.

¹⁰² The membership of the four-student staff committee was drawn from delegates living in or near Chicago. [Minutes of the NCC executive committee, December 30, 1946, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.] In that election the liberals and the Catholics had, as with the organizational representatives to the NCC executive committee, secretly selected a slate of candidates to support. As before, the caucus candidates prevailed. ["Report on the Chicago Student Conference," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.] See appendix for a list of the members of the staff committee.

From Chicago to Madison

The various members of the NCC — staff, officers, executive committee — met immediately after the conference ended. They established policies for fundraising and expenditures, set up procedures for proxy voting, and directed the staff committee to prepare a draft program and constitution for the NSO. They resolved to send letters to Wayne University and the University of Wisconsin, the two campuses that had expressed an interest in hosting the constitutional convention, informing them that their proposals were under consideration. And then they went their separate ways.¹⁰³

As the students who had participated in the Chicago conference dispersed, it remained unclear what role Catholic students would play in the new organization. The primary impetus for Catholic involvement had been the prevention of a communist takeover of the NSO.¹⁰⁴ But no serious takeover bid had been mounted, and by the end of the conference democratic safeguards offered the NSO substantial protection against one. Given that, Martin McLaughlin wrote, it was incumbent upon the Catholic students — students who before Chicago “had not ... had the opportunity to do much independent thinking” — to move beyond “the incessant red-baiting that characterizes much Catholic literature and many Catholic groups,” and in its place “show evidence of constructive planning and concrete programming.”¹⁰⁵ McLaughlin was by now emerging as a national leader among Catholic students, and what was needed, he believed, was not an “anti-communist crusade,” but a Catholic movement to “seize the initiative in advocating and striving to attain those beneficial and desirable reforms which his communist comrades

¹⁰³ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, December 30, 1946, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

¹⁰⁴ McLaughlin, “Conference in Chicago,” 713.

¹⁰⁵ McLaughlin, “Conference in Chicago,” 713-14.

dangle before the eyes of his fellow students as the drawing card for his own activities.”¹⁰⁶

As time went on, however, an anti-communist clique developed within the NSO that did not share McLaughlin’s perspective. A group of the Chicago delegates who had been instrumental in establishing that conference’s liberal-Catholic alliance — including Don Willner of USSA,¹⁰⁷ Jesse Cavileer of the Student League for Industrial Democracy, and NSO treasurer John Simons — remained in contact through early 1947, sharing information and co-ordinating tactics and strategy.¹⁰⁸ The group exchanged data and rumors about the presence of communists and fellow travelers in the NSO hierarchy — one passed on an allegation that Jim Smith’s secretary was “definitely CP,” and another noted pointedly that he’d seen an article on NSA from a communist journal lying around the offices the last time he’d visited.¹⁰⁹

The NCC reconvened on the morning of March 1, on the University of Chicago campus. Jim Smith had taken a leave of absence from the University of Texas to work for the NSO, and he, Austin, and the staff committee had prepared a draft constitution and

¹⁰⁶ McLaughlin, “Student Congress at Prague.” In October 1946, Catholic students had met under the aegis of the National Federation of Catholic College Students to create the Joint Committee for Student Action (JCSA), a coordinating body for Catholic involvement in the NSO, and McLaughlin had been made chair. [Andrew Lund, “The Intelligent Student’s Guide to the Coming Convention at Madison,” *Plain Talk*, August 1947, 15-16; Martin McLaughlin, “Catholic College Students Again,” *America: A Catholic Review of the Week*, September 13, 1947.]

¹⁰⁷ USSA transformed itself in the winter of 1946-47 into Students for Democratic Action, the student affiliate of the newly-formed Americans for Democratic Action. For the sake of consistency I refer to the organization as USSA throughout this chapter.

¹⁰⁸ No evidence exists that Simons was then working with the US government, but he would in 1951 and after serve as one of NSA’s first and most important contacts within the CIA. [Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 135-136.]

¹⁰⁹ Don [Willner] to “Al, Bill, John [Simons], Jesse [Cavileer],” February 10, 1947, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; John Simons to “Al, Bill, Don [Willner], Jesse [Cavileer],” [1947], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. The identities of “Al” and “Bill” cannot be definitively determined, but they may have been Al Houghton and Bill McDermed of the NCC staff committee.

program for the new group.¹¹⁰ The bulk of the March NCC meeting was devoted to the constitution, and specifically to the apportionment of power and the establishment of limitations upon it — at times it seemed as if the representatives were determined to place a check on every prerogative and to provide an explicit remedy for every possible malfeasance, however trivial.¹¹¹ There was extensive debate over the scale of representation for campus members of the NSO, and when the committee agreed on an algorithm to be used at the constitutional convention, slated for the University of Wisconsin at Madison that August, it reflected a consensus that small campuses had wielded excessive power at the Chicago conference.

For small and moderately-sized campuses, the delegate scales for the constitutional convention were to be similar to those that had been in effect in Chicago. But where the Chicago delegations had been capped at four, at the convention they would rise to as many as ten delegates. By increasing the representation of large campuses, the executive committee not only increased such colleges' power, but also, perhaps inadvertently, increased the chances that minority viewpoints would be represented — it was more likely that a student with a non-dominant perspective would be able to gain a place in a delegation of ten than in one of just four.¹¹²

Regarding the aims and activities of the new group, the staff committee's draft declared that one of the NSO's purposes was "to secure for all people equal rights and

¹¹⁰ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, March 1-3, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 1; "National Organization of College Students Planned at Enclave," Washington DC *Evening Star*, August 29, 1947. The officers and staff had exercised considerable discretion in drafting these documents, arguing that because the Chicago panel reports had not been approved by the plenary, the opinions expressed in them were owed no particular deference.

¹¹¹ When it was proposed that the executive committee be given a veto over the president's delegation of specific responsibilities, one representative exclaimed in frustration that if there were "as much distrust in the whole organization as there is in this meeting ... we [won't] get anywhere." But the veto was approved. [Minutes of the NCC executive committee, March 1-3, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 1.]

¹¹² The maximum size of organizational delegations was also raised from that provided for in Chicago, but only from four to six.

possibilities of primary, secondary, and higher education regardless of sex, race, religion, political beliefs, or economic circumstances.” This language departed from the Chicago panel report, which had mentioned neither political nor economic barriers. Jim Smith argued that the NSO should go still further, explicitly endorsing an expansion of government grants and scholarships for people of limited means, and letting “the world know that education should be as free as water and air.” But the executive committee was unresponsive — his proposal for specific language on scholarships was defeated in a 14-7 vote, and his underlying position on free education was politely ignored.¹¹³

Next the question of race was broached. Though there was some grumbling about the Chicago compromise, Smith — drawing on his unassailable reputation for racial liberalism — was able to convince the committee to accept it on practical grounds, and to leave the anti-segregation fight for another day. The meeting’s only challenge to the NSO’s racial posture came from the right, when Emmet Hurley, a representative from Georgetown, introduced an amendment changing the phrase “to secure for all people equal rights and possibilities...” to “to *aid in securing* for all people...” The original “to secure” phrasing was parallel to language describing the NSO’s other aims, but it was argued that it would be “courteous” to the white South to soften the language, and after considerable debate Hurley’s amendment was approved in a 13-11 vote.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, March 1947, NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹¹⁴ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, March 1947, NSA Papers, Box 1. Additional pressure to temper the NSO constitution’s language on discrimination came from another quarter. One provision had originally committed the NSO to working “to eliminate discrimination in student life,” but the staff committee had struck that clause because of concerns that students opposed to fraternities and sororities would claim NSO sanction for their attacks on the Greek system, arguing that fraternities and sororities’ selectivity in membership made them inherently discriminatory.

The Constitutional Convention Begins

NSA's constitutional convention opened in Madison on the evening of August 30, 1947.¹¹⁵ A mimeographed newsletter distributed the next morning bore an illustration depicting, in caricature, the arrival of the various campus delegations. A monocled, top-hatted gentleman bearing a suitcase marked "BOSTON" stood at the head of the queue, followed by a Texas cowboy, a Kentucky hillbilly, and a University of Southern California starlet. A dapper New York City smoothie in a zoot suit and pencil mustache was behind them, trailed by a long line of delegates snaking back out of the frame.¹¹⁶

If anything, the delegate roster of the convention trumped the diversity depicted in the cartoon. Seven hundred delegates from about 360 colleges and universities were present.¹¹⁷ More schools and more delegates were in attendance in Madison than had been in Chicago, with a higher proportion of attendees coming from the underrepresented South and West.¹¹⁸ Women's colleges were again well-represented, though black campuses' participation declined somewhat.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ The organization was named virtually by fiat. The executive committee endorsed "National Student Organization," but Smith, preferring NSA, used that name in convention materials, and its adoption became widespread.¹¹⁵ At the Madison convention the delegates would choose not to revisit the issue, and the National Student Organization was officially dubbed the "United States National Student Association" — USNSA, or simply NSA, for short. ["Constitutional Convention of the United States National Student Association," UW Archives.]

¹¹⁶ *NSA Bulletin*, August 31, 1947, AKL Papers.

¹¹⁷ NSA either didn't collect or didn't retain data on which schools attended the constitutional convention, but a pamphlet that listed the anticipated attendees included students from schools in the District of Columbia and 42 states — all but Delaware, South Carolina, South Dakota, Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico. The figure of 360 campus attendees comes from William Welsh, "United States National Student Association," *Higher Education*, November 1, 1948.

¹¹⁸ The invitation to the constitutional convention had been sent out to the student governments, student newspapers, and student affairs administrators of each of the nation's 1700 accredited colleges and universities, nearly twice as many schools as had received the call to the Chicago conference.

¹¹⁹ As of midsummer, only "a handful" of black colleges had registered. [Mailing to NSO Regional Officers [July 1947?], UW Archives.]

Thanks to a mailing that had been sent out by the national office in early April the delegates had been able to review many conference materials in advance, and several regions had held conferences in the spring to review and debate the proposals. In all, the delegates were far better prepared to take an active role in shaping the direction of the NSO than they had been in Chicago. The tenor of the convention was also far removed from the frenzied, confused Chicago environment. The executive committee's members — some newly elected to fill vacancies that had opened up since Chicago — arrived nearly a week before the convention began to continue work on the constitution and program.¹²⁰ The convention itself would be ten days long, with ample time on the agenda for discussion of each of the issues that were likely to arise.

This shift could be seen in the Catholic delegation, which as in December amounted to about a third of the students present.¹²¹ Where in Chicago they had taken their marching orders from two or three leaders, in Madison they had the tools to make many decisions on their own. Although the bishop of the Madison diocese addressed the Catholic students the first Sunday of the convention, exhorting them to serve as “mouthpieces of the Christian philosophy and the Christian way of life,” the Catholics could also look to their representatives on the NCC, to the heads of their campus delegations, and to their own regional leaders (whether Catholic or not) for guidance. Many may still have been, as Martin McLaughlin complained, “more anti-Communist than pro-Christian,” but they were far less isolated and far more self-directed — far more

¹²⁰ Some apparently arrived even earlier. Martin McLaughlin contended that a group of left-leaning delegates began to conduct pre-conference preparations in Madison ten days before the convention opened. [Martin McLaughlin, “National Student Association Convention,” *America: A Catholic Review of the Week*, November 8, 1947, 149.]

¹²¹ A press release on the mass noted below estimated attendance at 250 students. [Press release, University of Wisconsin News Service, August 31, 1947, UW Archives.] McLaughlin estimated Catholic attendance at the convention at 37% of the total. [McLaughlin, “Political Processes,” 69.]

integrated into the life of the conference — than they had been in December 1946.¹²² And unlike in Chicago, Catholics did not caucus as a group in Madison.¹²³

The church hierarchy had noted Catholic students' growing independence even before the Madison convention, and had taken steps to contain it. At an April meeting of the National Federation of Catholic College Students (NFCCS), church leaders had suppressed a resolution on Universal Military Training because it deviated from the position of the church, and had barred student participants from even discussing pending federal legislation on higher education.¹²⁴ The Youth Department of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, the NFCCS's sponsoring agency, insisted that its right to overrule the Federation on questions of "faith, morals, or discipline" be written into a new NFCCS constitution, and in June Archbishop Cushing, the chair of the Department, made it clear that organized Catholic student involvement in student activism was not to be conducted on an *ad hoc* basis. In the pages of the Newman Clubs' national newsletter, he urged the clubs' advisors to

instruct the student leaders of the national club federation, together with those active in the Joint Committee [for Student Action, an affiliate of the NFCCS] that they adhere to the prudent guidance of their respective campuses. Beyond the initial participation and exploratory activities at the Chicago meeting, any future activities or alliances of our student groups must be subject to the direction of institutional authorities and subject to final review by the hierarchy.¹²⁵

Martin McLaughlin did not accept such meddling placidly. In an article in the Catholic magazine *America*, he attacked "the over-protectiveness of Catholic educators,"

¹²² Press release, University of Wisconsin News Service, August 31, 1947, UW Archives; McLaughlin, "National Student Association Convention," 151.

¹²³ The Catholics' public caucusing had been a public relations disaster in Chicago. In Madison, "about a dozen top leaders" of the organized Catholic faction met nightly to plan strategy, but there were no mass meetings of Catholic delegates. [McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 69; Lee Marsh, "NSA," *New Student*, December 1947.]

¹²⁴ McLaughlin, "Catholic College Students Again."

¹²⁵ McLaughlin, "Catholic College Students Again." Cushing's comments quoted in Marvin Shaw, "Student America Convenes!," *Political Affairs*, October 1947, 881. The Newman Clubs were a network of campus-based Catholic student centers.

predicting that a “strong, dynamic apostolic student movement” would arise if the Church allowed students to take the initiative in solving “the problems of the student world.” Excoriating the “graft and corruption” that “too often” characterized Catholic politicians, and the failure of the Church to act on its values in areas such as “class or race discrimination,” he declared that it was improper and counter-productive for the Church to interfere with the internal workings of the NFCCS and to dictate to students on matters of political organization.¹²⁶

The Constitutional Convention: The Role of Outside Organizations

As the convention got underway, an article in *The Progressive* said that the question of “who is to control the NSA, and for what purposes” was “the basic issue at Madison.”¹²⁷ But control had already begun to devolve to the campuses, as we have seen, and no clique would be able to shape the proceedings at the constitutional convention as the USSA liberals and the organized Catholics had in Chicago.

The NSO’s initial planning committee had reflected the composition of the Prague delegation, a majority of whose members had served as representatives of student organizations.¹²⁸ Throughout their early planning, the committee had proceeded from the assumption that the NSO would be a hybrid, embracing both campus student bodies and national student organizations.¹²⁹ The liberal USSA had circulated a draft

¹²⁶ McLaughlin, “Catholic College Students Again.”

¹²⁷ Kelley, “Students Organize,” 10.

¹²⁸ Each of the twenty-five Prague delegates was given a seat on the planning committee, and the nine organizations that had sent representatives to the Prague conference were each invited to seat an additional representative.

¹²⁹ Farrar, “American Students Talk It Over,” 45.

statement of principles for the new group that recommended such a dual membership structure, with representation of individual campuses and organizations granted in proportion to “their size, location, and type of work that would contribute to the organization.”¹³⁰ On the other side of the communist/anti-communist divide Marvin Shaw, the head of the Communist Party’s Council of Student Clubs, had agreed, writing in the Party journal *Political Affairs* that an NSO that was “simply a federation of Student Councils, on the one hand, or a council of national organizations without local campus representation on the other ... would be but half a movement.”¹³¹

As late as the March 1947 executive committee meeting, the organizational representatives on the executive committee were still brainstorming ways to give the organizations a formal role in the NSO.¹³² By the time of the Madison convention, however, most of the national student organizations had tempered public support for formal organizational representation, either because they felt that they would be able to achieve influence in the Association through other means or simply because they recognized that their position was untenable.¹³³ The Catholic organizations went further, declaring their opposition to any formal organizational role in the NSO.¹³⁴

At the constitutional convention five proposals for organizational involvement with NSA were presented for consideration to the plenary, and the final vote was

¹³⁰ “USSA Proposal for a Nat’l Student Union,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

¹³¹ Shaw, “Reawakening,” 137. See also Marsh, “NSA” for AYD’s view of organizational membership in NSA as a possible mechanism for the creation of “a council of national student organizations.”

¹³² Minutes of the March 1947 NCC Executive Committee meeting, NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹³³ “NSA Favors World Body,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 2, 1947. The Communist-linked student groups were an exception to this general trend.

¹³⁴ FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section 5. This report notes that when the organizations were polled at the constitutional convention on the question of organizational representation, the NICC, several smaller Protestant groups, and the communist-linked organizations in attendance indicated support while the Catholics expressed opposition.

between the two that provided the smallest roles for outside organizations.¹³⁵ Choosing between a membership structure that granted outside organizations non-voting advisory status and an exclusively campus-based structure the delegates voted 315 to 265 for the latter.¹³⁶

The plenary's fear of an entrenched, unaccountable leadership lay behind the elimination of organizational representation, and this fear also manifested itself in restrictions on eligibility for delegate status and election to national office. Participation as a campus delegate was limited to those students who "certified" their intention to continue their studies at the same institution the following fall, as it was expected that a student who participated in the Congress would bring what he or she had learned back to his or her campus after it was over.¹³⁷ (There was a loophole of sorts in this policy, as members of the executive committee were granted delegate credentials at the Congress that fell at the end of their terms, regardless of their student status.¹³⁸) NSA leaders would also be subject to term limits — no individual could serve more than a total of two terms in the national office. In every way they could, the constitutional convention delegates sought to ensure that the Association's leaders would remain tied to, and responsive to, the campus.

¹³⁵ *NSA Bulletin*, September 3, 1947.

¹³⁶ "NSA Favors World Body," *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 2, 1947. Clifton Wharton, the 1946-47 NSO secretary, has identified this series of votes as the moment when campus-based delegates became convinced that they were "in charge" of NSA. [Wharton, "The 1947 Constitutional Convention," in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 144-48.]

¹³⁷ NSA Constitution [1947], NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹³⁸ NSA Constitution [1947], NSA Papers, Box 1. Because one had to be a delegate to be eligible to run for national office, only NEC members could run for NSA office after graduation. Others would have to take leaves of absence from their home schools.

The Constitutional Convention: National and Regional Structure

In the meetings that had followed Chicago, the NCC had crafted a plan under which the work of the NSO would be handled by five “commissions,” each with an elected full-time chair. The commissions would address conditions of (1) student life, (2) students’ rights and student government, (3) educational opportunity and discrimination, (4) academic freedom and educational policy, and (5) international issues.¹³⁹ The chairs of the commissions would, along with the president and other officers, make up a ten-member national leadership group, giving NSA a leadership structure that would have been unprecedented in an American student organization.

By the summer of 1947, however, sentiment was growing that the five-commission system was too ambitious — structurally, programmatically, and financially. The staff, concluding that NSA would be better served by attempting to “do a few things well” than assaying everything that might eventually be done, proposed an alternative structure in which there would be just three commissions — on student government, educational opportunity, and international student issues.¹⁴⁰ By the time of the convention the organization’s reach would be scaled back still further — instead of five commission chairs there would be just two vice presidents, one for domestic affairs and one for international.

An annual summer Congress would elect the organization’s officers and set basic policy, and during the year the officers would share responsibility for NSA’s governance

¹³⁹ “Suggested Program of Activities for the National Student Organization,” NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁴⁰ “Method of Establishing the Program of NSO Activities,” memorandum, August 1947, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

with a national executive committee.¹⁴¹ Other student groups had in the past (or would in the future) allocate representation on their governing boards on the basis of campus type, identity group affiliation, or organizational role, and most reserved some or all seats for at-large representatives.¹⁴² But NSA's executive committee would be dominated, as the NCC's had been, by representatives of its geographic regions. The regions would be, it was hoped, the soul of NSA. They would bear the primary responsibility for enacting NSA's program during the year, and through the executive committee, provide guidance and direction to the officers.¹⁴³

NSA's regions were largely autonomous, and they were small and numerous enough to ensure the presence of a strong diversity of opinion and background on the executive committee. The presence of the New York Metropolitan region on the committee, for instance, gave a voice to the city's radical student activists that they would have been unlikely to garner in a body in which they were folded into a Northeastern or Mid-Atlantic region, just as the division of the Deep South into several distinct regions made sure that NSA's Southern schools would speak in the national organization with a

¹⁴¹ Two proposals for an appointed NSA judiciary were prepared by the NCC — one of five faculty and four students, the other of nine students. ["Suggested Program of Activities for the National Student Organization," NSA Papers, Box 1.] But the first proposal was opposed by those who objected to giving faculty a governance role in NSA, and the second was criticized as duplicative of elected student leadership. [McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 30; Marsh, "NSA."] Though some had felt that a judiciary would "offer protection against Communist domination," the idea never sparked much enthusiasm. [M.T.W., "Students, On Guard!" *Plain Talk*, September 1947, 6; McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 30.]

¹⁴² The United States Student Assembly had provided for regional representation on its board of directors, but each of those seats was filled by a vote of the full USSA convention. The board members were thus USSA's representatives *to* its regions, rather than representatives *of* them. [USSA Constitution, [May 1945], ADA Papers, Series 2 Number 339.] When USSA became Students for Democratic Action, they granted the regions authority to select their representatives, but dramatically increased at-large representation at the same time. [SDA Constitution, ADA Papers, Series 2 Number 299.]

¹⁴³ At one point in the constitutional convention it was even proposed that NSA be re-envisioned as a kind of umbrella organization, with the regions themselves, and not the campuses, as the constituting members of the Association. [McLaughlin, "Political Processes," 34-5.]

variety of voices.¹⁴⁴ NSA's leadership hoped to see the regions function as a network of self-sufficient, even independent, entities, bringing ideas into the organization, conducting programming and other activities, and implementing the decisions of the membership.¹⁴⁵

Most of the disputes placed before the constitutional convention delegates were resolved amicably. Frequently the delegates simply ratified the recommendations of the Chicago conference or the NCC, or deferred to whichever delegates had arrived in Madison with worked-out proposals. Often these issues were dispatched without much debate. (The question of NSA's posture toward the IUS, discussed later in this chapter, was a notable exception.) But on the questions of ideological exclusion within NSA and of racial discrimination in the nation as a whole, the Madison delegates did break new ground, in each case moving to the left of their predecessors in the NSO.

The Constitutional Convention: NSA Repudiates Exclusionism

The issue of communism had been very much on the minds of the students who had assembled in Chicago in 1946. Avowed communists had been a small but visible

¹⁴⁴ As debate turned to specific mechanisms for campus and regional representation, sentiment — and voting power — seemed to disproportionately favor small schools and regions. The plenary rejected the executive committee's algorithm for delegate representation in favor of one that, like the Chicago system, gave no additional votes to campuses with student populations over 10,001. A provision granting two seats on the executive committee to the largest regions passed by a margin of just 298 to 283.

¹⁴⁵ The question of how many regions to establish had been seen primarily through this lens as well — although strong arguments were made that the national executive committee would function more smoothly with a small number of regions, the counter-argument that the regions themselves would be hobbled under such a proposal had ultimately carried the day. (The fewer regions there were, the more land each would have to cover, making broad regular participation in regional meetings logistically difficult.)

faction in Chicago, and avowed anti-communists a much more vocal presence. Just three years earlier, the liberal USSA, a convening organization of the NSO, had been founded on exclusionary principles, and many of the twenty-five delegates to the IUS's founding conference had come home from Prague concerned about communist domination of that body. The Chicago delegates had not taken overt steps to exclude communists from the NSO, but the extent of their commitment to inclusionism had been far from clear. They had adopted a statement of principles that urged the NSO to stand "unalterably opposed to any political doctrine which would stifle free and democratic education," with this opposition serving as "the single exception" to a policy of non-engagement with political and religious issues. They had additionally called upon the NSO to "investigate the best possible method" of ensuring that its campus delegates "be truly representative" of the colleges they attended, and there was by no means a consensus that democratic, open elections were the route to such representativity.¹⁴⁶ After the meeting the NSO's California region had gone so far as to pass a resolution endorsing a ban on "the Communist Party, its members and all Communist controlled organizations from the NSO."¹⁴⁷

Beyond the students in the NSO who identified themselves as communists, indications are that there was at least one prominent covert communist as well. By early 1947 rumors that NCC vice president Russell Austin was affiliated with the Communist Party were circulating, and these rumors were apparently not without foundation.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ "Reports of the Chicago Student Conference," ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. The administration of the University of Pennsylvania had recently decided not to permit direct elections for delegates to the Chicago conference because of fears that "radical elements" might gain the seats. [Memorandum on NSA and IUS from "SAC, Philadelphia" to "Director, FBI," December 18, 1946, FBI NSA Papers, Section 1.]

¹⁴⁷ FBI field office report SF 100-21710, San Francisco May 17, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 3.

¹⁴⁸ In an early 1947 letter to other anti-communists in the NSO, treasurer John Simons declared that he had confirmed that Austin was a Communist Party organizer, that Austin's wife was a "russian born organizer" named Sonia Gibbs who was active in

Austin would drop out of NSA involvement after the constitutional convention, but the following spring he re-appeared as the chairman of the Committee for International Student Cooperation, a Party-sponsored group that promoted American participation in the International Union of Students.¹⁴⁹

But the Chicago convention had gone smoothly, organizations of all stripes had been excluded from formal representation, and there had been no domination of the meeting by any political faction. Though a few of the Association's more ardent anti-communists remained apprehensive, by the time of the constitutional convention most delegates were confident of the Association's democratic soundness.¹⁵⁰ The preamble to the new NSA constitution opened with a statement of commitment to "academic freedom and student rights," and pledged the organization to the promotion of "international understanding and fellowship" and equal educational opportunity for all, regardless of "sex, race, religion, political belief, or economic circumstance."¹⁵¹ Chicago's grim

various Party projects, and that the Department of State and the FBI had "very interesting" files on him. [John Simons to "Al, Bill, Don, Jesse," [1947], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

¹⁴⁹ The Committee for International Student Cooperation shared an address with the American Youth for a Free World, the United States affiliate of the communist World Federation of Democratic Youth. [FBI field office report, MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 31, 1948, 19, FBI NSA Files, Section 9.] Little is known of Austin's life after NSA. A note in Schwartz's *American Students Organize* [91] gives his date of birth as February 18, 1913, and Social Security records for that name and birthdate indicate that he died in February 1966.

¹⁵⁰ Even some within the FBI had reached the same conclusion — a July report from the New York City field office found that though many American student leaders had been "skeptical" of the NSO before the Chicago meeting, "because there were indications that it was Communist-inspired and would be controlled by Communist interests," it appeared that the "anti-Communist student bloc for the present has defeated Communist aims to dominate NSO." [FBI field office report, NY 100-82655, New York City July 7, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 3.]

¹⁵¹ "Report of the Constitutional Convention," UW Archives. This language followed a staff committee recommendation. According to an FBI report, a panel proposal on discrimination in non-southern states, adopted by the plenary, opposed discrimination on the basis of political belief only in cases where the beliefs in question "recognize[d] the sovereignty of the U.S. constitution." [FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 5.]

expression of anti-communist resolve had been supplanted by an expansive vision of dialogue and common effort across ideological lines.¹⁵²

There would be no second-guessing of campus elections, as had been proposed in Chicago. Neither would there be any mechanism for the expulsion of delegates from the organization.¹⁵³ By grounding NSA exclusively in student government, the convention had set an ideologically neutral hurdle to participation that would shield the organization from domination by cliques of any orientation.¹⁵⁴ Democracy, not conformity, would be NSA's protection. Their Student Bill of Rights, discussed in chapter three, asserted "the right of every student to exercise his full rights as a citizen in forming and participating in local, national, or international organizations," and NSA's members were insistent on preserving that right within the Association itself.¹⁵⁵

The majority in Madison was anti-communist, in many cases fiercely so. But rather than expressing their anti-communism through exclusion, as the United States Student Assembly had a few years earlier, they reveled in their capacity to outmaneuver and out-organize their ideological opponents, portraying inclusion as a rebuke to, and even a victory over, communists.¹⁵⁶ Communist students and student organization

¹⁵² This approach also recognized that anti-communism could pose threats to non-communists as well. As Jim Smith had put it that spring, "suppression of students whose political convictions may be extremely leftist can easily lead to suppression of students for reasons not concerned with political characteristics at all." [Smith quoted in Stuart Cleveland, "Attack on the Campus," *New Masses*, April 29, 1947, 20.]

¹⁵³ Only entire schools, not individual delegates, could be expelled, and then only by a two-thirds vote of the Congress. As far as I have been able to determine, no motion to expel a campus under this provision was ever so much as brought to a vote.

¹⁵⁴ Kranz, "International Education," 90-92.

¹⁵⁵ NSA Constitution [1947], NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁵⁶ Even conservative John Simons, who argued that "experience has shown conclusively the impossibility of working with Communists," opposed a ban, saying that the NSO could not legitimately exclude communists who had been duly elected or appointed by the students of their campuses. He did, however, argue that the "damage" such communists could do should be "narrowed by confining NSO activities to that common area which is represented by student issues which concern students *as students*" as discussed in the conclusion to this chapter. [John Simons, "Need for a National Student Group," *The New Leader*, August 23, 1947. Emphasis in original.]

leaders were welcomed as participants in the constitutional convention, and even allowed to address plenary sessions, as when Lee Marsh of American Youth for Democracy — a Prague 1946 delegate and a member of the IUS Council — was included in a plenary panel on the IUS.¹⁵⁷ It was a greater triumph to defeat communists on a level playing field than to chase them away or drive them underground, and a September editorial in the *Wisconsin State Journal* crowed that NSA’s conventioners had “whipped the tar and stuffings out of the Communists in their midst.”¹⁵⁸ The Association’s new leaders were seeking to create a student politics that rose from the grass roots, one that expressed — and helped to form — the perspective of a generation, not a faction. They believed in the power of communication and dialogue, and they would not turn anyone away.¹⁵⁹

The Constitutional Convention: Racial Discrimination

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the original call to the Chicago conference had featured a forthright statement of opposition to racial discrimination on campus, but those within the NSO who were concerned that too aggressive a posture might drive the white South out of the organization had held the upper hand in Chicago and the NCC. Many delegates arrived in Madison determined to win a more robust statement against prejudice.

¹⁵⁷ FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section 5.

¹⁵⁸ “Where Once Flew the Crimson Drawers,” editorial, *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 9, 1947.

¹⁵⁹ For more detail on NSA’s at-times curious relationship with anti-communist liberal organizations in the late 1940s, see J. Angus Johnston, “Questions of Communism and Anticommunism in Twentieth Century American Student Activism,” *Peace and Change* volume 26 number 3, July 2001, 306-7.

The time of NSA's founding was a time of transition in American racial practices. Within a year of the Association's constitutional convention the Truman administration would issue an executive order banning racial discrimination in the armed forces, and the Democratic National Convention would pass a strong civil rights plank in its party platform. The idea that Jim Crow was both a betrayal of American ideals and a detriment to its position in the world was abroad in the land.¹⁶⁰

Two invited plenary speakers made these arguments to the delegates forcefully. In comments that were reported the next day in the *New York Times*, Laurence Duggan of the Institute of International Education told the plenary that discrimination on American campuses "belie[d] our democratic beliefs" and tarnished the nation's reputation among foreign students studying in the United States.¹⁶¹ In a separate speech the same day, black educator R. O. Johnson declared that "the Negro is the barometer of the practical application of democracy in these United States" — that "in the present struggle for world leadership, we Americans are judged ... on the basis of the way in which Negroes share in the fruits of American democracy."¹⁶²

Initially, white Southerners and black delegates took widely divergent positions on the question of what the NSO's racial stance should be, with the most hardline of the convention's blacks receiving support from communist delegates and a few others, and

¹⁶⁰ American racial discrimination had also been raised as an issue at the founding conference of the IUS in Prague, and the body had passed a resolution opposing "all discrimination in education and the pseudo-scientific theories of racial superiority." ["Resolutions of the World Students Congress," NSA FBI File, Section 3.]

¹⁶¹ "Aid to Negro Seen as Help to Nation," *New York Times*, September 2, 1947; "End Racial, Religious Prejudice On Campuses, Is Plea to NSA Delegates," *Madison Capital Times*, September 2, 1947. Duggan's IIE had worked closely with the NSFA. In December 1948 Duggan would fall to his death from IIE's mid-Manhattan offices after learning he was being investigated by the FBI on suspicion of espionage.

¹⁶² "End Racial, Religious Prejudice On Campuses, Is Plea to NSA Delegates," *Madison Capital Times*, September 2, 1947. The article on Johnson and Duggan's speeches was one of half a dozen that the *New York Times* ran on the convention — the NSO had conducted an effective public relations campaign in advance of the gathering. [Stanley R. Greenfield, "Publicizing the New Organization," in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 155-57.]

the Southerners largely isolated.¹⁶³ As the convention progressed, blacks and white Southerners caucused separately, and late in the night before the racial issue was to be taken up by a morning plenary a biracial committee of four delegates was deputized to seek common ground.¹⁶⁴ To the surprise of many, the four came to an agreement, drafting a proposal that won broad support in the conference steering committee. It was then brought to the plenary, where, after hours of debate, it passed unanimously.¹⁶⁵

To the sentence in which the NSO had pledged to “aid in securing for all people equal rights and possibilities” for education, the biracial committee had appended a new clause that committed NSA to working to “secur[e] the eventual elimination of all forms of discriminatory educational systems anywhere in the United States.”¹⁶⁶ This wording was notable for its avoidance of the word “segregation” — white Southern delegates had made it clear that any explicit NSA condemnation of that practice would lead to a walkout. But the pledge to work for an end to educational discrimination was a dramatic advance over Chicago¹⁶⁷ — and a rebuff to an earlier white Southern demand.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ Wharton, “The 1947 Constitutional Convention,” in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*.

¹⁶⁴ “National Student Association Launched Successfully at the University of Wisconsin,” *Sheboygan Press*, September 9, 1947; Farrar, “Students Map the Future,” 279. A similar negotiating team at the Chicago conference had produced a last-minute amelioration of that meeting’s weakened racial language, discussed above.

¹⁶⁵ Farrar, “Students Map the Future,” 279. According to an FBI report, the conference’s Southern delegations released a joint statement on racial discrimination before the plenaries that asked the body to note their commitment to “equal education.” The statement enumerated various steps Southern NSO members had taken since Chicago to advance that cause, including the holding of integrated regional conferences, the election of black regional officers, local actions in support of visiting integrated collegiate athletic teams, and “the booking of Negro entertainers by our cultural entertainment committees.” [FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section 5.]

¹⁶⁶ NSA Constitution [1947], NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁶⁷ “Students Dispute Discrimination,” *New York Times*, September 4, 1947. The Chicago panel report had repudiated “prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination” within the NSO itself, but had not included an anti-discrimination statement in the organization’s aims. [“Reports of the Chicago Student Conference,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

¹⁶⁸ The clause was adopted over a weaker alternate proposal, which would have committed NSA only to working for “the eventual elimination of all educational systems

The Constitutional Convention:
International Affairs

The NSO leadership could not have been accused of excessive humility in their assessment of what was at stake in international student organizing. “The time will come,” Jim Smith said in March, “when IUS leaders of various nations will be premiers ... and members of parliament of their respective nations,” and that such worthies would hold “in their minds the best possible ideas about the United States” was a question that “completely transcend[ed] the problems of communism vs. capitalism.”¹⁶⁹ Because it allowed the future leaders of the United States to reach out directly to the future leaders of other nations, the IUS was uniquely well-positioned to fill this need.

Early in the constitutional convention, the six American representatives to the IUS council addressed the body as a group, and each endorsed affiliation, at least in principle.¹⁷⁰ The question was then considered by the convention’s panel on international affairs, and the resolution they produced — running to four dense pages, attaching a variety of conditions to affiliation and mandating that the membership approve any agreement — was approved unanimously by the panel’s more than a hundred members.¹⁷¹ By the time that formal debate got underway on the plenary floor, favorable sentiment was so intense that the only two regional chairs who were willing to go on the record in opposition confined themselves to written statements to be distributed

in the United States that do not permit equal advantages and educational opportunity.” On the issue of whether racial discrimination would be taken up as a national campaign or left to the affected regions to address, liberals fared less well — the question was “resolved” with an ambiguous, even garbled statement of policy that allowed each side to claim a measure of victory. [NSA Constitution [1947], NSA Papers, Box 1.]

¹⁶⁹ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, March 1947, NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁷⁰ McLaughlin, “National Student Association Convention,” 150.

¹⁷¹ McLaughlin, “National Student Association Convention,” 151.

anonymously.¹⁷² There was intense debate over particular provisions of the resolution, but when the main question came before the body it passed by a vote of 436 to 35.

The resolution acknowledged that the IUS was “far to the left” of American studentry, and that communists had a disproportionate influence in the body, but tentatively endorsed NSA membership anyway.¹⁷³ Even a “minority position,” the statement’s authors argued, offered the Association “an opportunity for extensive and significant modifications of an otherwise possibly extreme” group.¹⁷⁴ However hostile to IUS’s geopolitical orientation they may have been, the delegates believed that engagement was preferable to self-isolation, that the IUS was one of only a few extant channels for international dialogue between East and West, and that, politics aside, American students would benefit tangibly from participating in IUS travel schemes and other service projects.¹⁷⁵

At convention’s end it was by no means clear that NSA and the IUS would be able to resolve the disagreements that still separated them. And even if the international group agreed to the terms NSA had set down, any decision would have to be ratified both by the 1948 National Student Congress and by the membership.¹⁷⁶ But in principle, the Association was open to the possibility and committed to further negotiations.

¹⁷² Press release, University of Wisconsin News Service, September 2, 1947, UW Archives.

¹⁷³ Pre-Chicago discussions on the IUS had seen some students advocating immediate affiliation and others complete disengagement, but there had been little support for either of these positions in Chicago. There was broad consensus that the NSO should be a part of the IUS if it could do so without compromising its autonomy, but the question of whether and how to affiliate was set aside for further study. [Willner, “Report on Chicago,” 3; McLaughlin, “Conference in Chicago,” 712.]

¹⁷⁴ “Report of the Constitutional Convention,” UW Archives.

¹⁷⁵ Minutes, September 1, 1947 plenary session, constitutional convention, UW Archives; Farrar, “Students Map the Future,” 280.

¹⁷⁶ Press release, University of Wisconsin News Service, September 7, 1947, UW Archives.

The Constitutional Convention: Elections

Under the new NSA constitution, five elected national officers — a president, vice presidents for domestic and international affairs, a treasurer and a secretary — would take leaves of absence from their respective schools and work for the Association full-time, as would a “National Editor” selected by the executive committee who would be responsible for publishing an NSA newspaper for national campus distribution.¹⁷⁷

The presidential election matched William Welsh, a history major at Kentucky’s Berea College — an integrated, co-educational Christian school that had been founded by an abolitionist in the 19th century — with William Birenbaum, a law student at the University of Chicago. Birenbaum had been a prominent participant in the Chicago meeting, while Welsh had not attended the Chicago conference and carried no notable organizational affiliations. He had only been elected chair of his region that March, and his name had not appeared in any of the several lists of likely candidates for high office that had circulated before or during the convention.¹⁷⁸

Welsh was, however, a white anti-racist from a Southern border state. He had ably chaired the final plenary debate on the NSO’s racial stance, and had become a popular figure over the course of the convention. As the elections neared he was urged to run for the presidency by several of the NSO’s prominent liberals, and he accepted.¹⁷⁹ When the votes were counted he had won with 312 votes to Birenbaum’s 244.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ McLaughlin, “Spotlight on Students,” 135.

¹⁷⁸ “National Student Group Elects Berea College Senior as President,” *Madison Capital Times*, September 7, 1947.

¹⁷⁹ Wharton, “The 1947 Constitutional Convention,” and William B. Welsh, “Launching the NSA,” in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 144-48 and 165-71. The below report says press coverage called Birenbaum a “right-wing” candidate, though I have not myself turned up any such characterizations. [FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section 5.]

¹⁸⁰ “Kentucky Man Student Head,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, September 7, 1947. Welsh would be one of the few early NSA officers to serve his term before graduation — he was a

The election for the domestic vice presidency was a three-way contest between Ralph Dungan, a Catholic college delegate from Pennsylvania and a member of the NCC executive committee; Royal Voegeli, a law student who chaired the University of Wisconsin student government; and Mildred Kiefer, the chair of the California region.¹⁸¹ No candidate received a majority in the first round of voting, and Dungan defeated Voegeli in a runoff. Janis Tremper, who had served on the Staff Committee elected in Chicago, defeated Jane Wilder of UCLA in the race for secretary, and the other two elections were uncontested — Robert Smith of Yale, who had chaired the convention's international activities panel, was elected international affairs vice president (IAVP), and Leeland Jones, a varsity football player and the president of the student government at New York's University of Buffalo, was elected treasurer.¹⁸²

Jones was the sole student of color among the officers elected in Madison, and Tremper the only woman.¹⁸³ Only Dungan, Tremper, and Smith had attended the Chicago conference, and none had been at the Prague conference that had preceded it.¹⁸⁴

junior at the time of his election, and he would return to Berea to finish his degree after serving as the Association's president.

¹⁸¹ An FBI report on the constitutional convention said that Dungan was the conservative candidate and Kiefer had support from "the pro-Communist element." [FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section 5.]

¹⁸² "National Student Group Elects Berea College Senior as President," *Madison Capital Times*, September 7, 1947. Jones' nomination was put forward by a student from Emory and seconded by a student from the University of North Carolina, both all-white institutions. Jones had been a leader in the effort to marshal black support for the conference's civil rights compromise. [FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section 5.]

¹⁸³ Jones would remain on his home campus during his year in office, and it soon became obvious that this arrangement was unworkable. Californian Mildred Kiefer, who had run for the domestic vice presidency at the convention, was appointed to serve as Jones's assistant in Madison. Her title was something of a euphemism, however, as she worked in the office full-time and drew the salary that had originally been budgeted for Jones. ["Member Schools to Support NSA With Annual Dues," *NSA News*, October 1947, 3.]

¹⁸⁴ In fact, not one of the candidates for NSA office in 1947 had been in Prague.

NSA's constitutional convention ended with most delegates in good spirits and optimistic about the prospects for their new Association. Martin McLaughlin spoke for many, summing up the convention as follows:

Certainly Communists were there, active and articulate; so were Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Socialists, Conservatives. There was no phoney unanimity; all divisive issues concerning student life were faced squarely, in the traditionally American manner; the majority ruled on all policy issues, and the minority will certainly try to become the majority next time.

It does not follow that debate will destroy; it is to be hoped that future emphasis will be on similarities, however, rather than differences — and that the give-and-take will build. The negative approach is fatal; a workable constitution, a modest and feasible program, and responsible officers will insure success and longevity.¹⁸⁵

The national campus interest that animated NSA at its founding was without precedent in American history. That students from hundreds of colleges and universities came together in 1946 and 1947 to create NSA was extraordinary, but at least as startling was the extemporaneous verve with which they took the Association's reins from the small group of organizations and individual students who had brought them together. Many of the questions that were so passionately debated in NSA's first meetings were left unresolved, and some would persist for decades. But on one issue, that of the organization's structure, the delegates' decisions were emphatic and decisive.

Between its planning conference in December 1946 and its constitutional convention in August 1947, a structure for the new group had emerged that would prove extraordinarily resilient. For the next three decades, through the rise and fall of McCarthy and the CIA relationship and Vietnam-era radicalism, NSA would be grounded in a campus membership and a student government base, and it would entrust its direction almost exclusively to elected officers fresh from the campus. And every August these leaders would be chosen by campus representatives gathered together for a

¹⁸⁵ McLaughlin, "Spotlight on Students," 137.

National Student Congress, the largest, most diverse, and most representative regular student conference in the nation.

Such structures would not prevent the rise of powerful cliques within NSA. In the heyday of the Association's CIA relationship, the membership's power to direct the Association would be severely compromised. The basic structure of the organization would, however, remain intact, and that structure would restrain the power of those cliques and their freedom to act. When the end of the CIA relationship came in the mid-sixties, it would be brought on as much by internal rebellion as by any external factor.

Conclusion: The Student As Student

The Chicago conference's Panel IV report had included the first expression of a concept that would shape NSA for decades to come — that of “students as students.” Its language was a bit less felicitous than some later expressions, but it articulated a principle that would come to stand at the center of debates over NSA's proper function:

Since this organization cannot achieve its objectives or maintain the active support of all college and university students if its influence should be diverted into partisan, sectarian, or narrow channels ... the NSO shall have as its objectives only those which contribute to the enhancement of the welfare of students and facilitate student contributions to international understanding and good will.” The NSO “shall specifically refrain from becoming involved in partisan political affairs, sectarian religious considerations, or similar matters which do not directly affect students in their function and activities as students, with the single exception that the NSO shall stand inalterably opposed to any political doctrine which would stifle free and democratic education in the United States.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ “Reports of the Chicago Student Conference,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. See subsequent chapters for the fate of this “single exception.”

The concept of “students as students” was always an amorphous one. In the years that followed, some of NSA’s members would interpret “students as students” as providing sanction for action on a diverse array of off-campus issues — arguing, for example, that abortion rights were a student issue, given the effect of carrying a pregnancy to term on one’s studies. Others construed “students as students” in the narrowest possible terms. The dispute was never conclusively resolved, and indeed it outlasted NSA itself, resurfacing in the Association’s successor organization, the United States Student Association. NSA’s history provides scant indication that the principle has ever functioned as much of a check on the ambitions of the Association’s more activist elements.

And of course ideology and structure were not independent variables within NSA — the “student as student” principle lent a moral legitimacy to, and thus sustained the organizational power of, the less-activist student leaders who were brought into NSA through its campus-based structure. “Students as students” provided a rhetoric of prudence and moderation that reinforced and was reinforced by the moderation inherent in NSA’s structure.

But the very longevity of the concept within the Association, the fact of its persisting power, suggests the extent to which it informed NSAers’ sense of their own mission, of the project in which they were engaged. NSA would never be an activist organization that happened to draw its members from the campus — it was fundamentally a *student* organization, one whose ideology as much as its structure bound it to the campus and served to inhibit the drift and diffusion that has so often pulled nominally student-based activist organizations away from the university.

Chapter Three Struggle: 1947-1950

Introduction

The National Student Association was founded on the idea that student identity provided a basis for national student organizing that would link the campuses to the global student community, empowering students at every level in between. No faction was strong enough to direct the course of NSA in its early years, however, and the delegates to the annual Congress would prove headstrong and unpredictable. As a result, NSA would proceed according to no unified plan. Grand initiatives would be launched, but many — the Student Bill of Rights, a Purchase Card System, a travel office — would falter. The Association would struggle to craft an effective organizational program and a relationship with its campus base, and its budget and membership rolls would suffer as a result. NSA's relationship with the International Union of Students would collapse in the wake of the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia, leaving NSA deeply divided on the question of its international role.

But in the face of all these difficulties, NSA persisted. In the late 1940s it drew students from hundreds of campuses to its annual Congresses, and began to articulate a coherent vision of social justice and academic reform. It was outspoken in defense of students' rights and active in strengthening student government. And — crucially — it survived. Though the Association's 1950s leadership would, as we shall see, take the

Association in directions to which many of its founders would have been deeply opposed, its second-generation leaders inherited an Association that would remain a resource for student leaders and retain the capacity to grow and change.

Establishing NSA

NSA established its first headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin.¹ Madison was home to an unusually strong student government — one that administered a student judiciary, partnered in campus public relations, and conducted lobbying in the state capitol, which stood less than a mile from the campus. The student government president was also, crucially, a strong supporter of NSA.² As the fall semester of 1947 began, it pressed the university to provide NSA with office space on campus, and won strong student support for the idea.³ Within the administration, however, several objections were raised.

The Madison campus's infrastructure had been sorely tested by the postwar student boom. Enrollment, which had never risen above twelve thousand before the Second World War, stood at 18,600 in 1946.⁴ Dozens of military surplus quonset huts were erected to serve as classrooms, and a trailer park dormitory was established adjacent to the football field.⁵ NSA's needs were modest, but an offer to host the

¹ Madison was selected over the University of Chicago by a vote at the constitutional convention.

² "Voegeli Can See Better U. S. Citizens in Student Group," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 24, 1947.

³ Editorial, University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal*, October 16, 1947; "NSA Needs a Home At Wisconsin," editorial, University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal*, October 3, 1947.

⁴ E. David Cronon and John W. Jenkins, *The University of Wisconsin: A History, 1945-1971*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1999, 9, 19. An unprecedented ten thousand out-of-state applicants were denied admission that year.

⁵ Cronon and Jenkins, *University of Wisconsin: A History*, 21, 28.

Association on campus, once extended, would not easily be withdrawn, and NSA's needs would only grow over time.⁶

There were also political considerations. Even before NSA's constitutional convention, university president Edwin Fred had received considerable mail critical of the Association and of his agreement to host their conference. NSA's "effort to magnify controversies," one anonymous letter-writer had declared, "with regard to academic freedom, 'the outrageous quota systems,' the rise of tuition costs, and 'outdated curricula' rather indicate a revolutionary approach on the part of those least informed."⁷ Anti-NSA correspondents willing to sign their names included representatives of the National Americanism Commission of the American Legion and the Madison and Wisconsin Foundation, a prominent local civic organization.⁸

On October 15, Fred announced with regret that space limitations made it impossible for the university to provide a home to NSA. He re-affirmed his support for the Association, however, and offered meeting space and whatever other "proper aid" the university could give.⁹ Denied a home on the campus, NSA settled in on a more permanent basis to the accommodations they were then occupying — a single drafty classroom in a decommissioned schoolhouse a few blocks away.

At its constitutional convention, NSA had set itself a test of its legitimacy —

⁶ Roy Luberg to Edwin Fred, October 3, 1947, UW Archive. Another concern was the whether an independent organization could legally be provided space on university property. [Clarke Smith to Roy Luberg, October 3, 1947, UW Archive.]

⁷ "From one who is said to know his Universities," President's file, UW Archives.

⁸ LeRoy E. Luberg to Royal Voegeli, July 10, 1947, UW Archives; R. Worth Shumaker to Edwin B. Fred, June 26, 1947, UW Archives.

⁹ "Statement by President E.B. Fred — October 15, 1947," UW Archive. Fred's support for NSA was genuine, and he continued to defend the Association when criticism reached his attention. In a November 7 letter to Carey Croneis, president of Beloit College, who had expressed concern about NSA's rumored "communistic leanings," Fred lauded the "attitudes, the sincerity, and [the] open-mindedness" of the delegates to the constitutional convention, and praised president William Welsh as "a very forthright young man" who would be more than competent to address any further concerns Croneis might have. [Carey Croneis to Edwin Fred, November 4, 1947, UW Archive; Edwin Fred to Carey Croneis, November 7, 1947, UW Archive.]

ratification of its constitution by 180 campuses, half the number present in Madison. The day session student government of the main campus of the City College of New York was the first to ratify the constitution, at, as NSA reported, “8:13 pm” on September 27, 1947.¹⁰ A few days later Oberlin became the first full member by paying its first-year dues, and others quickly followed.¹¹ There was a winter lull — in December several regional chairs reported difficulty competing with varsity football for the attention of their constituents — but affiliations and dues came in steadily during the spring.¹² By July NSA had reached the mandated 50% mark, and by the time of the first Congress membership stood at 225 campuses.¹³

The Break with the International Union of Students

The constitutional convention had chosen Prague delegate Bill Ellis as their liaison to the IUS, but in September 1947 Ellis became seriously ill and the National Executive Committee (NEC) tapped outgoing NCC president Jim Smith to take his place.¹⁴ The left-leaning Smith was a strong supporter of NSA-IUS ties, but his enthusiasm was not universally shared within NSA. That winter more than a few NEC

¹⁰ “Student Organizations Defeated in Bid for Voice, Vote Privilege,” *University of Wisconsin Daily Cardinal*, October 1, 1947.

¹¹ *NSA News*, October 1947.

¹² Minutes of the NEC, December 27, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹³ Delegates’ manual, 1948 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1. NSA seems to have missed its self-imposed deadline of June 7 for reaching the 50% threshold, but it doesn’t appear that anyone in the Association was inclined to make an issue of that fact.

¹⁴ Ellis had, as noted in chapter two, had been elected to an IUS vice presidency at the Prague conference. [Jones, *History of NSA Relations*, 45; Jim Smith to NEC, December 18, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

members came to believe that he was inclined to concede too much to the international group, and there even was some discussion about withdrawing him from Europe.¹⁵

But events in Prague would soon render such concerns moot. On March 1, 1948 Ellis, who was convalescing in Switzerland, sent NSA's IAVP the following telegram:¹⁶

CZECH STUDENT DEMONSTRATION FIRED ON. STOP. ALL STUDENT GROUPS AND NATIONAL STUDENT UNION DISSOLVED BY ACTION COMMITTEE. STOP. ALL ALLEGED REACTIONARY PROFESSORS STUDENTS BANNED FROM UNIVERSITY. STOP. EVERY DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLE VIOLATED. STOP. SMITH RESIGNED. STOP. I RESIGNED. STOP. IUS SECRETARIAT REFUSED TO CONDEMN ACTION. STOP. ASK CONFIRMATION OF OUR ACTION BY IMMEDIATE PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF AND DISAFFILIATION FROM IUS. STOP. WIRE TO SMITH AND ME ANSWER WHICH WILL BE EITHER CONFIRM OR DO NOT CONFIRM. SIGNED BILL ELLIS.¹⁷

A short time later Ellis received a reply from the national office: "NSA CONFIRMS."¹⁸

At the end of 1947 Czechoslovakia had been governed by an elected multiparty coalition. But early in 1948 non-Communist members of the coalition grew increasingly alarmed by the Communists' moves to consolidate control over the Czech national police, and on February 20 several leading cabinet ministers resigned in protest.¹⁹ President Edvard Benes initially refused to accept the resignations, but on February 25 he appointed a Communist-chosen slate in their place.²⁰

After the Benes capitulation several thousand students — Jim Smith among them — marched on the presidential palace. The marchers were dispersed by police who fired

¹⁵ Minutes of the NEC, December 28-30, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 16. Further complicating Smith's relationship with NSA, at least one NEC member believed that Smith had concealed knowledge of Ellis's condition in order to make possible his own election as Ellis's proxy. [Minutes of the NEC, December 29, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

¹⁶ By the time Smith arrived in Prague in November Ellis had been given a tentative diagnosis of tuberculosis and prescribed six months of bed rest. [Jim Smith to NEC, December 18, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

¹⁷ Telegram from William Ellis to Robert Smith, March 1, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

¹⁸ Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 52.

¹⁹ Magnelia, "International Union of Students," 137.

²⁰ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 57.

on the crowd, killing at least one student.²¹ That night the government posted an armed guard in front of Prague's student union building, and in the morning a group of communists installed themselves as the new leadership of the national union of students. Soon more than a hundred student opponents of the new government were arrested or expelled from their universities as fascist sympathizers.²²

Jim Smith met with IUS leadership on Saturday, February 28. He called on them to denounce the police shootings, the takeover of the national union of students, and the arrests and expulsions, but he was rebuffed. At the end of the meeting he submitted his resignation to the IUS, and Ellis's telegram reached NSA that Monday.²³

The decision to resign was a painful one for Smith, who had in December told the NEC that the question of whether the IUS was "Communist-dominated" (the quotation marks were his) was a distraction from the real challenge of developing "a philosophical basis for the activity of the organization, which can be found to be acceptable by Communists, other leftists, and all other students believing in the basic principles of civil liberties, majority rule, self-determination for all peoples, and peace."²⁴ But in the wake of the Prague upheaval he was forced to concede that it would be impossible to reach that common ground.

²¹ van Maanen, *International Student Movement*, 57-8; Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 49. Jim Smith himself saw a student shot, but reports of casualties were muddled — the BBC reported five students dead, and early US media accounts said as many as nine.

²² Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 49-50.

²³ Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 50-51.

²⁴ Jim Smith to the NEC, December 18, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.

The Birth of the International Commission

International events – specifically the organizing that surrounded the establishment of the IUS – had provided much the impetus for NSA’s creation. As noted in chapter one, international student organizing had provided a goad for American national student organizing at least twice before NSA – at the founding of the National Student Federation of America in the 1920s and the United States Student Assembly during the Second World War. On each of these occasions, and again at NSA’s creation, the existence of the international group spurred domestic work in at least four ways.

First, and most directly, each international group constructed membership on the basis of participation by national student unions, so that students who wished to be involved on the international level had no choice but to create such a body. Second, that requirement served as an organizing tool for students who were interested in creating a national group for other reasons. Third, international organizing brought students in contact with national unions of students in other countries, expanding their sense of the possible and offering them models for their own work. And finally, the international perspective encouraged students to think of themselves as members of a national movement, many of them for the first time.

The creation of the IUS, in summary, fostered interest in an American national student organization even among those whose interest in international student affairs was marginal. As discussed in chapter two, the Prague delegation’s early public pronouncements on the NSO had never emphasized its international agenda, and the international arena was even more remote to the campus delegates who formally constituted NSA in 1947. But if international issues were peripheral to the NSA project as it was understood by the majority of the Association’s membership, there persisted

within NSA a contingent of students and staff that was from the beginning acutely internationally minded.

The international affairs panel of the 1946 Chicago conference had recommended that the NSO empower the Committee on International Activities of the Harvard Student Council (HIACOM) as a “clearinghouse of information for student exchange, travel, relief, and rehabilitation.”²⁵ Although it appears that neither the Chicago plenary nor any subsequent body ever formally acted on that recommendation, the NSO did create an interim international office in Cambridge under HIACOM’s aegis in early 1947.²⁶ Established by Douglass Cater, who had represented Harvard in Prague, the committee was active that year, organizing student exchanges and producing two issues of a *Students International Activities Bulletin* for national distribution.²⁷

Although the Cambridge office had originally been envisioned as temporary, by the time of the constitutional convention it was an established fact — and to all indications an uncontroversial one. When IAVP Robert Smith of Yale succeeded HIACOM as NSA’s official international affairs authority, he set up shop in a room in the Harvard-Radcliffe Hillel offices, conducting his work with the help of a part-time secretary and a team of local volunteers.²⁸

²⁵ “Reports of the Chicago Conference,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. [See also NCC minutes, March 1947.]

²⁶ Between the Chicago and Madison conferences, all funds raised for NSA in the Massachusetts region were passed along to the Harvard committee. [“IUS Affiliation Awaits Negotiation; Four Man Team to Go to Prague,” *NSA News*, October 1947, 3.]

²⁷ As noted in chapter two, Cater had worked in the OSS, the precursor to the CIA, during the Second World War. For a suggestion that Cater “may have played a crucial role in laying the foundations for the CIA’s covert operations” in NSA, see Laville and Wilford, *The US Government, Citizen Groups, and the Cold War*, 124. Cater consistently maintained, however, that he had been unaware of the NSA-CIA relationship until it was made public. [Transcript, Douglass Cater Oral History Interview II, May 8, 1969, by David G. Comb, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.]

²⁸ Robert Smith, “Summary Progress Report,” December 27, [1947], NSA Papers, Box 16. Smith had ties to many of NSA’s non-student international advisors, and he received a salary from the World Student Service Fund during his term of office as NSA IAVP. [Karen Paget, “From Cooperation to Covert Action: The US Government and Students,

That year the International Commission concentrated its energies on student exchange and travel and on establishing the Association as the formal voice of American students on international bodies. They had impressive success, as NSA was granted representation in the World Student Service Fund and the American commission for UNESCO. In the summer of 1948 NSA's international arm ran or helped to run three summer programs in Europe, facilitating the travel of nearly 300 American students.²⁹

The 1947-48 officers were concerned about the International Commission's distance from the Association's headquarters, and at the 1948 Congress they announced that due to "the many problems of coordination" they had experienced in the previous year, the staff had agreed "that the national offices must be consolidated" in Madison.³⁰ This consolidation, however, lasted only a few weeks — in October's issue of the *NSA News*, it was reported that the International Commission had just moved back to Cambridge, citing the necessity for NSA's international operations to be "close to those agencies and governmental departments with which we must cooperate."³¹ (The consolidation of NSA's national and international wings would be proposed regularly in the years that followed, often by NSA officers, but it would not be achieved until 1959.)

By 1948 it was obvious that the disconnect between the international staff and the rest of NSA was more than just geographical. "The International Commission," IAVP Robert West wrote that December, "acts as a professional and highly technical agency in

1940-52," in Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford, *The US Government, Citizen Groups, and the Cold War* (London: Routledge, 2006), 75-6.]

²⁹ Report to the 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1. For more on the relationship between the International Commission and WSSF, see Paget, "From Cooperation to Covert Action."

³⁰ Delegates' manual, 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.

³¹ "International Office Goes to Cambridge," *NSA News*, October 1948; Richard E. Heggie, "From Madison to Urbana," in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 205.

the field of student exchange, immigration regulations, and so on,” and this work was “little understood by the students.” There was, he said,

a real danger that we are becoming so technical, so professional, and so sophisticated that the old meaning of international student cooperation, which meant so much to us when we formed NSA, will be lost to us in our work today. ... We stand in imminent danger of losing contact completely with the students we serve and existing independent of them, lacking roots in the real needs and desires of the students themselves.³²

West’s assessment was largely correct – few campus NSA leaders had much interest in, or understanding of, the International Commission’s activities. But this neglect did not, as West argued, represent a threat to the Commission’s work – in fact it was central to the Commission’s privileged position within NSA. As 1964-65 IAVP Norman Uphoff would later argue in the context of the ISC, the ordinary student’s lack of interest in international affairs “created a vacuum in which it was easy for others to move.”³³ The Association’s members and its domestic staff had their work to do and the International Commission had its own, and for more than a decade each would pursue its path largely free of interference from the other. The membership would make only sporadic and perfunctory efforts to intervene in the International Commission’s affairs, and the International Commission’s interference with the prerogatives of the membership would generally be conducted with restraint. (When this tacit agreement was breached by International Commission overreaching in the early years of the CIA relationship, NSA went into decline until the balance was restored.) There would always be points of conflict, even in times of calm, but for the most part the entente was a cordial one.³⁴

³² Minutes of the December 1948 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

³³ Norman Uphoff, “The Viability of Student Internationals,” in Altbach and Uphoff, *The Student Internationals*, 147.

³⁴ As discussed in chapter six, this accommodation came under intense new pressures in the mid-1960s, pressures which ultimately doomed the CIA relationship.

NSA's First Congress: Madison 1948

NSA's first National Student Congress took place on the University of Wisconsin campus during the last week in August 1948, with nearly five hundred delegates and two hundred observers from more than 275 campuses present.³⁵ The constitutional convention had seen higher turnout, but the Congress attendance was no less impressive — the 1947 convention had been open to all comers, while each Congress delegate was a paid-up member of the Association.

The Congress, whose official theme was “The Student in the University Community,” would last just six days, and its agenda was ambitious but unfocused. The early work of the meeting was conducted in topical workshops in which delegates were urged to “feel free to wax enthusiastic over projects for the year.”³⁶ Each workshop would proceed according to whatever system its members developed — it was hoped that this would encourage initiative among the delegates.³⁷ As a manual distributed at the Congress put it, “you know the problems facing students on your campus. You know the areas in which you need help. You know the limitations of the campus unit, of your region, of the national staff. With these points clearly in mind, each workshop will plan the program for NSA in that area.”³⁸ The delegates, only twenty percent of whom had

³⁵ “Congress Elects New Officers,” *NSA News*, October 1948. The University of Minnesota had offered to host, but logistical considerations prevailed — with the national office in Madison, it was far cheaper and easier to hold the conference there. [“USNSA: The First National Student Congress,” NSA Papers, Box 1; “Memorandum re: Request by National Student Association,” April 26, 1948, UW Archives.]

³⁶ “On the Upswing,” *NSA Bulletin*, August 23, 1948.

³⁷ Mailing from NSA staff to student government presidents, April 7, 1948, UW Archive; “Madison, One Year Later,” a JCSA report on the 1948 Congress, October 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 84.

³⁸ Delegates' manual, National Student Congress 1948, NSA Papers, Box 1.

ever attended an NSA national gathering before, were given twelve hours, spread out over the first two days of the conference, to complete this daunting task.³⁹

Initial planning had anticipated a slate of ten workshops — four on international questions, three on student government, and three on other domestic concerns. As the staff sifted through the applications, however, it became clear that domestic workshops, particularly those concerned with student government, were far more popular with the delegates than those with an international focus. In order to match delegates with their preferred workshops the total number was increased to fifteen.⁴⁰ Eventually, each proposed at least one project for NSA to take on during the upcoming year, and the workshop on cultural programming proposed seven, including student concerts, plays, and art exhibits, a magazine, a radio show, and a speaker's bureau.

Early in the Congress five representatives of NSA's International Commission addressed the plenary on the subject of the IUS. All five opposed IUS affiliation, though four endorsed some form of cooperation on practical projects.⁴¹ Of the five speeches, it was Jim Smith's, expressing his frustration and ultimate disillusionment, that made the strongest impression. The IUS's leadership was, he said, "convinced, I think honestly, that the program of the Communist Party and of the Soviet Union is the program of peace." He had urged them to consider "that there might be right on both sides," but to

³⁹ Press release for the *Journal of Higher Education*, UW Archives; delegates' manual, National Student Congress 1948, NSA Papers, Box 1.

⁴⁰ Four workshops were split into two sections and a new one was added on public relations, producing the following final list: 1: Economic problems in education; 2A and 2B: Other problems in education; 3A and 3B: Student government structure; 4A and 4B: Student government functions; 5A and 5B: Student government activity; 6: Student cultural welfare; 7: [International] relief techniques; 8: [International] academic exchange; 9: [International] travel and reconstruction; 10: Foreign student hospitality; 11: Student public relations. The most popular was student government structures, for which 115 students pre-registered. ["On the Upswing," *NSA Bulletin*, August 23, 1948.]

⁴¹ Summary minutes of the 1948 National Student Congress plenary, NSA Papers, Box 16. Most of those on the panel were members of an NSA team that had visited Europe that summer. Only Lawrence Jaffa, who would run a losing campaign for IAVP at the Congress, broke with the consensus, arguing that there should be only minimal coordination with the IUS until it had been reformed along democratic lines.

no avail.⁴² “I am not a Red-baiter,” he said, “but the convictions of the IUS officials are contrary to the conviction [on] which NSA was founded — that peace can only come through understanding.”⁴³ When he concluded his remarks, he received a standing ovation from the delegates.⁴⁴

After the panel’s speeches, a University of Wisconsin delegate moved to grant ten minutes of floor time to a supporter of IUS affiliation. An hour of debate and procedural wrangling followed, and the motion was defeated 158 to 127 vote.⁴⁵ The plenary reversed itself the next day, however, and a committee chose Walter Wallace, chair of the New York Metropolitan region and national student director of the Young Progressives of America (supporters of Henry Wallace’s presidential campaign), to deliver a pro-affiliation address.⁴⁶ Wallace, one of only three members of the NEC to have opposed the break with the IUS, gave an impassioned speech, which was met with what one newspaper account called “respectful silence,” after which the plenary voted overwhelmingly to reaffirm the NSA-IUS split.⁴⁷

The plenary then turned to a question that would divide NSA in the years that followed — whether to pursue the establishment of an international competitor to the IUS. Though the delegates did not foreclose such a move at a future date, they strongly opposed the creation of such a group at that time.⁴⁸ They had chosen not to affiliate with the IUS, but they still held out hope for reforming it, and so long as that possibility

⁴² “Skip IUS, Student Tells NSA Body,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 26, 1948.

⁴³ “Ban on International Tie Urged at NSA Session,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 27, 1948.

⁴⁴ Stanford student Erskine Childers, who would be elected IAVP a year later, also addressed the plenary on international affairs — he had met with Latin American student leaders over the summer.

⁴⁵ “Take-Over Move Fails at NSA Meet,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 27, 1948.

⁴⁶ “NSA Skeletal Notes,” [1948], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁴⁷ “Reject Merger, NSA Is Urged,” *Milwaukee Journal*, August 27, 1948; “Take-Over Move Fails at NSA Meet,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 27, 1948; Summary minutes of 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 16.

⁴⁸ Summary minutes of 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 16.

remained they did not want to see the Cold War recapitulated on the student stage.

Also prominent on the plenary's agenda was the question of racial discrimination, upon which liberals had hopes of breaking new ground. There were fewer white southern delegates at the 1948 Congress than at the constitutional convention, and that spring NSA's Wisconsin region had unanimously passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on federal aid to educational institutions that discriminated in admissions.⁴⁹ Liberals at the Congress were also conscious of the example set by that summer's Democratic National Convention, where Senator Hubert Humphrey had urged his party to walk "out of the shadow of states' rights ... into the bright sunshine of human rights," winning support for an unprecedented civil rights plank in the Democratic platform.

In light of all this activity, the liberal USSA, which had been taken under the organizational wing of Americans for Democratic Action and renamed Students for Democratic Action (SDA) in 1947, had made the fight against racial discrimination the centerpiece of their Congress organizing plans.⁵⁰ Rebuffed in its efforts to win a formal role in NSA, SDA hoped to establish itself as a force in the setting of Association policy.⁵¹ But though SDA sent out floor leaders to shepherd legislation in the plenaries, and coordinated their organizing with the nominal leadership of the still-numerous Catholic

⁴⁹ Jane Wilder to "Bill," July 23, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; "Regions Active on All Fronts," *NSA News*, May 1948, 2.

⁵⁰ The SDA also hoped to blunt any political advantage the communist American Youth for Democracy could garner from their own activism on the question of race discrimination. [Jane Wilder to "Bill," July 23, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; Wilder to Lloyd McAulay, July 23, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

⁵¹ Aware of NSA members' hostility to outside pressure, SDA had pledged to refrain from back-channel organizing in NSA, but executive secretary Jane Wilder privately admitted that this was intended merely "to squash the undesirable SDA leaders who can do us no good by caucusing" and to convince outsiders of SDA's "good intentions" toward the Association. ["NSA Resolution," July 22, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; Jane Wilder to Joseph Farber, July 23, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

contingent, their efforts were largely in vain.⁵²

Congress workshops 2A and 2B, on non-economic “problems in education,” both produced anti-discrimination proposals for the plenary. The first called for the establishment of a “National Bureau” on race discrimination, which would encourage campus discussion and serve as a clearinghouse for information, but play no advocacy role.⁵³ The plenary endorsed this proposal without substantial opposition. The other workshop proposed a set of projects that would have, among other things, “placed the NSA in favor of pressuring legislative bodies to end discrimination practiced by tax-supported colleges” — a central component of SDA’s Congress civil rights agenda.⁵⁴ But the plenary, concerned with how NSA was perceived in the white South, refused to approve that workshop’s report.⁵⁵

The plenary’s rejection of the report of Workshop 2B was a significant defeat for SDA, and reflected the continuing decline in the power of the organizationally-based factions that had founded the Association. Catholic colleges were still well-represented in NSA, and those schools’ delegates were by no means immune to arguments made by the national Catholic organizations, but regional alignments were coming to play an ever-larger role, students were growing more comfortable making their own decisions in the plenary, and would-be Congress leaders increasingly found the internal dynamics of the meeting difficult to predict, much less control.⁵⁶

The rancorous debates over the IUS and racial discrimination had consumed most of the time available to the plenary, and as time ran out, much of the Congress’s

⁵² The Catholic student organizations were largely supportive of SDA’s position on civil rights, and SDA gave Catholic leaders the opportunity to vet SDA literature on the subject. [Jane Wilder to “Bill,” July 23, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; Wilder to Mary Torrison, August 6, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; Wilder to Joseph Farber, July 23, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

⁵³ Press release for the *Journal of Higher Education*, nd, UW Archives.

⁵⁴ “Philadelphia Negro Student is NSA Head,” *Madison Capital Times*, August 28, 1948.

⁵⁵ Summary minutes, 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 16.

⁵⁶ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 3.

substantive agenda had to be abandoned as the exhausted, dispirited delegates turned to the election of new officers.⁵⁷

At the start of the Congress, it had been far from clear who the candidates for national office would be.⁵⁸ The delegates were more self-confident than they had been before, and neither NSA's elected leadership nor any other faction was powerful or organized enough to decide the outcome of the officer elections in advance. Over the course of the Congress, however, back-room discussions were frequent — and frequently decisive. In the early going, incumbent president William Welsh supported Richard Heggie, a regional chair and an SDA member, for president, while Jim Smith hoped to convince William Birenbaum, who had run for president the previous year, to run again.⁵⁹ Birenbaum, in turn, made it clear that he would be a candidate only if no one he could support stepped forward. James "Ted" Harris, a black Catholic and the chair of the Pennsylvania region, agreed to run for president late on Friday night.⁶⁰

The maneuvering continued until the last moment. First Heggie was nominated by outgoing IAVP Robert Smith. Birenbaum was nominated next, but he withdrew and nominated Harris, who had performed impressive service as a plenary chair at the Congress. Outgoing treasurer Leeland Jones was nominated, but declined. At the last minute Heggie, convinced that he could not beat Harris, withdrew, leaving Harris to be

⁵⁷ Summary minutes of the 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1; "NSA Attacked; Can Stand On Record," *University of Wisconsin Daily Cardinal*, September 22, 1948. Jane Wilder of the SDA said the Congress's small communist contingent had bogged the plenaries down with dilatory parliamentary tactics, [Jane Wilder, "Report on the United States National Student Association," October 25, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.] but a reporter from the University of Wisconsin, noting that "a whole valuable day" had been squandered on the passage of the Congress rules, concluded that self-absorption, not communism, had been to blame, as "each of the 700 sweating, irked delegates" had demanded to be heard on every minor issue." ["NSA Faces Turbulent Year Ahead," *University of Wisconsin Daily Cardinal*, September 16, 1948.]

⁵⁸ Joe Farber to Jane Wilder, August 8, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; telegram from Farber to Wilder, August 19, 1948 [need more].

⁵⁹ "Meet Your Staff," *Daily Bull*, August 27, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 1.

⁶⁰ "Interesting Conversations," [1948], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114. Harris was a graduate of LaSalle University in Philadelphia.

elected without opposition.⁶¹ A short time later Heggie was elected vice president for student government and student life when *his* only opponent withdrew.⁶²

For the international affairs vice presidency, two members of that summer's NSA international team faced each other — Yale graduate student Robert West and Larry Jaffa of Harvard Divinity School.⁶³ West was an advocate of practical cooperation with the international group to the extent it was possible, while Jaffa took a more sharply anti-IUS stand, and West won the race handily.⁶⁴

Eugene Schwartz of New York's City College was elected vice president for educational problems without opposition. Schwartz, a civil engineering student who had been involved with NSA since the Chicago conference, had in the Association's early months been accused of communism, and in the spring of 1948 he had been one of just three NEC members to oppose breaking off negotiations with the IUS. But despite all that, his only opponent — Allard Lowenstein of UNC — withdrew before the vote.⁶⁵ The final election, for secretary-treasurer, matched Robin Roberts of Sarah Lawrence, described in an SDA report as a candidate of the left, with Helen Jean Rogers of Mundelin College in Chicago.⁶⁶ Rogers, who was active in Catholic student organizing and had put together a student art exhibit on view at the Congress, won easily.⁶⁷

⁶¹ "Interesting Conversations," [1948], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; "Students Pick Negro Chief," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 29, 1948; "NSA Faces Turbulent Year Ahead," *University of Wisconsin Daily Cardinal*, September 16, 1948.

⁶² "Meet Your Staff," *Daily Bull*, August 27, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 1.

⁶³ "Meet Your Staff ... Rob West," *Daily Bull*, August 30, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 2.

⁶⁴ Jaffa was, like Heggie, a member of SDA, but he was estranged from some key members of that group's leadership and the SDA did nothing to advance his candidacy. The vote in the IAVP race was 240 to 169, with ten abstentions. [Jane Wilder to Richard Hough, August 14, 1948, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

⁶⁵ Future NSA President Lowenstein was then attending his first Congress. It's not clear why he withdrew from the race.

⁶⁶ "NSA Skeletal Notes," [1948], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

⁶⁷ "Know Your Staff: Helen Jean Rogers," *Daily Bull*, August 31, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 2. Rogers had intended to run for the vice presidency of student government and student life, but she was convinced to step aside in favor of Heggie. ["Interesting Conversations," [1948], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

In the end only seven candidates stood for election to NSA's five offices, leaving three races uncontested. As in 1947, the officers chosen to lead NSA consisted of one male student of color, one white woman, and three white men. As in 1947 NSA had shown itself to be concerned with organizational continuity but disinclined to perpetuate its founders in office — of the five, all had been at the constitutional convention, and four had been elected chairs or co-chairs of their regions there, but only Eugene Schwartz had been present in Chicago.⁶⁸

NSA, Student Government,
and the Crafting of a Domestic Agenda

By the time that NSA was established, student government was a fact on the vast majority of American campuses. As one contemporary observer put it,

in practically all colleges and universities there are to be found three areas of responsibility, (1) the administration, legally responsible for policies, finances, property, personnel, and publicity, (2) the faculty, responsible for instruction and contributing to existing knowledge, and (3) the student body, through its representatives responsible for the organization, promotion, and handling of the many so-called "extracurricular activities."⁶⁹

But though student government was by then ubiquitous, it was still quite constrained, as faculty and administrators tended to regard institutional governance as their exclusive domain. And even where students held sway, they were closely monitored and often overruled — a 1943 survey of American colleges found that only two percent of institutions granted ultimate authority for student government to students themselves,

⁶⁸ Harris, apparently alone among the 1948-49 officers, was a parent — he brought his wife and infant daughter with him to Madison. [NSA public relations biography, nd, UW Archives.]

⁶⁹ Harry McKown, *The Student Council* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1944).

and that just twenty-six percent permitted student governments to meet without the participation of at least one faculty or administration advisor.⁷⁰

The vitality of democratic student government was crucial to NSA's mission from the start. "Democratic student government" was a term of art within NSA, referring to student governments in which representatives were chosen by direct student election. By extension, however, it implied a student prerogative to establish the structures under which such a student government would operate, and to resolve any disputes that arose within it — a student government was democratic to the extent that it was self-directed. As the Student Bill of Rights declared, students had the right not only to participate in democratic student governments, but also to "establish" them.⁷¹

Student government was the mechanism for student participation in university governance, control of student activities, and coordination with student bodies on other campuses. Though many student governments were little more than puppets, the strongest were a local manifestation of the principle that undergirded NSA on the national level — that students were capable of managing their own affairs in pursuit of their own betterment and the reform of the campus and the larger society. For the new NSA student control of student government was — as a panel at the constitutional convention put it — "exercised not for its own sake, but ... to implement the desired transformation of the ... educational institution" and the world beyond its gates.⁷²

In the fall of 1947 the University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal* noted in an editorial that although the campus's Women's Self-Government Association and a

⁷⁰ BH Peterson, "Student Government in Collegiate Institutions," *Journal of Higher Education*, April 1943.

⁷¹ NSA Constitution [1947], NSA Papers, Box 1.

⁷² Report of the NSA Constitutional Convention, 1947, author's collection.

student referendum had recently voted to liberalize women's dorm hours, the reform was being held up by an administration committee. Given that, the *Cardinal* argued, the Women's Self-Government Association was "not 'self government' at all but merely an advisory board and police force." As the editorial's peroration put it,

Graduates of the university are expected to go out of college and into healthy, normal lives. They are counted upon to be the leaders of their generation. Superficial restrictions here cannot prepare them for such responsibilities. When treated like high school kids, college students often act like high school kids. When granted a measure of responsibility, they act like adults.

A university cannot be a housemother.⁷³

This was the approach to student government that drove NSA, and though a students' rights orientation as self-conscious as that displayed by the *Cardinal* would not be established on all of the nation's campuses overnight, NSA's national leadership made strengthening and expanding student government its highest priority in its early years.⁷⁴ At the direction of the delegates to the constitutional convention, the Association sponsored local and regional student government clinics throughout the nation, urging participants to critically examine their student governments' structure, scope of action, and effectiveness, to initiate reforms, and to write up their conclusions for the benefit of their successors. "The work that you have done," they were assured, "will be of inestimable help to those who follow you."⁷⁵

In a similar vein, NSA's first official publication was a 24-page booklet called *Student Leadership and Government in Higher Education*, jointly written by NSA vice

⁷³ "Do Students Have Private Lives?" editorial, University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal*, October 24, 1947.

⁷⁴ This emphasis existed in many regions as well. In 1947 it was reported that the Texas-Oklahoma region, for instance, was "putting first emphasis in bringing in schools" that had not attended either of NSA's founding conferences, and that in service of that goal it had prioritized "the development of student government at many schools which have none." ["Regions Report NSA Activities Coast to Coast," *NSA News*, October 1947, 1.]

⁷⁵ "Regional, Local Clinics Planned," *NSA News*, October 1947, 3; "USNSA Bulletin: The Student Government Clinic," [1948?], UW Archives.

president Ralph Dungan and University of Wisconsin student affairs administrator Gordon Klopf and published in early 1948.⁷⁶ (In 1967 Dungan would, after stints serving as Special Assistant to presidents Kennedy and Johnson, be named chancellor of higher education for the state of New Jersey.) *Student Leadership* provided a general overview of the history, theory, and practice of student government, and offered advice and guidance to the local student government officer.⁷⁷ It was distributed free of charge to all student governments that had sent representatives to the constitutional convention.⁷⁸

A central concern of *Student Leadership* was the “peculiar problem” of student government’s status as “a sovereign body which is not sovereign.”⁷⁹ The first edition treated this state of affairs as a given, but in a revised edition published in 1949 NSA vice president Richard Heggie adopted a more exhortative stance, endorsing a “community government” approach to university administration — in which students, faculty, and administrators participated jointly in university governance.⁸⁰ To the legal authority of the campus administration Heggie counterposed a “moral right of the student” to self-government.⁸¹ This vision of the university as a democratically-governed community had been present in NSA from the beginning, but it had seldom been articulated as coherently and forcefully as an alternative to the *in loco parentis* model as it was here.⁸²

⁷⁶ Ralph A. Dungan, Jr., and Gordon Klopf, *Student Leadership and Government In Higher Education*, 1948. NSA had previously distributed its governance documents and a few issues of the *NSA News*, but *Student Leadership* was its first original, stand-alone publication. [Robert Kernish, “The History of USNSA,” 1965, NSA Papers, Box 1.]

⁷⁷ Dungan and Klopf, *Student Leadership and Government in Higher Education*, 1948.

⁷⁸ “Student Government Explained in Booklet,” *NSA News*, January 1948. Copies were made available to non-member schools at ten cents apiece.

⁷⁹ Dungan and Klopf, *Student Leadership*, 11-12.

⁸⁰ Richard Heggie, Ralph A. Dungan, Jr, and Gordon Klopf, *Student Leadership and Government in Higher Education*, 2nd edition, 1949, 21. [ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 116.]

⁸¹ Heggie, Dungan, and Klopf, *Student Leadership*, 2nd edition, 20.

⁸² See the officers’ “Report to the Second National Student Congress,” 1949, particularly the section Student Life and Government. [NSA Papers, Box 1.]

Beyond student government support, NSA's domestic program was slow to cohere. Jim Smith had envisioned NSA undertaking serious educational research — comparative work on different states' school systems, investigations of the causes and effects of substandard education, even assessments of the suitability of dormitory architecture for students' needs.⁸³ But the constitutional convention had given the Association a smaller staff than had been anticipated, and most of his ideas were shelved.

Much of the staff time in NSA's first year was devoted to study and organizing around a grab-bag of issues, from curriculum reform to Universal Military Training.⁸⁴ Treasurer Leeland Jones worked on a pilot project for a national student discount card system, and president Bill Welsh compiled an educational packet on atomic weapons and energy for distribution to NSA's members.⁸⁵ Other campaigns proposed at the constitutional convention found no champions in the national office and so received little sustained attention.⁸⁶

The Association's agenda for the following year evolved in a similarly haphazard way. As noted earlier, the delegates to the 1948 Congress suggested more than forty projects for the upcoming term, but failed to prioritize them in any meaningful way.⁸⁷ As secretary-treasurer Helen Jean Rogers complained, NSA "eagerly embraced ... every worthy project that [was] advanced," leaving the office in a constant state of disarray.⁸⁸

Throughout all this, however, some order was beginning to appear. The Association's student government projects continued to progress, as did the student

⁸³ Minutes of the NCC executive committee, March 1-3, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 1.

⁸⁴ Kernish, "The History of USNSA," 2; "Enthusiasm Big, Agenda Small as Students Meet," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 24, 1948.

⁸⁵ Ella G. Roller to William Welsh, November 19, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 104; Mildred Kiefer to William B. McCord, November 1, 1946, NSA Papers, Box 104. No copy of the packet or list of its contents survives in the NSA archives.

⁸⁶ Minutes of the NEC, December 27, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.

⁸⁷ Summary minutes of 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 16.

⁸⁸ Helen Jean Rogers, "Report on Administration and Finances," [April 1949], NSA Papers, Box 16.

discount system. NSA devoted considerable energy to the creation and promotion of mechanisms for student evaluation of courses and faculty in its second and third years, a project that would remain an Association staple in decades to come.⁸⁹ A legislative advocacy program was launched in 1948-49, as were several cultural projects — a student art exhibit toured fifty American campuses and an IUS event in Prague, and a pilot issue of a student literary journal, *Essai*, was published.⁹⁰

By 1949 the national office had begun to turn its attention from setting up shop to establishing a sustainable program, and to articulate a concrete vision of the student's role on campus. The question of civil liberties stood at the heart of both of these efforts.

Academic Freedom, the Student Bill of Rights,
And Charges of Communist Infiltration

One early attempt to explicate NSA's values came in the form of its Student Bill of Rights. The essential motivating ideals behind the Bill were simple, powerful, and provocative — as the Association's first secretary summarized them, they included “the right of every academically qualified student to a college education, to conduct research freely, [and] to exercise his full rights as a citizen.”⁹¹ Implicit in this characterization, but explicit in the Bill of Rights itself, was a fourth principle: the right of students to organize into student governments and other organizations without interference.

⁸⁹ “Report to the Third National Student Congress,” 1950, NSA Papers, Box 2.

⁹⁰ “700 Students Expected for NSA Congress,” *Madison Capital Times*, August 21, 1948; “Student Art Tours Schools; Exhibit Sent to Prague Show,” *NSA News*, October 1948; “*Essai*: A New Approach,” *Daily Bull*, August 26, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 1. Another Student Art Tour was mounted in the fall of 1949, this one so popular that the 120-piece exhibit was split into three independent shows to accommodate demand. [Student Government Newsletter, October 28, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 152.]

⁹¹ Janis Tremper, “United States National Student Association,” National Association of Deans of Women, 1948, NSA Papers, Box 1.

As approved by the constitutional convention, however, the Bill had fallen short of its considerable potential. It was grounded neither in NSA's still-developing "university community" model of campus relations nor in any other coherent theoretical approach.⁹² It suffered from imprecise writing, and from inconsistencies in content and tone. It asserted some rights in sweeping, expansive terms — as with students' "right to invite and hear speakers of their choice on subjects of their choice" — but larded others with caveats and qualifications.⁹³ It opened with a preamble notable mostly for its lack of rhetorical power, and concluded with a lengthy technical discussion of administrative regulation. Some passages seem to have been intended as statements of principle, others as musings on the role and function of student government, and still others as procedural guidelines for student personnel administrators.

The Bill's infelicities reflected its haphazard origins. Though NSA's constitution had gone through half a dozen rounds of discussion and revision between the start of the Chicago conference and the end of the Madison convention, the Bill was not subject to that process. It had been hurriedly drafted not long before the March 1947 NCC meeting, and it had received a harsh reception there.⁹⁴ Deemed in need of substantial revision, the draft was excluded from the packet of materials that was sent out to delegates the following month.

⁹² The 1949 officers' report to the Congress would call for the adoption of a Bill of Responsibilities, "under a section on the idea of the campus community," but as we shall see no amendments or additions to the bill would be agreed upon that year or for several years thereafter. [Report to the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.]

⁹³ The original bill, for instance, asserted "The right of students and recognized student organizations to use campus facilities, provided the facilities are used for the purpose contracted, subject only to such regulations as are required for scheduling meeting times and places." ["Report of the Constitutional Convention," UW Archives.]

⁹⁴ For the origins of the Bill, see the minutes of the March 1947 meeting of the NCC Executive Committee. Walter Wallace, the chair of the New York Metropolitan region, proposed scrapping the staff committee draft altogether, and only a tie-breaking vote by president Jim Smith defeated Wallace's proposal. [NCC Executive Committee minutes section one, 5-6, NSA Papers, Box 1.]

Work continued on the Bill up to and during the constitutional convention, and the version approved by the plenary was cobbled together from a variety of sources. Material was taken from a 1941 ACLU report on students' rights, from various staff committee efforts, and from a proposal written by the Notre Dame delegation. However thoughtful these documents may have been, they meshed imperfectly and the process of amendment introduced additional awkwardness.

The Bill's one unambiguous virtue was its conception of the student's relationship to higher education. It declared that students' role in the university was properly understood in the context of their rights as citizens and scholars, whose "contractual ... obligations and responsibilities" should be set out in "clear and concise" terms before matriculation. Though the original Bill envisioned students' role in governance as largely consultative, it portrayed the extracurriculum as an integral component of university life and argued that students had the right and the responsibility to manage their own affairs.

When the Bill was disseminated after the constitutional convention, however, it left many readers unclear as to its practical purpose. As a result, NSA expended considerable energy that first year attempting to ease qualms about what the Bill actually was.⁹⁵ Vice president Ralph Dungan said in January that it was not intended to be binding on NSA's member campuses, but to describe "an ideal situation which will be realized in an ideal educational community."⁹⁶ A few months later, with criticism continuing to mount, he said it was merely an attempt "to gain a little experience and a minimum of tradition to start building."⁹⁷ An editorial by William Welsh in the May 1948

⁹⁵ The convention had appended to the Bill a lengthy guide to its implementation and a set of procedures for adjudicating "violations" of it, and these appendices led some students and administrators to infer that NSA intended to attempt to force member campuses to comply with it.

⁹⁶ Dungan to Albert E. Marten, January 6, 1948.

⁹⁷ Dungan to Valaske, July 14, 1948, NSA Papers, Box 161.

NSA News insisted that the Bill was simply a “guide” by which each campus could “evaluate the democracy of its own college or university community.”⁹⁸ But the status of the Bill remained ambiguous, and such ambiguity left NSA open to harsh criticism.

That year’s most prominent substantive attack on the Bill appeared in the educational journal *School and Society*. Its author, Edward Fitzpatrick, the president of Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, was neither reactionary nor hostile to student empowerment. Fitzpatrick had addressed NSA’s constitutional convention, in fact, where he had lamented the “neglect of the student as an active agent in the formal educational process, as a co-operative agent in administration, and as a controlling agent over student extracurricular activities.”⁹⁹ But though he had expressed confidence in Madison that the establishment of NSA would prompt new attention to such problems, he found the Student Bill of Rights to be a “confused” and “disappointing” document that betrayed “a lack of understanding of what rights are,” one which embraced principles so grandiose as to be meaningless and so petty as to be unworthy of expression.¹⁰⁰

There was a near consensus within NSA by 1948 that the Student Bill of Rights needed a major overhaul, and proposals for revision were prepared prior to NSA’s first Congress, but the body lost quorum before any of them could be put to a vote.¹⁰¹ The question saw lengthy but inconclusive debate at the 1949 Congress and the problem was referred to a committee for further review.¹⁰² In the meantime, NSA sought to move

⁹⁸ Welsh, “Basis for Forming Policy,” *NSA News*, March 1948, 3.

⁹⁹ Press release, University of Wisconsin News Service, September 2, 1947, UW Archive.

¹⁰⁰ Edward A. Fitzpatrick, “Student Bill of Rights of the United States National Student Association,” *School and Society*, August 14, 1948, 97.

¹⁰¹ “Leftists Try to Sway NSA Delegates,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 26, 1948; Summary minutes of 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 16. See also “Constitutional Amendments,” NSA Papers, Box 1; “Revised Student Bill of Rights,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114; “Declaration of the Student Right,” ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

¹⁰² Kernish, “The History of USNSA,” 3; “Members of Other Colleges Give Opinions on Student Rights In Reply to Misc Query,” *Vassar Miscellany News*, November 9, 1949; Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2. The plenary did

forward with practical work in the area of campus civil liberties. In December 1948 the NEC established a committee to “objectively consider every supposed violation” of academic freedom and student rights “that occurs throughout the United States” and to conduct a national review of colleges’ policies in these areas. They also approved statements on three academic freedom cases and procedures for investigating any such complaints that NSA might receive.¹⁰³

The late 1940s were, of course, a period of restriction of campus civil liberties for faculty as well as students. In 1948 the University of Washington had fired three faculty members who had refused to cooperate with a state investigation of communists in academia, two of whom were admitted Communist Party members themselves.¹⁰⁴ In the years that followed, more than a hundred American professors were fired under similar circumstances, and defenses of academic freedom from within the university were sporadic and largely ineffectual.¹⁰⁵

At its April 1949 meeting the NEC passed a substantial new resolution on academic freedom.¹⁰⁶ Running to more than three single-spaced pages, the resolution endorsed principles promulgated by the American Association of University Professors, condemning “the present tendency in the educational community towards the negation of long-established principles of academic freedom,” the “rising tide of fear, rumor, suspicion, and misinformation regarding alleged subversion” and “hysterical,” “arbitrary” actions that had recently been taken against faculty and students across the nation. It called upon each NSA region to establish a subcommission on academic

clarify NSA’s position on faculty rights, however, declaring that “membership in any ... organization or adherence to any philosophical, political, or religious belief does not constitute in itself grounds for dismissal of, failure to rehire, or denial of tenure to educators in the United States.” [Lynch and Klopf, “A Report.”]

¹⁰³ Minutes of the December 1948 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁰⁴ Ellen W. Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower: McCarthyism and the Universities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 96-103.

¹⁰⁵ Schrecker, *No Ivory Tower*, 338-341.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of the April 1949 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

freedom and students' rights, empowered the national office to investigate several recent alleged violations of academic freedom, and put the Association on record as opposing investigations of the University of Chicago and Roosevelt College by the Seditious Activities Commission of the Illinois state legislature. With such actions, NSA sought to provide support to individual students whose civil liberties were under attack on campus and to enhance students' rights more generally.¹⁰⁷

NSA's defense of civil liberties on campus provoked criticism from the right, as did its refusal to purge communists from its membership and its policy of engagement with the IUS. Perhaps the most vocal of the Association's conservative critics was Allen B. Crow, president of the Economic Club of Detroit, a prominent venue for debate on social, political, and economic issues. In October 1947, Crow distributed an eight-page, single-spaced report on NSA to college administrators around the country. Entitled "Challenging Questions Which Have Been Thrust Upon Our Colleges and Universities By the Organizing Convention of the United States National Student Association," the report argued that NSA was "a vehicle through which the Communist-controlled International Union of Students" could "convert every college and university in the United States into an incubator where Communists may hatch among both the students and faculty ... to further promote their already well-advanced program for world domination."¹⁰⁸ Crow's report, and others like it, would be widely circulated in conservative academic circles in the months and years that followed.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes of the April 1949 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁰⁸ Allen B. Crow, "Challenging Questions Which Have Been Thrust Upon Our Colleges and Universities By the Organizing Convention of the United States National Student Association," October 1, 1947, UW Archives. The crudeness of Crow's rhetoric undermined its credibility in many quarters, though NSA officers received indications that it had an effect on some campuses. [Minutes of the NEC, December 27, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.] NSA officers Bill Welsh and Ralph Dungan traveled to Detroit in October to debate Crow at the Economic Club, and they reported to the NEC that Crow had seemed placated by their comments. ["Leaders Describe Intended NSA Role in National Affairs," *NSA News*, October 1947, 4.]

NSA was also the subject of attention from the Federal Bureau of Investigation in this period. The FBI had monitored American involvement in the IUS from early on, and when that organizing led to the creation of the NSO, the Bureau's interest grew sharper. An August 1947 memo described the NSO as the "logical affiliate" for the IUS in the United States, stating that the NSO should for this reason "be followed closely." If the NSO did in the future affiliate with the IUS, "consideration should be given to the possibility of having it declared subversive."¹⁰⁹ At least three covert agents were deployed to observe NSA's constitutional convention, and the 83-page report they compiled was just one of dozens of reports and memoranda compiled by FBI field offices on NSA's national, regional, and local activities in the late forties and early fifties.¹¹⁰

The Bureau received dozens of queries about the possibility of a communist presence in NSA in these years, from correspondents who ranged from students and administrators to the office of the Attorney General of the United States.¹¹¹ NSA delegates from one Catholic college even wrote to ask that the FBI furnish them with the names of "prominent ... Communists and Communist sympathizers" in NSA, as their Dean had instructed them to "beware of such characters and ... vote against them if they come up for any of the elected offices."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ FBI memo from [redacted] to [redacted], "International Union of Students, Security Matter – C," August 14, 1947. NSA FBI File, Section 4. Early Bureau reports on the NSO proceeded from the mistaken belief that that "National Student Organization" and "International Union of Students" were two different names for the same organization.

¹¹⁰ FBI field office report MI 100-10217, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, September 30, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 5.

¹¹¹ "The Director, FBI," to "The Attorney General," March 31, [1948], NSA FBI File, Section 7; Representative John S. Wood to Peyton Ford, Assistant to the Attorney General, March 3, 1949, NSA FBI File, Section 10. NSA received such queries as well — in 1947 the chair of the Louisiana-Arkansas-Mississippi region, stung from attacks on NSA's loyalty, requested that the national office procure "some sort of an official statement" — preferably a letter from the State Department or the FBI — "that NSA has no subversive elements." [Minutes of the NEC, December 27, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

¹¹² [Redacted], St. Joseph's College, Philadelphia, to "Federal Bureau of Investigation," July 31, 1950. NSA FBI File, Section 16.

Hoover's office told each of these letter-writers that the Bureau could not comment on the loyalty of particular organizations or individuals.¹¹³ But the carbon of each such response that the FBI retained for its own records bore a note summarizing the status of the NSA investigation, and these notes and other internal documents provide a rough timeline of the Bureau's evolving attitudes toward the Association.

While an October 1947 note declared that the Bureau had uncovered "strong indications of possible Communist connections in NSA," a May 1948 note stated that though the Communist Party had won "some manner of success in a few local chapters" of the Association, and remained "strongly interested" in NSA, its success on the national level had been negligible.¹¹⁴ (The Association had broken with the communist-dominated IUS that March.) In the spring of 1950 a Bureau report declared that NSA was "diligently combating Communist penetration," and shortly thereafter Hoover declined to authorize the deployment of undercover agents to the Association's Congress, directing that information-gathering "be limited to newspaper accounts."¹¹⁵ In early 1951 he directed the Milwaukee field office to close their investigation of the Association.¹¹⁶ As far as the Bureau was concerned, NSA was neither subversive nor a threat to become so.

¹¹³ An exception was a reply to a correspondent who characterized NSA as "one of the typical youth organizations supported, if not actually conceived, by the Communists. The Association advocates the usual line, that is to say, racial tolerance, control by the Student Body over the curriculum of the colleges, and the general administration of college affairs." Hoover replied that "for your strictly confidential information," NSA was "a liberal students organization which the Communists have attempted to infiltrate without noticeable effect." [[Redacted] to J. Edgar Hoover, January 12, 1948 and J. Edgar Hoover to [redacted], February 9, 1948, NSA FBI File, Section 7.]

¹¹⁴ Internal Bureau notation on carbon copy of John Edgar Hoover letter to [redacted recipient, Ohio University], October 15, 1947, NSA FBI File, Section 6; Internal Bureau notation on carbon copy of J. Edgar Hoover letter to SH Swenson, Aberdeen, South Dakota, chief of police, May 13, 1948, NSA FBI File, section 9.

¹¹⁵ J. Edgar Hoover to "Communications Section," August 29, 1950, NSA FBI File, Section 16.

¹¹⁶ "Director, FBI" to "SAC, Milwaukee." March 21, 1951, NSA FBI File, Section 16; Memorandum from "SAC, Milwaukee" to "Director, FBI," December 18, 1951, NSA FBI File, Section 16. The investigation was formally closed on November 30 of that year, when the closing report from the Milwaukee field office was filed.

NSA and Racial Discrimination

By late 1948 NSA membership was substantial but beginning to stagnate, and the Association's geographic base was shrinking.¹¹⁷ Four contiguous Northeastern states — New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania — now accounted for more than a third of NSA's membership, while Southern campuses amounted to just seven percent. Twenty-five white Southern campuses had attended NSA's founding meeting in Chicago, but by 1948 just five had become members.¹¹⁸ The Association received a particularly stinging rebuke that February, when the students of Jim Smith's alma mater, the University of Texas, decisively rejected membership in a referendum.¹¹⁹

Conditions were hardest in the black South. Of the seventeen black colleges present in Chicago in 1946, the vast majority located in the South or on its borders, just two were NSA members by 1948, and just two more attended the Congress as observers.¹²⁰ The black colleges in the 1946 cohort were converting to NSA membership

¹¹⁷ Forty-one states had been represented at the Chicago meeting, and by the summer of 1948 only one school in any of the seven remaining states — Pembroke College in Rhode Island — had joined NSA. Meanwhile, six states that *had* sent students to Chicago now had no member campuses in the organization. NSA had member schools in 36 states in 1948, and only a single member each in ten of those.

¹¹⁸ Another four were in attendance as observers at that summer's Congress.

¹¹⁹ "National NSA Notes," *NSA News*, March 1948, 2; Robert H. Sollen, "Report on the National Student Association," *School and Society*, July 9, 1949. More than four thousand students had voted in the Texas referendum, and despite a pro-NSA stand by the student newspaper, nearly sixty percent of those voting had opposed affiliation with the "radical and dictatorial" NSA.

¹²⁰ NSA did no better in recruiting black colleges that had not attended the Chicago meeting. By 1948, only three such schools were NSA members. Eight white Southern schools that had not been present in Chicago had joined by then, and another three attended the Congress as observers that year. (The comparison between white Southern schools and black colleges is not precisely geographically parallel, as about one-third of the black colleges present in Chicago were located beyond the borders of the former

at just half the rate of white Southern schools, and in fact they had a lower rate of conversion to NSA membership than any other major category of school — worse than men’s colleges, women’s colleges, or co-ed campuses, worse than religious schools, secular private institutions, or public colleges, worse than any region.

But although the Association’s leadership frequently fretted about NSA’s difficulties appealing to white Southern campuses and plotted strategies to better reach them, concerns that too ardent a courtship of such schools might drive black campuses out of the Association were rarely if ever voiced. Indeed, NSA leaders often adopted the habit, common at the time, of referring to the white South as “the South” in casual conversation — when talk turned to the recruitment of “the South,” it was not Morehouse, Spellman, or Georgia State that was under discussion.

This blind spot assumed a particular significance because of NSA members’ anxiousness to be perceived as a truly national student association. To be a national organization, the Association needed a Southern membership. And to be perceived as having a Southern membership, NSA needed member schools from the white South. And so, as we have seen, though most NSA delegates were liberal on racial issues, the Association steered a cautious course on civil rights, with white Southern conservatives wielding disproportionate — and often decisive — influence over deliberations.

There were those in NSA’s national leadership who rejected such accommodations, however. Shortly after taking office, 1948-49 vice president for educational problems Eugene Schwartz issued a call for the Association to take a more activist approach to discrimination. In an article in the *NSA News*, he argued that NSA had too often “evaded the issue, or couched discussions in ambiguous terms,” satisfying nobody — it was time, he said, to formulate a program that reflected the fact that NSA

Confederacy. All but one of the exceptions, however, were located either in Washington DC, or in a border state — Kentucky, Maryland, or Missouri.)

was more than just “a treaty between the geographical sections of the United States.”¹²¹

At its December meeting the NEC showed little stomach for such an approach. They passed a policy statement that opposed conditioning federal financial aid to segregated higher educational systems on progress on desegregation.¹²² At the same meeting, they rejected a resolution calling for the full integration of the armed forces, citing the resolution’s lack of direct relevance to higher education. (They had shown no such reluctance earlier in the meeting when they opposed religious discrimination in displaced persons law and endorsed the United Nations’ new Universal Declaration of Human Rights.) Later they offered “congratulations” to an Amherst fraternity chapter “for its forthright action in pledging and accepting a Negro student,” but refused to urge national fraternities and sororities to renounce racially discriminatory policies.¹²³

In the next few months, however, sentiment within the NEC shifted. Secretary-treasurer Helen Jean Rogers made a three-week tour of the South that spring, speaking to students from a hundred different campuses, and found that NSA’s anti-segregation stands did not provoke as much hostility as she had feared.¹²⁴ And president Ted Harris suggested in an April report to the NEC that NSA’s equivocation on racial discrimination *was* damaging its image. In “certain areas which are considered fundamental to student interests,” he wrote, NSA’s “spasmodic, sporadic” activities had been “scoffed or smiled upon” by the Association’s members. In the future, NSA would need to “concern itself with these questions in an organized and concentrated manner.”¹²⁵

¹²¹ Eugene Schwartz, “Eliminate the Barriers,” *NSA News*, October 1948.

¹²² Minutes of the NEC, December 28-30 1948, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹²³ Dick Heggie offered a rationale for such reluctance in an *NSA News* piece he wrote on fraternity discrimination in February, declaring injudicious application of “force from the outside” might retard “the accumulation of internal pressure” against discrimination. [Dick Heggie, “19th Century Hangover,” *NSA News*, February 1949.]

¹²⁴ Gordon Klopf, Advisory Council Newsletter, March 16, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹²⁵ Harris identified racial segregation, international affairs, and academic freedom as three such areas. [Ted Harris, president’s report (appendix to NEC minutes), April 1949, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

When it met in April, the NEC took up the officers' challenge, going further in opposition to racial discrimination than ever before.¹²⁶ It unanimously passed a resolution in support of a federal bill that would outlaw racial segregation in higher education in Washington DC, and "pledged the machinery of [NSA's] legislative program" to the effort to pass that bill. It also unanimously charged a new NSA subcommittee on human relations with preparing "specific programs for [the] elimination of discrimination and segregation in the educational community."¹²⁷

The 1949 Congress continued in the same direction. Although the delegates refused to endorse a flat ban on federal financial aid to segregated schools, they urged NSA's regions to support "legislation to eliminate unfair educational practices," including racial discrimination, segregation, exclusionary quotas, and retaliation against students who publicly opposed such practices.¹²⁸ They also exhorted NSA's member student governments to deny recognition to organizations that maintained discriminatory policies, and called on the National Panhellenic Council and the Interfraternity Conference to press for the elimination of discrimination in their chapters.¹²⁹

Their most dramatic step came in the form of a revision to Bylaw II, NSA's statement of principles on discrimination. Passed in 1947, the bylaw was deferential to states-rights sentiment. In 1949 a new culminating passage put NSA on the record in forthright opposition to racial discrimination for the first time:

¹²⁶ Two months earlier, the segregation problem had been personalized for NSA when Silas Hunt, a delegate to the constitutional convention, enrolled in the University of Arkansas law school, becoming its first black student since 1872. Hunt, previously the student government president and the editor of the student newspaper at Arkansas AM&N, was enrolled contingent on an agreement that he attend classes in isolation. ["Negroes Gain Little in Legal Battle Against Segregation," *NSA News*, March 1948.]

¹²⁷ Minutes of the April 1-3 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16. A motion to insert the word "eventual" before "elimination of segregation" was rejected in a 10-7 vote.

¹²⁸ Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

¹²⁹ Lynch and Klopff, "A Report."

[I]t shall be the policy of the USNSA to support and stimulate legislative and legal action on the national, regional and campus levels to seek the elimination of statutes and laws that are used to perpetuate discrimination and/or segregation.¹³⁰

Over NSA's first two and a half years, in national conferences and NEC meetings, the Association's antiracist students had confronted threats of disaffiliation from white southern schools, and they had "moderated" their positions in response to those threats. The delegates at the 1949 Congress did not abandon the search for common ground, but they would no longer allow the Association's position to be dictated by an obstructionist minority.¹³¹ The extent to which this new rhetorical forthrightness would be accompanied by new organizing was not yet clear, however.

The Question of Lobbying

NSA lobbied Congress on just one matter during its first year — the Meade Act, which increased GI Bill stipends.¹³² Soon, however, the scope of productive legislative action would seem much broader. A major reason for this shift was the publication of the report of the Truman Commission on Higher Education, the first serious foray by an American president into education policy.

In Truman's mandate to the commission he asked it to take up

means of expanding educational opportunities for all able young people; the adequacy of curricula, particularly in the fields of international affairs and social understanding; [and] the financial structure of higher education with particular

¹³⁰ Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

¹³¹ The Congress subcommission on anti-discrimination programming did, however, delay the release of its final report until it was able to consult with a southern white delegate on the draft they had prepared. [Lynch and Klopf, "A Report."]

¹³² "Student Action Helps Vets Gain Pay Increases," *NSA News*, March 1948.

reference to the requirements for the rapid expansion of physical facilities.”¹³³

This mandate read like a page from an NSA position paper, and when the report was published the Association embraced it, criticizing only its timidity on the question of desegregation.¹³⁴ The Report laid out a bold new vision for federal government engagement with higher education, endorsing programs for curricular reform, the extension of public colleges, particularly at the community college level, and a dramatic expansion of federal financial aid. Few of its recommendations would be implemented immediately, but it set an agenda for government involvement in academia in the postwar era, and helped to spur NSA to a new engagement with national politics.¹³⁵

In 1948-49 NSA expanded its legislative efforts dramatically. The December NEC meeting passed a policy statement on economic access to higher education that endorsed the elimination of all “insuperable economic barrier[s]” to education, and called for “a national program of federally financed scholarships” as a means toward that end. It also authorized the creation of a legislative subcommission, which would operate out of the District of Columbia under the leadership of Edward O’Connor of Catholic University.

The first issue of NSA’s *Legislative Newsletter*, edited by O’Connor, appeared in March of 1949 with a threefold purpose — to serve as a clearinghouse for information on possible congressional action, to disseminate the NSA position on specific pending legislation, and to instruct local student governments and activist groups in lobbying techniques.¹³⁶ This was an ambitious agenda — perhaps too ambitious. By 1950 the

¹³³ Quoted in Thelin, *History of American Higher Education*, 268.

¹³⁴ “Education Report, NSA Goals Similar,” *NSA News*, January 1948, UW Archives.

¹³⁵ Thelin, *History of American Higher Education*, 268-270.

¹³⁶ “A Starter,” *Legislative Newsletter*, March 22, 1949, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

legislative subcommittee was dormant.¹³⁷ In politics, as in the arena of academic freedom, NSA was becoming more ambitious, but encountering difficulty in translating that ambition into effective action.

NSA, Students, and Student Governments

The NSA constitution specified student bodies, not student governments, as its basic unit of membership, and some of NSA's founders had portrayed the Association as supportive of, but extrinsic to, local student government. But in principle NSA was a national union of students, in practice it was a confederation of student governments, and by late 1948 that tension was beginning to cause strains on some campuses.

At issue was the question of relations between student government and the campus's NSA delegates, who at the time were not required to be student government officers themselves. At the December 1948 NEC meeting, NSA vice president Dick Heggie expressed concern that NSA delegates were in some cases operating as competitors or foils to local student governments, and the NEC responded with a declaration that NSA delegates should "be responsible to" student government and "never act so as to weaken the proper authority of the student government on campus."¹³⁸ That summer's staff report to the Congress went further, declaring for the first time that student government was "the agency through which the student body is represented in NSA and through which NSA programs are initiated on the campus." The

¹³⁷ In 1949-50 the subcommittee had concentrated primarily on federal legislation relating to scholarships, government aid to colleges, and educational discrimination. [NSA Legislative Newsletter, November 12, 1949, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

¹³⁸ Gordon Klopf, National Advisory Council newsletter, January 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14; minutes of the NEC, December 1948, NSA Papers, Box 14.

NSA chapter¹³⁹ on a given campus should be, the report continued, understood as “an arm of the student government body and not an autonomous unit.”¹⁴⁰

This statement was only a partial solution, however. Though it declared that NSA’s campus representatives should be integrated into student government, it offered no guidance as to how. And however campus NSA chapters were conceptualized, the connection between them and the national office remained an attenuated one.

In 1948-49 the national office made a sustained effort to bridge the gap with the campus. The officers traveled extensively, and at the December 1948 NEC meeting, secretary-treasurer Helen Jean Rogers reported that the staff was answering 250 letters a week, regularly working 14-hour days to keep on top of the workload. The officers also conducted national surveys on campus honor systems and student government elections, and retooled the monthly *NSA News*, founded in 1947, from “a house organ” to “the nation’s ... only intercollegiate newspaper.”¹⁴¹

None of these initiatives resolved NSA’s problems with chapter relations, however. The campuses were increasingly reliant on NSA for assistance with their local initiatives, as the 250 letters the staff answered every week demonstrated — if students

¹³⁹ The Association used a variety of terms to refer to the students on a particular campus who were actively involved in NSA. In this dissertation I have used the term “chapter,” though many in NSA eschewed it, arguing that it implied that only those students who were involved in NSA, not the student body as a whole, were members of the Association.

¹⁴⁰ Quotes taken from “Student Leaders Speak on the NSA — 1949,” NSA Papers, Box 2. In later years the Association would move toward a model under which student government officers would represent NSA on campus and at national gatherings, and in fact NSA advisor Gordon Klopff proposed such an approach as early as 1949. “If the local student government leaders,” he wrote in *School and Society*, “and not a subcommittee of the student government, were the individuals most vitally involved with NSA, the program of the association could have a greater impact on the total leadership of the campus.” [Gordon Klopff, “The College Administrator Looks at the National Student Association,” *School and Society*, August 27, 1949.]

¹⁴¹ The *NSA News* expanded to eight pages that winter, adding a roundup of news from student papers and a higher education news section, but it would be published only sporadically in the years that followed. [Gordon Klopff, Advisory Council Newsletter, January and December 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14; Report to the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1; Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Klopff and Trueblood, “An Evaluation,” 1951, 87.]

needed help setting up a book co-op or an orientation program, they knew they could call on NSA for help. But this assistance was a one-way street — few campuses involved themselves in advancing the work of the Association.

In the spring of 1949, Dick Heggie launched another NSA periodical, the *Student Government Newsletter*, whose first issue was devoted almost entirely to expressing the national office's ongoing frustration with the campuses.¹⁴² Introducing a list of NSA publications, for instance, the newsletter advised its readership that if any of them felt that they hadn't "been getting your money's worth" from NSA, then "dollars to doughnuts you or your NSA Committee has stuffed the material you've received into some nearby, large, circular pigeon-hole."¹⁴³

Helen Jean Rogers shared Heggie's frustration, but took a less reactive approach to the problem, concluding that a more direct program of membership training and involvement was essential to NSA's growth. Although she believed that the regions and chapters had the potential to take on much more responsibility for the programmatic work of the Association, she recognized that they would not play that role without much more thorough and focused preparation.

That process should, in her view, begin at the Congress. NSA's annual meeting should no longer serve "solely or even mainly to debate the controversial issues of the day and set forth policy statements." Rather it should perform a "training function," integrated into "the training function of the entire Association."¹⁴⁴ And reforming the Congress would not be enough — Rogers' trip across the South had convinced her that NSA needed to put staff in the field.¹⁴⁵

Eventually, Rogers argued, NSA should place at least one paid staffer in each of

¹⁴² Gordon Klopf, Advisory Council Newsletter, March 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹⁴³ Student Government Newsletter, March 10, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 152.

¹⁴⁴ Helen Jean Rogers, "Report on Administration and Finances," [April 1949], NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁴⁵ Gordon Klopf, Advisory Council newsletter, March 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14.

its more than two dozen regions — to visit schools, keep the chapters running smoothly, and assist with the administration of NSA projects. Until such a network could be put in place, she called for a system of field secretaries, three to begin with, dividing the country among them.¹⁴⁶ At its April 1949 meeting, the NEC endorsed a field secretary plan that owed much to Rogers' proposal.¹⁴⁷

But neither Rogers' plan nor the NEC's was ever implemented, for reasons that remain obscure. NSA adviser Gordon Klopff reported in the spring that the officers intended to propose "a complete revision of the administrative staff of NSA for 1949-50," with several staffers "in the field full time."¹⁴⁸ Rogers' idea was mentioned as one of a number of possible approaches for the coming year in the staff's year-end report, but there is no record of its having been considered in the Congress's working groups, and no such project was approved by the plenary that year. NSA's 1949-50 budget included \$6,000 for travel, a figure more than double that allocated the previous year, but that allocation is the only evidence that any mechanism for enhancing outreach to the campuses was ever considered.¹⁴⁹

The field secretary concept would be revived at regular intervals within NSA in the years that followed, as the Association continued to struggle with the inadequacy of its connection to the campus.¹⁵⁰ But as we shall see no such program was ever

¹⁴⁶ For 1949-50 each would be paid a salary in the fall and remain on staff in the spring if sufficient funding could be procured — if not, they would serve as volunteers and operate from their home campuses during the spring semester.

¹⁴⁷ Under the NEC's scheme the field secretaries would concentrate on NSA's less well-organized and well-represented regions. [Minutes of the April 1949 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

¹⁴⁸ Gordon Klopff, Advisory Council newsletter, March 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹⁴⁹ Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

¹⁵⁰ In 1950 the Congress mooted a proposal that would have created as many as seven traveling staffers, but that idea was abandoned in the financial disarray of the following year. In 1953, a less ambitious proposal was put forward by outgoing NAVP Phillip Berry, who called for NSA to hire a single full-time traveling field secretary as part of its Student Government Information Service (SGIS). This secretary would gather information for SGIS, and work "with the student governments in outlining new programs and

implemented with lasting success, and NSA's relationship with the grass roots remained underdeveloped well into the 1970s.

NSA and the United States Government in the 1940s

As the Association struggled to define its programmatic mission and its relationship with the campus, its relationship with the federal government remained unsettled as well. In a sense, NSA's relationship with the State Department predated NSA itself — during Jim Smith's presidency the NSO had contacted the State Department for advice regarding the IUS — but direct government support for the nascent NSA was extremely limited.¹⁵¹ As NSA was establishing itself, however, the Central Intelligence Agency was crafting an ambitious program of covert operations within American voluntary organizations, one that would have a major impact on American culture and politics in the 1950s and 1960s and profoundly shape the future of the Association.

NSA and the CIA were born almost simultaneously — the Agency was created by an act of Congress in July 1947, and given its charter for covert action in December of that year.¹⁵² In May 1948 George F. Kennan wrote an Agency planning paper noting that “throughout American history private American citizens have banded together to champion the cause of freedom.” This tradition, which had been “exploited” by

remedying old problems.” A Congress committee endorsed Berry's idea in principle, but it was never implemented. [Summary minutes of August 21, 1953 afternoon NEC meeting, minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

¹⁵¹ “National Organization of Students Planned at Conclave,” *The Evening Star*, August 29, 1947. In June 1945, the United States Student Assembly had made a similar query regarding its involvement with the left-leaning arrangements committee for the World Youth Conference. [“Memorandum on World Youth Conference,” June 27, 1945, ADA Papers, Series 2 Number 339.]

¹⁵² Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 23-24.

communists in their creation of front groups, should be revived by covert government action “to further American national interests in the present crisis.”¹⁵³ A month later, an Office of Policy Coordination (OPC) was created within the CIA, tasked with conducting covert work relating to

propaganda, economic warfare; preventive direct action, including sabotage, anti-sabotage, demolition and evacuation measures; subversion against hostile states, including assistance to underground resistance movements, guerrillas and refugee liberation groups, and support of indigenous anticommunist elements in threatened countries of the free world.”¹⁵⁴

The most immediate high-profile project to emerge from this new strategy was the National Committee for a Free Europe (NCFE), launched in June 1949. The NCFE established “National Councils” of anti-communist Eastern bloc expatriates, supported research on the Soviet system, and conducted educational work among young refugees. By 1950 it was also conducting psychological warfare work — dropping propaganda into Eastern Europe by balloon and, more prominently, establishing Radio Free Europe, a massive network of propaganda radio stations.¹⁵⁵

The OPC worked with extant voluntary organizations as well. In early 1949, for instance, it began providing large-scale covert funding to the anti-communist Free Trade Union Committee (FTUC), which had been founded in 1944 and was headed by former communist Jay Lovestone.¹⁵⁶ In just its first year of funding, the CIA apparently provided the FTUC with approximately \$200,000, much of which was subsequently disbursed to anti-communist labor movements in Europe.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵³ Quoted in Helen Laville and Hugh Wilford, eds, *The US Government, Citizen Groups and the Cold War: The State-Private Network* (London: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁵⁴ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 27. The OPC was initially known as the “Office of Special Projects.”

¹⁵⁵ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 33-35.

¹⁵⁶ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 53-55.

¹⁵⁷ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 55.

The scope of OPC funding for, and infiltration of, American voluntary organizations was vast — it eventually grew to encompass academics, journalists, artists, musicians, clergy, civil rights activists, and others.¹⁵⁸ By one estimate, total CIA outlays to such projects amounted to as much as \$15 million a year at its peak.¹⁵⁹

As the CIA was constructing its covert network, NSA was assiduously developing its contacts with governmental agencies and a variety of professional and philanthropic organizations. The effects of these efforts were visible as early as the 1949 Congress — the participating and observer organizations at the 1946 Chicago conference had mostly been student groups like the YMCA, USSA, and AYD, but by 1949 they included UNESCO, the American Council on Education, the Red Cross, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and the Department of State.¹⁶⁰ Though NSA’s founders, wary of infiltration by organizations with agendas of their own, had put in place restrictive policies on affiliation with outside groups, such rules posed little practical obstacle to the establishment of such relationships — as time went on, the NEC and Congress grew ever more casual about circumventing the restrictions through the use of creative nomenclature.¹⁶¹ The overt connections between NSA and the United States’ foreign policy apparatus were widely remarked at the time, as when the communist Labor Youth League criticized the Association’s “strong State Department ties.”¹⁶²

As we have seen, the Association was not a creation of the United States government, as has sometimes been charged. The initial funding and organizing work

¹⁵⁸ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 4.

¹⁵⁹ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 251.

¹⁶⁰ Lynch and Klopff, “A Report.”

¹⁶¹ NSA’s 1948 alliance with the National Coordinating Council for the Placement of DP [Displaced Persons] Students, for instance, was described as a “cooperative measure” rather than an “affiliation.” When asked what the distinction between the two was, IAVP Robert West said that other than the ratification procedure, there was no difference. [Minutes of the December 1948 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

¹⁶² Leon Wotsy, *Youth Fights For Its Future* (New York: Labor Youth League, 1952), 20.

that made the NSO possible came overwhelmingly from students on the nation's campuses and in its established national student organizations. It was only gradually that the government developed the means to clandestinely influence such actors — and through them the nascent NSA — in more than an attenuated way.

One platform for such influence was a body whose ties to the United States government in the late forties appear to have been considerably more robust than the Association's — the International Affairs Committee of the Harvard Student Council, or HIACOM. Founded in the fall of 1946 by Harvard Prague delegate Douglass Cater, HIACOM was the nucleus of New England organizing for the NSO and the site of much activity in the international student sphere in the immediate postwar period. Although it was never under the organizational control of the Association, HIACOM functioned as an official NSO affiliate in 1946-47, and it would later develop and launch several projects that would be implemented with the Association's imprimatur.¹⁶³

The available evidence suggests that HIACOM worked far more closely with the United States government in this period than NSA did, and that it may have been HIACOM's relationship with the Association that gave the government a foothold in NSA. In 1950, during former HIACOM chair Frederick Delano Houghteling's term as executive secretary of NSA, Houghteling was able to use his position to broker the delivery of \$12,000 in CIA funds to NSA to fund Association representatives' travel to Europe — the first such payment made by the Agency to the Association.¹⁶⁴ Not long thereafter, the Agency would fund an NSA European student survey and preparations for an international student conference later that year.¹⁶⁵

But NSA was an unreliable partner. The Association's elections were, as has been noted, unpredictable and often extemporaneous affairs, and when the Congress elected

¹⁶³ Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 138-40.

¹⁶⁴ Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 142-43.

¹⁶⁵ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 129-30.

an IAVP who was wary of government entanglement — as it did in 1948 and again in 1949 — the government had few opportunities for engagement.¹⁶⁶ Individuals within NSA might have relationships with particular agencies in this period, but such ties were limited and contingent. Between 1946 and 1951 NSA had no coherent, ongoing relationship with the OPC or any other arm of the United States government.

The Search for New Sources of Revenue

The founders of NSA had envisioned an Association funded primarily by dues and conference fees, and in NSA's early years that was the revenue structure the Association employed.¹⁶⁷ In 1947-48 NSA received \$18,981 — nearly 95% of its income — in dues, and the budget approved for the following fiscal year was structured similarly. But dues revenue did not meet expectations — 1947-48 income was just three-fifths of what had been anticipated.¹⁶⁸

NSA membership grew steadily, if unspectacularly, in the late 1940s. It sacrificed

¹⁶⁶ Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 142. The Association of the 1950s and 1960s was distinctive, perhaps unique, among the American organizations that were secretly supported by the CIA in that it was a democratically structured body, run by an elected leadership that turned over every year.

¹⁶⁷ The NSO received start-up funds from its organizational members, of whom communist and Christian groups were the most generous. Additional support came from a few of its most active campuses and from conference fees. Together, these gave NSA a sizeable bank balance as the 1947-48 academic year began. ["The National Student Organization: Fact Sheet," [1947], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

¹⁶⁸ "USNSA Budget for 1947-1948," UW Archives. (The first-year budget covered the 11-month period from the start of September 1947 to the end of July 1948, and so excluded revenue from both the constitutional convention and the first National Student Congress.) "Financial Statement — June-July 1948," NSA Papers, Box 1. The budget passed at the constitutional convention anticipated expenses of \$34,844 for the year, but 1947-48 revenue was just \$20,940.

revenue for growth, however, cutting its dues rates at each of its first three Congresses.¹⁶⁹ The Association perceived itself as needing a large membership base in order to present itself credibly as the representative of the nation's students, and there were recurring complaints from the membership in its first years that dues were unsustainably high.¹⁷⁰ The Association quickly realized that it would not be able to support a staff of the size it envisioned through dues alone — as early as the first Congress a search for supplementary revenue sources had been undertaken in earnest.¹⁷¹

The Purchase Card System (PCS) began as a pilot project in Buffalo in 1947-48, and expanded to eight cities in the Northeast and Midwest the following year. Under the system, students paid one dollar for a PCS card, and received discounts at participating local merchants and a subscription to the *NSA News* in return.¹⁷² But there was concern expressed in some quarters that PCS might drain away energy that would otherwise be devoted to building the student cooperative movement and weaken local student cooperatives where they already existed.¹⁷³

The Association's other potential source of services revenue was travel. Since 1947 NSA's International Commission had been engaged in a variety of projects to

¹⁶⁹ The Association reported a dues-paying membership of 231 campuses as of July 29, 1948, and of 280 as of June 30, 1949. [National Student Congress "Work Booklet," 1948, NSA Papers, Box 1; "Explanation of U.S. National Student Association Financial Statement, June 30, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 4.]

¹⁷⁰ Gordon Klopf, National Advisory Committee newsletters, March and December 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹⁷¹ "Financial Statement — June-July 1948," NSA Papers, Box 1; Report to the 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁷² "Purchase Card System Expands In NSA Regions," *NSA News*, October 1948.

¹⁷³ In December 1948 vice president for educational problems Gene Schwartz declared that PCS would be treated within NSA as "a temporary expedient," and NSA announced a new partnership with the 300-member North American Student Cooperative League to promote cooperatives at NSA member schools. ["Plans Made for Project With Cooperative League" and "PCS Progress Report Lists Policy Changes," *NSA News*, December 1948.] The student cooperative movement, in which local collectives operated ventures ranging from bookstores to student apartments, was active on many NSA member campuses at the time. Such cooperatives, which persist at some schools to this day, have to date received little scholarly attention.

promote student travel — it published an annual directory, *Work-Study-Travel Abroad*, sponsored various tours, and coordinated with foreign National Unions of Students to bring overseas students to the United States to study.¹⁷⁴

In 1948-49 neither PCS nor the travel program had been operated on a profit-oriented basis, but with dues income stagnant NSA chose to gamble that both could be.¹⁷⁵ The 1949 Congress passed a budget anticipating revenue nearly double that of the previous year, though it projected dues income to hold steady. Most of the remaining income was to come from PCS, which was expected to show net revenue of \$3,000, and the travel program, which was expected to bring in a profit of \$8,500.¹⁷⁶ These figures were aspirational rather than concrete, however, and NSA's reliance on them owed little to any reliable projection — PCS had brought in revenue of \$2,500 to the national office the previous year, and though travel operations had apparently made some money as well, the officers made no formal accounting of either project to the Congress.¹⁷⁷

The 1949 Congress

The University of Illinois at Urbana, the host of the 1949 Congress, was more

¹⁷⁴ "Report to the Second National Student Congress," 1949, NSA Papers, Box 1. A major project of the international office during 1948-49 was the production of *Study, Work, Travel Abroad*, a guide to summer school programs outside the US and to public and private organizations that were facilitating travel abroad. [*Study, Travel, Work Abroad: Summer 1949*, Truman Library.]

¹⁷⁵ "Report to the Second National Student Congress," 1949, Section II, 25, NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁷⁶ "NSA Financial Operating Statement: 1 September 1949 — 30 September 1950," NSA Papers, Box 2.

¹⁷⁷ Report to the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Gordon Klopff, National Advisory Committee newsletter, March 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14.

restrictive in its student regulations than the University of Wisconsin had been.¹⁷⁸ Prior to the Congress NSA warned delegates that the wearing of shorts would be prohibited, and jeans and “pedal pusher” slacks discouraged.¹⁷⁹ And though male Congress attendees were free to come and go as they pleased, women would be subject to a 1 am curfew.¹⁸⁰ Many male delegates made light of this latter restriction, but women in at least one region, the left-leaning New York Metropolitan, raised vocal objections to it.¹⁸¹

Attendance at the Congress was a bit higher than it had been the previous year, and the length of the Congress was increased from six days to nine.¹⁸² Discussion and debate would take place in a multi-tiered format — after introductory sessions, unstructured conversations would take place in a series of small “roundtables,” designed to acquaint delegates with each other and allow for in-depth discussion of particular issues and potential action.¹⁸³ Roundtable topics ranged from NSA’s relations with high schools to the possibility of a study tour of India, and they apparently ran smoothly, though most produced little in the way of programmatic recommendations.¹⁸⁴ Any ideas that came out of the roundtables were taken up by commissions on Student Life, Educational Problems, International Affairs, and “NSA Finance, Administration, and

¹⁷⁸ Swimming in Lake Mendota had been a favored form of recreation in 1947 and 1948, but public swimming facilities in Illinois would be off-limits due to a polio scare. [“Don’t Go Near the Water,” *Daily Bull*, August 24, 1949.]

¹⁷⁹ Report to the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁸⁰ The time of the curfew was 11 pm on Sundays. [Report to the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.]

¹⁸¹ “Point of Privilege,” *Daily Bull*, September 1, 1949 — also note the cartoon in that issue.

¹⁸² “Staff Selects Illinois For Congress Site,” *NSA News*, February 1949. More than 800 delegates, alternates, and student observers participated, representing about 300 schools. These figures were 10-20% higher than the previous year’s. [“Master Credentials Sheet,” Second National Student Congress, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

¹⁸³ NSA Student Government Newsletter, September 28, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 152.

¹⁸⁴ “Report of the Roundtable Discussion Groups,” 1949, NSA Papers, Box 1. One group’s “Program” report consisted in its entirety of the declaration that the group had unanimously “agreed that something must be done.”

Public Relations” for further discussion and concretization.¹⁸⁵ When disagreements arose in the commissions they were generally resolved by the expedient of sending competing reports to the plenary for consideration.¹⁸⁶

New practical trainings for the Congress and the return to campus were also added to the Congress agenda in 1949. A series of student government training events and a conference for members of the student press were held concurrently with other Congress programming, a film on parliamentary procedure was screened for delegates, and NSA advisor Gordon Klopf offered a role-play simulation of a student meeting.¹⁸⁷

Two incidents at the Congress demonstrated the Association’s growing willingness to apply its stated values in the arena of race relations to its own operations. First, early in the gathering, NSA ran a front-page article in the *Daily Bull*, the official Congress newsletter, asking delegates “not to patronize the Deluxe Tavern, 520 Green St., where three of our delegates have been discriminated against.” Signed by “National Staff,” the notice said that such discrimination violated “every princip[le] of justice for which the Association stands.”¹⁸⁸ And second, a few days later, the Congress took notice of the discriminatory practices of another local business. Declaring that local civil rights activists were aware of discrimination at the Lombardi Restaurant, the plenary urged all Congress participants who had experienced discrimination from local businesses to

¹⁸⁵ Program of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1. Each roundtable was capped at twenty students, and roundtable leaders were trained in democratic group procedure in advance of the Congress. [Marion Lynch and Gordon Klopf, “A Report on the 1949 National Student Association Congress,” *School and Society*, December 10, 1949; NSA Student Government Newsletter, September 28, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 152.

¹⁸⁶ Lynch and Klopf, “A Report.”

¹⁸⁷ *Daily Bull*, August 26, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 1; Program of the 1949 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁸⁸ “Notice!” *Daily Bull*, August 26, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 1.

inform the NEC and the university's Student-Community Interracial Council and instructed the NEC to follow up on the issue after the Congress.¹⁸⁹

These actions contrasted sharply with NSA's actions when confronted with a similar situation the year before. In 1948 it had become known shortly before the Congress that a black graduate student had been refused accommodation in a rooming house on State Street. Then, the only Congress publicity for the incident had come from the left-wing Students for Wallace, and when Jack Killian, a Wallace supporter and the co-chair of NSA's Wisconsin region, had risen to request NSA's support for a boycott of the Campus Soda Grill, a student hangout below the rooming house, he had been ruled out of order by NSA president Bill Welsh.¹⁹⁰

Despite the expanded schedule, the plenary ran out of time as it had in 1948. There were some complaints about parliamentary tactics, but the consensus seemed to be that there had simply been too much to do. Most of the program discussion had to be shelved, and the officer elections were conducted in a hurried atmosphere.

By 1949 regions, many of which had a loose internal ideological affinity, were a major force at the Congress. (The New York Metropolitan region, for instance, with its heavy representation from the city's public colleges, by then operated — as it would for much of NSA's history — as a center of left discussion and organizing.) In regions and outside of them, students caucused formally and informally throughout the gathering.

As in 1948, many officer candidates did not make final decisions on whether to run until the last minute. The electoral process suffered as a result — the delegates often

¹⁸⁹ Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2. At the December 1949 NEC meeting, it was reported that “non-demonstrative, persuasive methods” had succeeded in ending discrimination at one of the restaurants. [Gordon Klopf, National Advisory Committee newsletter, December 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14.]

¹⁹⁰ “Leftists Try to Sway NSA Delegates,” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, August 26, 1948; *NSA Congressional Record* [published by Students for Wallace, 1948], NSA Papers, Box 1.

had little information on which to base their votes, and many candidates seemed underprepared when they addressed the plenary. Unlike in 1948, each of the races was contested, and with time pressure mounting in the later contests the plenary voted to forego candidates' speeches — “eliminating,” two observers wrote, any chance of the delegates' “knowing much about the candidates' qualifications and abilities.”¹⁹¹

In the presidential election New Jersey NEC member Bob Kelly, a Catholic who had distinguished himself as a plenary chair during the Congress, ran as a “conservative” against three opponents, including Gene Schwartz of CCNY, the first NSA officer to run for a second term.¹⁹² It was a close race, with Schwartz drawing on strong support from within the NSA national office, but Kelly beat Schwartz in the third round of balloting.¹⁹³

Adopting a proposal from the previous year's officers, the delegates had changed the title of the secretary to “executive secretary,” hoping that the title change would help the Association break its “precedent of always having a woman elected as secretary,” while encouraging “consideration of a woman for other staff positions.”¹⁹⁴ In this effort, it could be said that they achieved a partial success — the executive secretary elected at the 1949 Congress was indeed a man, but so too were all the other officers elected that year.

¹⁹¹ Lynch and Klopff, “A Report.” Nearly 400 votes were cast for the NSA presidency, but by the time the final election was held just 300 voters remained. [Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

¹⁹² Barry Keating, “A History of the Student Government Movement in America,” (New York: Students for Democratic Action, 1953, mimeographed) 32a; Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

¹⁹³ Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Eugene G. Schwartz, “From Urbana to Ann Arbor,” in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 236. In a memoir essay a Catholic 1949 Congress delegate recalled participating in an “all-night caucus” of Catholic Congress participants that strategized how to ensure Kelly's election. She also wrote that she collaborated in “a parliamentary subterfuge” on the plenary floor “that was somehow intended to swing the election,” though she offered no specifics. [Tesse Hartigan Donnelly, “The 1949 Congress — And Beyond,” in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 952.]

¹⁹⁴ Minutes of the NEC, April 1949, NSA Papers, Box 16. In an effort to reduce the logistical burden on the officers, the plenary had separated the duties of the treasurer from those of the secretary, making the treasurer a full-time appointed position.

Jane Coogan of Albertus Magnus, a Connecticut women's college, ran for the vice presidency for student life. Coogan, who had served as secretary of her region in 1948-49 and led a roundtable on academic freedom and student rights at the Congress, made it to a run-off, but was defeated there by Ted Perry, an African American student from Temple University — the only black officer elected that year.¹⁹⁵ She then ran for executive secretary and again lost in a run-off — this time to Fred Houghteling of Harvard, an NEC representative.¹⁹⁶ In the race for IAVP Erskine Childers, an NEC member and advocate of continued cooperation with the IUS, defeated William Holbrook, an opponent of such efforts, by a margin of nearly two to one.¹⁹⁷ As in previous years, the plenary showed a preference for relatively new faces. None of the officers elected in 1949 had been present at the 1946 Chicago conference, and only two — Kelly and Houghteling — had attended the constitutional convention.

There would be real strife among NSA's officers for the first time in 1949-50. President Bob Kelly isolated himself from the rest of the Association's staff, routinely sequestering himself in his office from the moment he arrived in the morning until he left at night. His fellow officers have tended to attribute this self-isolation to Kelly's aloof personality or conception of his role as president, but there are indications that other factors may have come into play — according to one staffer relations eventually deteriorated to such an extent that Kelly refused to directly address executive secretary

¹⁹⁵ Secy: "Region Elects Labree After Parrs Resigns," *NSA News*, February 1949; Minutes. Keating says there were "certain elements of prejudice" in this election, but doesn't elaborate.

¹⁹⁶ In an effort to provide continuity in the national office, the executive secretary position was established on a calendar-year basis, to begin in 1950, with Houghteling to take office in January. [NSA Student Government Newsletter, September 28, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 152.]

¹⁹⁷ Keating; Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

Bob Delahanty, even in social situations.¹⁹⁸

The Rift with the IUS Deepens

In the wake of NSA's decision to break off affiliation talks with the IUS, the two organizations made some efforts to co-operate on specific projects. In 1948-49, for instance, IAVP Robert West publicized IUS-sponsored exchange programs in the United States, made plans to send an American delegation to a World Federation for Democratic Youth festival in Budapest and on a trip to Eastern Europe and began negotiations for a visit by IUS leaders to the United States.¹⁹⁹ But ultimately most of these collaborative efforts foundered. The IUS pressed NSA to work in partnership with its official United States affiliates — a handful of small left-wing student organizations — and NSA, seeing itself as the sole legitimate voice of American studentry, bridled at such pressure. The Association, in turn, pushed for changes to IUS policy that the international group refused to enact. Seemingly minor disagreements frequently proved intractable — though each side claimed to want a closer relationship, neither could stomach the concessions that the other demanded.²⁰⁰

Relations between the IUS and Western national unions of students deteriorated further after a September 1949 incident in which the members of the Yugoslavian delegation to an IUS Council meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria were arrested by government agents and expelled from the country.²⁰¹ The British, French, and Danish delegations to

¹⁹⁸ Eugene Schwartz, "From Urbana to Ann Arbor," Craig Wilson, "Random Notes of the NSA News Editor," Richard J. Medalie, "NSA's Educational Affairs and Student Life Programs," all in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*.

¹⁹⁹ Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 63.

²⁰⁰ Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 64-5.

²⁰¹ Jöel Kotek, *Students and the Cold War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 149.

the meeting requested that the IUS protest this treatment and invite Yugoslavia to send an alternate delegation, but they were rebuffed.²⁰²

At that same meeting, the British delegation asked the IUS to call a conference of member and non-member NUSes. The IUS refused, however, and the British convened such a meeting themselves in London that December, with students from 18 countries, primarily Western-aligned, in attendance.²⁰³ The participants — NSA IAVP Erskine Childers among them — endorsed a list of complaints regarding the IUS and proposed a set of constitutional amendments designed to address their concerns. A clear majority, however, opposed creation of a new Western union of students.²⁰⁴ At its January 1950 meeting, the IUS Council denounced the London conference and expelled the Yugoslavian NUS from the organization. The British NUS, previously committed to working for reform from within, responded by withdrawing from the IUS.²⁰⁵

At that summer's National Student Congress, NSA's delegates would pass a new resolution on the IUS. Declaring that the international group had shown no "willingness to work with American students in their National Student Association on constructive activities" in the previous year, they announced that NSA would suspend its cooperation with the IUS for the next twelve months.²⁰⁶ That same day the delegates approved a resolution that committed NSA to working with other national unions of students on

²⁰² van Maanen, *The International Student Movement*, 70-74; Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 149.

²⁰³ All the nations present were from North America or Western Europe, with the exception of Australia, Finland, New Zealand, and South Africa.

²⁰⁴ Gordon Klopff, National Advisory Council newsletter, December 1949, NSA Papers, Box 14; Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 72-3. At the 1949 Congress the delegates instructed the NEC to enter into no negotiations for affiliation during the coming year. At the same time, however, they directed the national office to "continue its efforts of cooperation" with the IUS on non-political projects and forbade the NEC from entering into any negotiations for affiliation with any *other* international student organization. [Minutes of the 1949 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; "Day in Review," *Daily Bull*, September 1, 1949, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

²⁰⁵ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 154-57; Jones, *History of USNSA Relations*, 72-5.

²⁰⁶ Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, 20, NSA Papers, Box 2.

practical projects, a resolution that, in a final clause, declared that NSA would for the first time open discussions about the possibility of establishing a new international student union.²⁰⁷ These resolutions were part of an effort, heretofore opposed by NSA's membership, to establish an alternative to the IUS in international student organizing — an effort that would advance dramatically in the following year.

Allard Lowenstein and the 1950 Congress

Participation in the Congress fell by about twenty-five percent between 1949 and 1950, as NSA's geographical base continued to contract.²⁰⁸ New York's representation, always high, rose still further, while just about every other part of the country saw a sizeable decline. New blood was scarce — just eight first-time campuses attended, and half of those were in New York.²⁰⁹

No one cause for the decline stands out. In part the contraction surely reflected a general slackening of enthusiasm after the excitement of the Association's first gatherings. Contemporary observers would see a broader decline within NSA, and some pointed to the gradual loss of the student veteran cohort to graduation, but it is also clear that the Association had failed to craft functioning mechanisms for campus-national coordination, and that member relations were suffering from that lack. Three years after its founding, NSA was underfunded and stagnating.

²⁰⁷ The resolution incorporated a caveat stating that NSA opposed the creation of any new organization that would not draw worldwide support from students “who would be willing to subordinate ideological differences” to common goals. Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁰⁸ About 550 delegates and observers were present, representing about 240 campuses. [Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

²⁰⁹ Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2. New York State sent 89 delegates, including 57 from the New York Metropolitan region, to the Congress. The decline in attendance was most pronounced in the Midwest and the South.

With the influence of the Association's founding generation of student veterans on the wane, it is perhaps fitting that the central figure of the 1950 National Student Congress was not a founder, a veteran, or even a student. Allard Lowenstein, 16 years old when the war ended, was not a delegate to the 1950 Congress, but he would shape its deliberations in powerful ways and ultimately, in an unprecedented draft, be chosen as NSA's new president.

By 1950 the Communist Party's youth affiliate, American Youth for Democracy, had reconstituted itself as the Labor Youth League (LYL). The LYL's executive secretary, Robert Fogel, was an official observer at that year's Congress, and he requested permission to address a plenary on the subject of the Korean War.²¹⁰ Though the NEC was overwhelmingly hostile to the LYL, and concerned about the potentially disruptive effect that a Fogel speech could have on the Congress, they voted after lengthy debate to grant him ten minutes in which to speak.²¹¹

The third day of plenaries would be the one devoted to international issues, with Fogel's speech prominent on the agenda. Hoping to avoid sparking protests that would distract delegates from the work of the Congress or cause public relations problems for the Association, NEC members visited each regional caucus the night before, asking that no delegate use parliamentary maneuvers to prevent Fogel from speaking. These efforts were successful, as Fogel's fiery speech drew little reaction from the floor and only one protest, quickly dismissed by the chair, after he finished.²¹²

²¹⁰ Fogel later attained prominence as a historian, and he was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1993.

²¹¹ Keating, "Student Government Movement," 32c. Before the NEC made its decision, the LYL distributed a flyer to Congress attendees that criticized the Association, "great believers in free expression for the Russians," for being too "afraid" to allow a dissenting voice to be heard at its own Congress. ["Watch Out For a Sneak Play," [1950], ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

²¹² Keating, "Student Government Movement," 32c.

The delegates passed a resolution on the war that condemned North Korean aggression, and supported the United Nations' intervention in the conflict. With the American invasion at Inchon weeks away, the resolution urged the United States to work with the UN to pursue "a peaceful and honorable settlement," and looking beyond Korea, called upon the students of the world to join with the UN in working for "the elimination of the causes of war" and the "peaceful mediation of international disputes." It further expressed NSA's support for students in the developing world who were "struggling for independence and self-governing status."²¹³

But the Congress was primarily concerned with domestic and organizational concerns. The delegates revisited NSA's positions on federal financial aid and racial discrimination, breaking little new ground. They also noted that attacks on academic freedom had been growing in intensity as a "consequence of the increasing international tension," and declared themselves opposed to loyalty oaths and ideological tests for scholarship recipients.²¹⁴

Dissatisfaction with the Association's functioning was high, and a variety of measures were put forward to address it.²¹⁵ Decrying the lack of "communication and understanding between the International Office and the National Office," the delegates directed that the two offices be consolidated under one roof for the upcoming year — a directive that was never implemented.

The Congress also attempted to clarify the relationship between the president and the other national officers. In a resolution, they declared that the president, "first among equals," should preserve an "impartial balance between the various phases of the

²¹³ Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²¹⁴ Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²¹⁵ A new feature of the 1950 Congress was the commission working papers — informational packets designed to give delegates background on the workings of the organization and on policy matters that would be likely to arise at the Congress. In years to come, the working papers would grow to become some of the Association's most ambitious publications.

organization's activity," but in a bylaw amendment they empowered the officers as a group to, by majority vote, "direct all of the activities of each of [their] members."²¹⁶ The president was thus empowered to oversee the work of the other officers, from whom he was simultaneously instructed to take direction. It was not quite a direct contradiction, but neither was it a recipe for harmony or an aid to resolving disputes that might arise.

There were two declared candidates for president at the Congress, but the election went to a man who was never formally nominated — and who was ineligible to serve.²¹⁷ In an apparent violation of NSA's bylaws, the delegates ignored the official candidates and gave Allard Lowenstein the office in a draft.

Raised in New York, Lowenstein had graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1949. A year earlier, his immediate career plans had seemed set, and they did not include NSA. North Carolina's junior senator had died in office in early 1949, and when Lowenstein's mentor, UNC president Frank Porter Graham, had been appointed to fill the vacancy, he had invited Lowenstein to join him on his senate staff. But in the summer of 1950 Graham was defeated in the senatorial primary, and Lowenstein found himself looking for work. He went to the NSA Congress (listing his address as "c/o Senator Graham's Office, Washington DC"), and served as a sort of roving assistant to the staff. He was visible on the Congress floor as well, and one of his friends from UNC — later an NSA president himself — said subsequently that a "spontaneous, spellbinding" speech Lowenstein gave in favor of the Korean War resolution created the groundswell of support for his candidacy.²¹⁸

²¹⁶ Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²¹⁷ Lowenstein was not registered for the Congress, and thus ineligible for the presidency. Under the NSA bylaws, campus delegates, members of the NEC and the national staff, and regional officers of the Association were eligible for office, but Lowenstein was none of the above.

²¹⁸ Cummings, *Pied Piper*, 43-44.

It remains unclear whether the Lowenstein draft itself was spontaneous or engineered, and whether the concealment of Lowenstein's ineligibility was deliberate. But when the time came for nominations just two candidates were named — Sheldon Steinhauser of New York and Roy Romer of Colorado.²¹⁹ The balloting was by roll-call that year, and when it began California opened the voting by casting all its ballots for Lowenstein.²²⁰ Region after region followed suit, and when the tally was complete, 254 votes, nearly three-quarters of the total, had been cast for Lowenstein.²²¹

Lowenstein would be a powerful force in NSA during his term of office, and though he would not be fully embraced by the CIA-era Association establishment, he remained a force thereafter. He would have a peripatetic career after his term in NSA, including a variety of liberal organizing campaigns and short stints in the US Congress and the United Nations, and students — frequently NSA students — would always figure prominently in his organizing.

Conclusion: The Changing of the Guard

For much of the late 1940s NSA had been led by students of its founding cohort, but generational change came quickly to NSA. As early as April 1949 Ted Harris had written that he believed that “much of the drive and enthusiasm that motivated our founders” had already been “lost.”

[T]here are not enough of us who are capable of transmitting a respect for the fundamental values of NSA. ... Trips to Europe, 20% discounts on a suitcase, or traveling drama groups are not enough to keep NSA alive for

²¹⁹ Two others were nominated and declined, and Lowenstein's name did not come up. Romer would go on to a career in politics, serving three terms as governor of Colorado.

²²⁰ Lowenstein diary, August 31, 1950. AKL Papers.

²²¹ For a review of the other 1950 Congress elections, see Gordon Klopff, NAC Newsletter, December 1950, NSA Papers, Box 14.

any length of time, nor for that matter to justify our existence at all. As leaders, we must focus our minds on the fact that whether by accident or design, NSA is a medium through which the whole pattern of American higher education may be affected, expanded, and improved; a medium through which American students may cooperatively add to the economic, social, and cultural welfare of the student everywhere. We must keep in sight the *community* of faculty, students, and administration which is ideal in securing these objectives, and this vision must be beamed to enough students to maintain an intellectual, spiritual, and moral direction to all our activities.²²²

Harris' generational argument resonated with many of NSA's early leaders, as well as non-student observers and allies. As time went on and the veterans of the Second World War became less dominant in American campus life, NSA's leaders were getting younger — and, in the eyes of some, less mature and less capable.²²³

This transition had been anticipated by NSA's first-generation leadership from the beginning. The veterans among them had seen themselves as uniquely suited to the task of establishing a new national student organization, and some of them carried that sense of specialness over to the operation of NSA as well. In late 1947 one NEC member had noted that “the student community of today is older than it will be 5 years hence,” and cautioned the Association that its long-term planning should bear in mind that it would be imprudent to “get those people who will be following us into situations with which they are not naturally [sic] able to cope.”²²⁴

And it was not just the organizational skills or the personal maturity of the new student leaders that was called into question, but their ideological sophistication as well. In a 1948 account of NSA's early successes in fending off communist advances, the dean

²²² Minutes of the April 1949 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

²²³ A similar criticism was raised regarding the post-veteran leadership of the Catholic NFCCS, in that instance with a gender component added. Most of the nation's Catholic colleges were women's schools, and as veterans of the Second World War graduated out of the NFCCS, its officer positions were increasingly won by women. As women came to dominate the leadership of the organization, criticism of the NFCCS grew. Male campuses began to drop out, and there was even discussion of holding separate elections for slates of male and female officers. [Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 40.]

²²⁴ Minutes of the December 28, 1947 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

of students of Michigan State wrote that as long as “the same type of student” that had led NSA at its constitutional convention remained in control, administrators “need never have any worry about what is going to happen to the group.” But if NSA were to “weaken,” if there came a time that the Association no longer had “that type of leadership,” it would be in substantial peril.

It is not at all obvious, however, that the generational change that was taking place in NSA can be traced entirely to the loss of veterans’ perspectives and abilities. Not all of the Association’s founders had been veterans — a significant number of its original leaders had been women, particularly on the campus and regional level, and some early male leaders had, like NSO president Jim Smith, spent the war years on the home front. In seeking to understand generational shifts within NSA, one can as easily argue that the declension marked the transition from those who had created the Association to those who inherited it, and onto whose shoulders the task of perpetuating it would fall.

In the November 1949 issue of *The Intercollegian*, NSA public relations director Ralph Lee Smith wrote that “with veterans leaving the American college scene, younger men and women are stepping into the Association’s regional and national offices,” and wondered whether “the younger, straight-out-of-high-school college generation” was “capable of ‘carrying on’?”²²⁵ In statements like this, the exceptionalist rhetoric of NSA’s founders — of such use in getting NSA off the ground just two or three years earlier — redounded against the students who faced the task of turning the Association’s grand plans into reality. The question of whether students had the capacity to manage their own affairs, on the campus or in their national organization, had not been dispatched by NSA’s early successes, but merely reframed. In the early fifties, it would be the “straight-out-of-high-school” students whose abilities would be questioned, and who would confront new and intensified external pressures on their independence.

²²⁵ Ralph Lee Smith, “Now Know NSA,” *The Intercollegian*, November 1949, 22.

NSA's founders had held great hopes for the Association, but they had faced difficulties in attempting to turn their vision into reality. Underfunded and understaffed, they had crafted a variety of service programs for their membership, but largely failed to influence national policy on education or campus civil liberties. The National Student Congress was maturing into a robust venue for debating the issues of the moment, undertaking national networking, and conducting skills trainings for its participants, but it was not an effective mechanism for setting organizational priorities or creating functioning programs of action, and attendance was beginning to decline.

And yet NSA's sense of itself was growing more grandiose. A cartoon in the first issue of NSA's *Student Government Newsletter* for 1949-50 revealed much about the Association's understanding of its own importance and role. In the graphic, "NSA Activity" was represented by a group of a dozen figures seated at a conference table, with a huge globe looming behind them. From the front of the table three arrows extended, labeled "Health," "Welfare," and "Education." With the world behind them (or, perhaps, on their shoulders), the cartoon suggested, NSA's leadership would develop plans to deliver health, welfare, and education to their constituents, who — though implicit — were neither pictured nor identified.

In 1951 William Birenbaum, who had been a candidate for the NSA presidency in 1947 and had remained involved in the Association as an advisor, would offer a stern warning to the Association:

The mere existence of NSA can lull American students into a confidence which may be wholly unwarranted. The existence of an ineffective, conservative, and weak NSA may lead uninformed American students to believe that they have exploited fully the means at their hands for national expression...

American students need a national voice. I think NSA can be that voice, if its members are now willing to re-examine their approach to national student government. It is late, but it is still not too late to act...

The constituent members of NSA must embark at once upon an aggressive campaign to interest their student bodies in national affairs, and to build vital local student governments for the expression of student opinion. A condition for continued membership in NSA should be an active, aggressive student government, with a carefully conceived program, and real authority and power. ... The delegates to the National Congress should and must insist upon a complete financial accounting, and a complete financial housecleaning...

And finally, the American students who are NSA must approach their organization with new courage and faith in their own abilities. They must reconsider the value of intelligent discussion; they must remember that stagnant government cannot long remain democratic government. They must throw off the fear of change, fear of criticism, fear of losing support, fear of losing respectability. They must approach their problems with guts.²²⁶

Birenbaum was calling on NSA to take on hard, unglamorous tasks, and to address them doggedly. An NSA that made “active, aggressive student government” a precondition of membership would be a smaller NSA, and one that devoted more energy to building up student governments would be one that had less time for making pronouncements about the proper conduct of the Korean War.

The editors of the Organizational Affairs Working Papers at the 1951 Congress would feature Birenbaum’s stirring words prominently in that document, but the years that followed would provide little evidence that his exhortations had been taken to heart. National affairs and student government concerns were less prominent on NSA’s agenda in 1951 than they had been in 1950, and they would be less prominent in 1952 than they had been in 1951. The Association’s leadership would in the early 1950s turn away from the campus, and expand its own powers at the expense of those of NSA’s members.

²²⁶ Organizational Affairs Working Papers, 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

Chapter Four Retrenchment: 1950-1956

Introduction

NSA had struggled in its first few years, and the early 1950s dealt it a series of new setbacks. A travel office crisis plunged the Association into debt. Relations among the officers were frequently strained. Congress attendance slumped, the staff was slashed, and domestic operations were drastically reduced. NSA remained unable to establish a close connection with its member campuses, and its failure to do so caused its membership base to shrink. As ties to student government weakened, NSA would come to rely more and more on outside advisors and patrons, often to its detriment. And in the midst of this, though almost no one in the organization knew it, the Association was entering into a new clandestine relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency — a relationship that few of NSA's early leaders would have countenanced.

After 1951 NSA's international activities were funded almost exclusively by the CIA, and officers and alumni with Agency ties would come to wield great influence in the Association as a whole. The CIA relationship would bring NSA a measure of institutional stability and raise its international profile, but in its shadow the Association would drift further from its campus base. The National Student Congress, once a major event, became little more than a showcase for the International Commission's agenda, and

attendance plummeted — more than three hundred schools had sent representatives to the constitutional convention, but just 173 were in attendance at the 1954 Congress.

In the early stages of the CIA relationship the International Commission dominated the Association as it never had before — and never would again. The year 1954 was in many respects NSA's nadir, and the Association gradually came to take on a more balanced, bifurcated character thereafter. Responsibility for NSA's domestic program was gradually given over to the domestic vice presidents, the Congress, and the NEC, while its ever-expanding international program and a few high-profile domestic projects operated under the purview of a carefully vetted, self-perpetuating cadre of international affairs vice presidents, alumni, and staff. It was this NSA — divided, compromised, ambitious — that would set the template for the decade that followed.

Financial Crisis, 1950-51

At the 1950 Congress NSA cut its dues rates for the third straight year.²²⁷ The plenary directed that its dues reduction be effected “without detrimentally affecting the association as a whole,” but gave little indication as to which programs were to be cut. Further restricting the staff's options, the delegates declined to streamline the Association's structure, perpetuating NSA's high expenditures on salaries and related expenses. With the declines in enrollment that accompanied the outbreak of the Korean conflict dues income fell even lower.

The Congress also abandoned the Purchase Card System as a revenue stream. PCS had been an important source of income in 1949-50, showing a profit of more than

²²⁷ “National Dues Go Down,” *NSA News*, October 1950.

\$2500 — 8% of the cash-strapped Association’s total revenue for the year.²²⁸ But the program was also a focus for criticism, both from those who claimed that NSA should not be taking money from the pockets of individual students and from those who believed that student-only discounts were inherently elitist. Accordingly, PCS had been overhauled and de-emphasized. Renamed the Student Discount Service (SDS), the program was placed on a revenue-neutral footing.²²⁹

The delegates would likely have made different choices that August if they had been aware that NSA’s travel department was undergoing a catastrophic collapse. Until 1949 the travel program had not been expected to show a profit, and in fact had been subsidized by the Association.²³⁰ In 1949-50, however, it had been reconceived as a money-making venture, with an anticipated profit of \$8500 factored into the NSA budget for the year. To realize that profit, and to establish NSA as a force in the travel industry, a dramatic expansion of travel operations had been undertaken. The number of students served was tripled, and NSA contracted to provide a variety of new services.²³¹

But expenses rose far beyond what had been anticipated, with IAVP Erskine Childers spending much of the year traveling on travel program business. Additional headaches resulted when an NSA-chartered ship was declared unseaworthy, stranding six hundred student travelers.²³² The national office dipped into travel income to cover

²²⁸ Treasurer’s report for 1949-50, NSA Papers.

²²⁹ “Congress Alters PCS, Eliminates \$1 Charge,” *NSA News*, October 1950. A national survey conducted in 1955 found that SDS was often “not filling any real purpose for the student,” and it appears to have faded away not long thereafter. [Report on SDS, appendix to Educational Affairs Commission Working Papers, 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3; composite report to the 1955 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

²³⁰ Erskine Childers to Klopff, November 7, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 18; Travel Department working papers, included in the International Commission working papers of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²³¹ Erskine Childers to Klopff, November 7, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 18.

²³² Erskine Childers to Klopff, November 7, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 18; Lauri Johnston, “Europe-Bound Ship ‘Unsafe,’ 600 Here,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1950. Most of the

its own expenses, the travel program borrowed from European national unions of students to keep itself afloat, and by the end of the year the department had amassed a deficit of \$26,000 — a figure nearly the equal of the Association’s entire annual budget.²³³

And by the time the extent of that collapse was made known, the Association was experiencing a leadership crisis almost as severe as its fiscal meltdown.

Organizational Crisis and the Move to Colorado

Looking back on NSA’s history in the mid-1950s, executive secretary Marion Andert said that the founders’ vision of a unified “student staff,” strained in 1949-50, was buried at the 1950 Congress.²³⁴ Bickering among the new officers began almost immediately, and the group was riven by power struggles and personality clashes throughout the year.²³⁵ By the next Congress at least two had seriously considered resigning.²³⁶

Most of the disagreements centered around president Allard Lowenstein, who saw his position as one of pre-eminence among the officers — and who, as he confided to

students later made the voyage on a troop ship provided by the government. [Harold Faber, “Beached’ Students to Accept U.S. Bid,” *New York Times*, June 25, 1950.]

²³³ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 5.

²³⁴ Marion Andert, Executive Secretary’s report to the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

²³⁵ Minnesota regional leadership memorandum to the NEC, April 17, 1951, NSA Papers, Box 16.

²³⁶ Minnesota regional leadership memorandum to the NEC, April 17, 1951, NSA Papers, Box 16; Helen Jean Rogers to Gordon Klopf, April 13, 1951, NSA Papers, Box 18. These sources imply that SAVP Elmer Brock actually did resign at one point, but was convinced to reconsider.

his diary, regarded several of his colleagues as “rebels” or “incompetents.”²³⁷ The year’s most acrimonious disputes revolved around Lowenstein’s vocal anti-communism and his support for a new pro-western international student union, but virtually any issue had the potential to provoke a crisis. Staff positions regularly went unfilled as a result of this gridlock, and outreach to the campuses dwindled.²³⁸

Conditions in Madison were also unsatisfactory. Although the University of Wisconsin student government and the *Daily Cardinal* had always been sympathetic to NSA, the Association had been frustrated by the lack of assistance offered by the student body and by its inability to secure appropriate, affordable office space locally — as early as 1948 the staff had placed a short article in the *NSA News* saying that they were looking to move.²³⁹ The 1950 Congress directed the Association to find a new home, specifying that the new headquarters should be located in the Midwest, and an ultimately fruitless search consumed scarce staff resources in the year that followed. Finally, in the summer of 1951, with no suitable Midwestern location forthcoming, the NEC chose Boulder, Colorado, where NSA had been promised a small rent-free office on the University of Colorado campus, as the Association’s new headquarters.²⁴⁰

The disarray in the national staff affected all aspects of the Association, but NSA’s domestic programs fell into particularly deep neglect.²⁴¹ The *NSA News*, which just two years earlier had undergone an ambitious expansion, was scaled back to a single-sheet broadside, and appeared only two or three times in the fall before disappearing

²³⁷ Allard Lowenstein diary, August 31, 1950, AKL Papers; Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32c.

²³⁸ Phillip DesMarais to Gordon Klopf, January 23, 1951, NSA Papers, Box 18. As shall be seen later in the chapter, concerns about exposure to the draft also complicated NSA’s efforts to fill vacant staff positions in 1950-51.

²³⁹ “Site for Office Sought By Staff,” *NSA News*, October 1948.

²⁴⁰ Minutes of the August 26, 1951 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2; Dennis Trueblood, NSA advisors’ newsletter, January 1952, NSA Papers, Box 14.

²⁴¹ The already beleaguered travel office was another casualty, as editorial and printing problems caused the annual *Work, Study, and Travel Abroad* brochure to be delayed past the point of usefulness. [Klopf and Trueblood, “An Evaluation,” 1951, 87.]

entirely.²⁴² NSA's cultural program, Elmer Brock told the 1951 Congress, "died," and the fate of the Association itself seemed in doubt.²⁴³

NSA moved from Madison to Boulder after the 1951 Congress, as planned. President Bill Dentzer would be the only officer working from the national office in Colorado, with day-to-day responsibility for NSA falling to executive secretary Marion Andert in his absence.²⁴⁴

The year got off to a slow start, with the skeleton staff arriving in Boulder in a rental truck in early October.²⁴⁵ After the move Dentzer spent much of his term on fundraising and international work, at one point leaving the country for more than a month.²⁴⁶ As a consequence, NSA's domestic program fell into further neglect, and it was all that Andert could do to keep the files in order and reply to incoming mail.²⁴⁷ The domestic vice presidents, all full-time students isolated on their own campuses, could give NSA only intermittent attention.²⁴⁸ SGVP John Haley resigned in the spring, unable to effectively balance his studies and his NSA duties, while Sylvia Bacon — perhaps the

²⁴² *NSA News*, October 1950, November 1950; Klopf and Trueblood, "An Evaluation," 1951, 87.

²⁴³ SAVP report, minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2. Occasional efforts were made over the next few years to revive the art tour, literary magazine, and symphony forums, but the projects received little support from the national office or the membership. [Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; 1953 SAVP report, Student Affairs Working Papers, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

²⁴⁴ Dennis Trueblood, NSA advisors' newsletter, January 1952, NSA Papers, Box 14; Keating, "Student Government Movement," 33. Though a capable administrator, Andert of course had no authority to speak or act on the Association's behalf.

²⁴⁵ Kernish, "History of NSA," 6; William T. Dentzer, Jr., "From Minneapolis to Bloomington," in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 300.

²⁴⁶ Dennis Trueblood to Gordon Klopf, January 12, 1952, NSA Papers, Box 18. In that letter, Trueblood estimated that between his election and the end of January, two-thirds of Dentzer's time was devoted to international issues.

²⁴⁷ Dennis Trueblood, "Observations of the 1952 National Student Association Congress," NSA Papers, Box 18; Executive Secretary's report, Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁴⁸ Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

most active of the three part-time vice presidents — said in her report to the Congress that she had been “lonely, very lonely” at Vassar throughout the year.²⁴⁹

After just a few months in Boulder, it was obvious to all that the national office had to be moved back east.²⁵⁰ Accommodations in Colorado were disappointing, and many of the anticipated benefits of the move had failed to materialize.²⁵¹ Coordination with the International Commission, the travel office, and eastern campuses was difficult, and NSA’s regional leaders, lacking guidance from an understaffed and geographically isolated national office, were even less effective than usual.²⁵²

Tasked with finding NSA a new home in the Northeast or Midwest, the NEC narrowed the field to Philadelphia, New York City, and Newark, leaving the final decision to the staff. The staff chose Philadelphia, citing its affordability, its proximity to New York and Washington, and its lack of racial segregation in public accommodations.²⁵³ Despite concerns from some quarters that moving the office off campus might weaken NSA’s ties to its membership and place it in “too close proximity to ‘pressure groups,’” the new office was established in downtown Philadelphia. For the second year in a row, the school year would begin with NSA’s domestic leadership consumed with the task of moving their base of operations halfway across the country.²⁵⁴

An additional strain in these years was the problem of the draft. According to NSA president Dick Murphy, writing to Eleanor Roosevelt in late 1952, it had “been the

²⁴⁹ President’s report, minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2. Bacon urged NSA to make it possible for more of the elected leadership to work from the national office the following year.

²⁵⁰ Summary minutes of the August 28-29, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁵¹ Summary minutes of the October 1951 NIC meeting, NSA Papers.

²⁵² Dennis Trueblood, NSA Advisors’ newsletter, January 1952, NSA Papers, Box 14.

²⁵³ Summary minutes of the August 28-29, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2; Kernish, “History of NSA,” 7.

²⁵⁴ Summary minutes of the August 28-29, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2; Leonard Wilcox, NAVP report, minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

policy” from 1950 on for local draft boards to give officers deferments. The American Council on Education had vouched for NSA’s value, he said, as had “a number of leading educators,” and no officers had been drafted in the first two years of the Korean conflict.²⁵⁵ Even so, however, the draft had caused staffing difficulties for NSA. The Association lost its treasurer and two potential staff members in the fall of 1950 because of draft fears, and Lowenstein sent out a plaintive, unavailing call for “women, veterans, or run-of-the-mill males who happen to have one leg too few — or too many” to fill the vacant positions.²⁵⁶

The draft problem, then, was not just one of losing officers or staff to induction. It was also a problem of recruitment — if potential candidates for NSA positions could not be assured of deferments, they might well choose not to apply, opting instead to stay on their own campuses, to seek admission to graduate or professional school, or to enlist.²⁵⁷ NSA’s stability depended not only on its ability to secure deferments for its officers and critical staff, but on its ability to ensure in advance that such deferments would be forthcoming. As of 1951 it could provide no such assurances.

NSA had emerged from the travel office crisis of 1950 solvent, but operating on an extremely restricted budget. In 1951 dues were raised for the first time, and the increase was expected to add several thousand dollars to NSA’s coffers for the year, but it was clear that the Association’s membership had neither the resources nor the inclination to support any significant expansion of NSA activities.²⁵⁸ Some feelers were put out to foundations, but such donors would be unlikely to fund basic operating expenses, and the government would not provide more than minimal overt assistance.

²⁵⁵ Dentzer to Eleanor Roosevelt, November 23, 1952, NSA Papers, Box 18.

²⁵⁶ Lowenstein to NSA regional chairs, October 19, 1951, NSA Papers, Box 18*; Lowenstein to NEC, December 4, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 16*; Klopff and Trueblood, “An Evaluation,” 87.

²⁵⁷ Marion Andert to Gordon Klopff (letter to NIC), April 26, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.

²⁵⁸ Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2. The minutes say a revenue bump of “\$27,000” was anticipated, but this is presumably a typo.

The expansion of NSA's revenue base beyond campus contributions had been a sensitive and controversial matter in the Association's early years. The founders had seen financial independence as a precondition of organizational integrity — an exclusively dues-based funding scheme had initially been considered “an essential feature of NSA's financial setup,” as the 1947-48 officers put it, and at one point the NSO had even considered a flat ban on external funding.²⁵⁹ But by 1948 the officers had opened the door to the possibility that they might, with “the explicit understanding that there will be no strings attached,” accept outside funding for “a special project or publication.”²⁶⁰ A few such grants were received in the years that followed, but outside support was limited — not least because donations to the Association were not tax exempt.²⁶¹

NSA Restructuring at the 1951 Congress

Early in his presidency, Lowenstein had declared that it was imperative for NSA to “grow rapidly and make our growth a healthy and meaningful one,” and set himself a goal of bringing fifty new schools into the Association.²⁶² He spent much of the year on the road, giving some two hundred speeches during his term.²⁶³ But the national office's

²⁵⁹ Report to the 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.

²⁶⁰ Report to the 1948 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 1.

²⁶¹ Because of its lobbying efforts, NSA was classified by the IRS as a social service agency rather than an educational association, and contributions and support to the organization weren't tax deductible. NSA had in previous years investigated the possibility of incorporation, but some campus student governments were barred from becoming members of a corporation, so that wasn't a comfortable option. Also, concerns were expressed that if NSA as an entity were to incorporate then the commercial activities of the travel office (not incorporated on its own until 1953) would likely complicate NSA's efforts to secure tax-exempt status for itself.

²⁶² Allard Lowenstein to regional chairs, October 19, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 18; Lowenstein to the NEC, December 4, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 16.

²⁶³ Klopff and Trueblood, “The United States National Student Association: An Evaluation,” *School and Society*, August 11, 1951, 86.

bickering and its failure to carry out an effective domestic program alienated many schools, and his recruitment efforts were largely a failure — NSA finished its most internally divided year with its smallest Congress to date. Only about 175 schools participated — a drop of 25% from the previous year and 40% from the year before.²⁶⁴

The mood at the Congress was grim and recriminatory.²⁶⁵ The high hopes of NSA's early years had been dashed, and the delegates pressed for explanations as to what had gone wrong and how. Plenary debate was heated and confused, as bitter argument and convoluted parliamentary maneuverings preceded votes on subject after subject.²⁶⁶

Though there were those in NSA's campus membership who were ready to take a more active role in providing direction to the Association, they were disorganized and distracted. The momentum in 1951 was not in the direction of a more decentralized, democratic NSA, but toward more hierarchy and more top-down control. Lowenstein was a major engine behind this shift, although other alumni would come to wield far more power in the reconstituted NSA. He had worked to consolidate power in the office of the president during his term, and at the Congress he was able to marshal the support he needed to write that transformation into NSA's constitution, bylaws, and budget.

Several factors facilitated this effort. First, there was considerable sentiment at the Congress that decisive leadership of any kind would be preferable to the gridlock of 1950-51. Second, Lowenstein was a magnetic presence — his personal charisma was such that his adversaries complained that he dominated Congress plenaries “by hypnotism.”²⁶⁷ And finally the ongoing financial crisis made some sort of streamlining inevitable.

²⁶⁴ Directory of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁶⁵ Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32e.

²⁶⁶ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 6; Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32e.

²⁶⁷ Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32g.

In the 1951-52 budget each of the vice presidential positions was stripped of its stipend. The Cambridge-based IAVP was instructed to fundraise his or her salary, and the remaining officers were, as noted earlier, directed to work from their home campuses on an unpaid, part-time basis. Lowenstein and his allies also succeeded in pushing through a set of constitutional amendments that ratified the president's pre-eminence, with "full authority over and full responsibility for the operation of USNSA, the Staff, and the National Office." The delegates balked at a provision that would have granted the president unlimited authority to make new policy between meetings of the Congress and NEC, but otherwise adopted the Lowenstein proposal as written, turning aside five amendments that would have restrained the president's power.²⁶⁸

In spite of all this, however, Congress still offered the membership opportunities to influence NSA's direction. The 1950 Congress had instructed the staff to mount a Student Body Presidents' Conference (SBPC) the following year, to begin one day in advance of the Congress itself and run concurrently thereafter, and in 1951 the SBPC served as a nucleus for organizing at the Congress.²⁶⁹ Able to caucus and network at the SBPC, student government leaders operated as an organized bloc at that year's Congress for the first time. As a result of criticism and proposals put forth at the 1951 SBPC a student government vice presidency and a Student Government Information Service (SGIS) — a national archive of informational materials of interest to student leaders, its services available to member and non-member schools — were created.²⁷⁰ Strong rhetoric of student government empowerment was in evidence that year as well, as SAVP

²⁶⁸ Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁶⁹ Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁷⁰ Keating, "Student Government Movement," 32g.

Elmer Brock criticized “student governments which permitted themselves to become tools of college administrations.”²⁷¹

After years of opposition, the 1950 Congress had opened the door to the possibility of the creation of a competitor to the IUS. At the first International Student Conference (ISC), a gathering of national unions of students held in Stockholm in December 1950, Allard Lowenstein had attempted to push that door wide, giving a forceful speech in favor of the establishment of an anti-communist international student organization — a speech for which he was formally rebuked by the conference’s other participants.²⁷² The NEC had endorsed Lowenstein’s position at its next meeting, however, and Lowenstein sought similar support from the Congress that summer.

Outgoing IAVP Herbert Eisenberg, who had been sidelined by Lowenstein in Stockholm, lobbied against the resolution, arguing that such a body would be opposed by students in Europe and Asia. In a departure from previous practice, international student guests were vocal participants in the debate, with the Canadian and French contingents supporting the resolution while the Dutch, Norwegians, English, and

²⁷¹ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 5. The Student Body Presidents’ Conference was held again in 1952, and it was considerably more ambitious than it had been in its inaugural year. The conference consisted of four days of workshops and speakers on student government activities, structure, and programming, relations with faculty, administrators, and the student body, and other issues. [Agenda of the 1952 Student Body Presidents’ Conference, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

²⁷² Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32e; Herbert Eisenberg to NSA Executive Committee, December 24, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 2. As an alternative to a new international student organization, the Congress endorsed the creation of a coordinating body for the “Student Mutual Assistance Plan” that had been approved at the December Stockholm meeting. [Herbert Eisenberg memorandum to the NSA Executive Committee, [December 1950], NSA Papers, Box 2; Jones, “Relations with the International Union of Students,” 83-4.]

Brazilians opposed it.²⁷³ After a grueling floor fight the opposition, led by Avrea Ingram of Harvard, won a narrow victory.²⁷⁴

The ideological and personal divisions that had so split the Congress carried over into the officer elections, as Lowenstein and Brock championed passionate anti-communist Bill Dentzer of Muskingum College for the presidency.²⁷⁵ Dentzer was opposed by Ken Kurtz of Swarthmore, one of few dissenters from the Lowenstein “foreign policy” on the NEC the previous year.²⁷⁶ Dentzer managed to squeak into office with a 15-vote margin of victory — the second-narrowest of any presidential race in the Association’s first decade.²⁷⁷ In the IAVP race Ingram, credentialed as a Harvard graduate student, stood for election. The Lowenstein faction was unable to find a suitable candidate with whom to oppose him, and he ultimately ran unopposed.²⁷⁸

The Establishment of the CIA Relationship

In 1950 money from the Central Intelligence Agency found its way to NSA on at least two occasions. That summer the CIA underwrote the travel of thirteen Association representatives abroad in an ambitious effort to establish contact with anti-IUS student leaders, and in the fall it provided funding for planning and outreach for the upcoming

²⁷³ Such students had attended NSA’s national meetings since at least the constitutional convention, but they had rarely played an active role in plenary debates.

²⁷⁴ Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32f.

²⁷⁵ Dentzer to Gordon Klopf, December 16, 1951, NSA Papers, Box 18. In the part-time officer races that year, Sylvia Bacon, a Vassar student and an officer in the New York State Young Republicans, was elected student affairs vice president — the first female vice president in NSA’s history. [Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

²⁷⁶ Minutes of the December 1950 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

²⁷⁷ The 1954 election, which International Commission staffer Harry Lunn won despite garnering four fewer votes than his opponent, was the only closer race.

²⁷⁸ Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32f.

Stockholm International Student Conference.²⁷⁹ These are the two earliest known instances of the Agency providing direct covert funding to NSA, and each appears to have been undertaken with the goal of boosting the prospects for the creation of a pro-Western competitor to the IUS. Some Association officers were suspicious of this unexplained largesse, however, or disinclined to mount the projects the agency sought to fund. With the ISC moving forward, and NSA taking a leading role in that effort, the Agency's need for a reliable presence within the Association was growing more acute.

A recently declassified Agency memo from February 1951 provides an unusually detailed picture of the CIA's assessment of NSA at this time. The memo characterized the NSA-CIA relationship as "an extremely delicate one," due to the fact that the Association was "not receptive to accepting government subsidy." NSA as an entity, the memo said, was of the opinion that "such a course of action would run contrary to its basic principle of independent thought and action and would in a sense reduce it to the position of being a tool of the government." Thus a general subsidy was not seen as "feasible," though "the penetration we have made" into the Association would likely make it possible for the Agency to continue to underwrite "individual projects by careful use of such means as will not offend or arouse the suspicion" of others in NSA.²⁸⁰

The memo also indicated the Agency's willingness to clandestinely intervene in the internal politics of the Association. It described NSA president Allard Lowenstein as an advocate of the Association's taking a "forthright stand" against "Communism as a political and military menace to our security," and IAVP Herbert Eisenberg as a proponent of "a more idealistic less militant" position. With Lowenstein in danger of being drafted into the army the Agency had "undertaken, covertly and through the proper channels," to obtain him a deferment.

²⁷⁹ Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 142-143; Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 129-130.

²⁸⁰ Reproduced in Schwartz, *American Students Organize*, 569.

The February memo took NSA's opposition to covert work as a given, but a memorandum prepared for the Secretary of State the previous month had pointed the way to a possible way out of the impasse. Robert Donhauser, an official in the US embassy in Sweden, had observed the Stockholm meeting, and come to some conclusions. Lowenstein and the rest of the NSA leadership were not "of sufficient caliber," he said, "to carry through their part of the [international] program." "Given the importance of international student activities," he said, "more outstanding graduate students" should "be found to run NSA's international program, permitting more continuity and leadership, more maturity and more experience both home and abroad."²⁸¹

The election of Avrea Ingram has been taken by many to have been an implementation of Donhauser's recommendation.²⁸² Certainly Ingram's background raised eyebrows — he was a 24-year-old Harvard graduate student who had joined the HIACOM staff just that spring and never attended a Congress before.²⁸³ Although Ingram had been a central figure at the Congress and his election was ultimately uncontested, Allard Lowenstein would later express disbelief that Ingram could have been the "spontaneous choice" of the Congress delegates.²⁸⁴

However he arrived in his position, Ingram would be the mechanism for the realization of the Agency's goals within NSA. In this he would find an ally in NSA president William Dentzer — Dentzer and Ingram had been adversaries at the Congress,

²⁸¹ Donhauser quoted in Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 146.

²⁸² Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 149; David Harris, *Dreams Die Hard*, (New York: St Martin's/Marek, 1982), 169. Allard Lowenstein had courted alumna Helen Jean Rogers to run, but Rogers, who had represented NSA abroad the previous year and has been identified as a member of the HIACOM circle, declined. (Three other Congress attendees declined nomination for the position, including Lowenstein himself.)

²⁸³ Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 149.

²⁸⁴ Ingram's candidacy may have been engineered — and the refusal of Lowenstein ally Helen Jean Rogers, a member of the HIACOM circle, to run against him is certainly suggestive — but the election itself appears to have been legitimate.

but in office they formed a strong working relationship.²⁸⁵ Just weeks after taking office Ingram informed Dentzer that he was working to secure a major new funding stream for NSA, and in November the Association was approached by alumnus John Simons, now a CIA employee, who identified himself as representing an unnamed private donor.²⁸⁶ By January it had been publicly announced that the International Commission had raised sufficient funds to underwrite its activities for the year.²⁸⁷ (Some of this money made its way to the national office's coffers as well — in a budget statement for the winter of 1951-52, a \$3900 transfer to the national office from the International Commission was noted.²⁸⁸) As allowed under a bylaw passed at the 1951 Congress, the sources of these funds were kept secret, on the grounds that their publication would expose the donors to unwelcome requests from others.²⁸⁹

The CIA's primary interest in NSA in this period seems to have been in the realm of international student politics, specifically in the establishment of the ISC as a permanent competitor to the International Union of Students. When the ISC's permanent office, the Coordinating Secretariat (COSEC) opened in Leiden, Holland, in the summer of 1952, Dentzer was hired as a member of the staff. Ingram served a second

²⁸⁵ Ingram and Dentzer had been opponents on substantive questions at the Congress and region-by-region analysis of voting patterns in their elections reveals that each had drawn most of his support from opponents of the other. [Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

²⁸⁶ Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 135-136.

²⁸⁷ Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 150; Dennis Trueblood, NSA Advisors' Newsletter, January 1952, NSA Papers, Box 14.

²⁸⁸ Statement of NSA receipts and disbursements for October 1951 through March 1952, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁸⁹ Dennis Trueblood, "Observations of the 1952 National Student Association Congress," NSA Papers, Box 18. The Congress' passage of this bylaw, and of the budget provision under which the incoming 1951-52 IAVP was instructed to fundraise his salary, raise the question of whether one or more members of NSA's 1950-51 leadership had reason to anticipate that the International Commission would be receiving covert funds the following year. No unambiguous evidence of such an expectation has yet surfaced, however, and extant documents do not reveal the identity of the individual or individuals who put forward the bylaw amendment and the budget provision.

term as IAVP that next year, and then joined Dentzer at COSEC.²⁹⁰ Sometime in 1952, an internal CIA report summarized what had been accomplished:

The ISC/COSEC ... represents the first stage towards a world federation capable of competing with the communist IUS. ... The decisions taken at [the ISC meeting in] Copenhagen authorize the organization to carry on a large-scale program of publications and to implement, through its Secretariat, a student aid program across the world. The main objective of the organization is to have the non-communist national unions leave the IUS, and to weaken and isolate the communists.

The ISC is controlled through one of our agents in a key position, through two leaders of the NSA, and through a foundation financed by the CIA which enables us to control its finances.²⁹¹

Unlike most of the American organizations through which the CIA conducted covert operations, the National Student Association had neither been created nor wholly captured by the Agency. It had not needed to be. By 1952 the CIA had by its own account established the International Commission as its point of entry into NSA, and through that mechanism established control of the ISC.

The 1952 Congress

The Congress of 1952 was smaller than the previous year's, and unusually passive.²⁹² In a post-Congress article, two of NSA's advisors wrote that the "young" delegates, "realizing their limitations," had frequently called on alumni and other outsiders to offer suggestions about NSA's direction and agenda.²⁹³

The night before the elections the outgoing national officers met with regional

²⁹⁰ Paget, "From Stockholm to Leiden," 155-157.

²⁹¹ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 208-209.

²⁹² There were 311 delegates in attendance at the 1952 Congress, according to the Congress minutes. [NSA Papers, Box 2.]

²⁹³ Trueblood and Klopff, "The 1952 Congress," *School and Society*, 281.

representatives. A slate of officer candidates was agreed upon, and almost all its members were elected unanimously.²⁹⁴ First Dick Murphy of North Carolina was elected president. A fellow student of Lowenstein's at UNC, Murphy had been Lowenstein's first choice to take the position of executive secretary in 1951.²⁹⁵ He had also been nominated for president that year, but had declined, serving instead as the chair of the NIC.²⁹⁶ An NSA advisor had described Murphy as the only one of NSA's student leaders "who fully recognize[d] the value of the national student government program" of the Association, but he had been active in international affairs as well, serving as an NSA representative to UNESCO and as the chair of the International Commission at the Congress.²⁹⁷

Leonard Wilcox, the outgoing student body president of the University of Michigan and chair of the NEC, was elected to a new, full-time national affairs vice presidency.²⁹⁸ Avrea Ingram, who had aroused such bitter antipathy the previous year, was re-elected as IAVP without opposition, becoming the first NSA officer to win a second term. All of the full-time officer elections, and the first two of the three part-time officer elections, were uncontested. When the plenary reconvened for the election of the educational affairs vice president, however, the delegates engaged in what one observer called a "rank and file" rebellion against this "show of extreme unanimity." The candidate of the slate was Manfred Brust, a doctoral student in physiology at the University of Illinois who had received his undergraduate degree eight years earlier, and

²⁹⁴ Keating, "Student Government Movement," 35.

²⁹⁵ Dennis Trueblood to Gordon Klopff, February 13, 1952, NSA Papers, Box 18; Lowenstein diary, August 31, 1950. AKL Papers.

²⁹⁶ Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁹⁷ Trueblood to Gordon Klopff, January 12, 1952, NSA Papers, Box 18; Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress; Minutes of the August 20, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2.

²⁹⁸ Wilcox had chaired the SBPC and the student government commission at the Congress, and like Murphy, he had been a member of the NIC the previous year. [SBPC agenda, 1952, NSA Papers, Box 2; Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

he did hold on to win, but insurgent Joseph Clancy, student government president of the City College of New York, came within a few votes of an upset victory.²⁹⁹

NSA Finances in the Early CIA Era

In 1952 Avrea Ingram — who knew about the CIA funding — advised the Association’s domestic officers — who did not — to “follow his example” and launch an intensive fundraising campaign. But without his faith that such a campaign would bear fruit, the domestic staff was loath to divert resources from NSA’s programmatic work.³⁰⁰ Given the reasons for the Agency’s interests in the Association, moreover, it is by no means clear that the CIA would have provided such assistance if it had been asked. The International Commission fared well under the CIA’s patronage in these early years, the national office far less so.³⁰¹

Since the February 1967 disclosure of the NSA-CIA relationship, the only publicly available accounting of its financial scope has been a chart that was prepared for the 1967 Congress by 1966-67 NSA president Eugene Groves.³⁰² For every fiscal year from 1947 forward Groves provided a figure for the Association’s gross income, and a statement of how much, if any, of that money had come from known or suspected CIA sources. The Association’s total CIA subsidy had, he concluded, amounted to nearly 70%

²⁹⁹ Alumni survey, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 18; Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 35.

³⁰⁰ Andert to Klopff, April 26, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.

³⁰¹ In the fall of 1953 NSA’s president told Gordon Klopff that “a shortage of funds resulting in an inadequate staff and inadequate facilities” was the national office’s most serious problem. [Edwards to Klopff, October 1, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.]

³⁰² Eugene Groves, *The President’s Report to the Twentieth National Student Congress*, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

of NSA's total income between 1951 and 1966, the period of large-scale Agency funding, and more than 80% of its revenue between 1952 and 1958.

In the absence of any other solid information on the extent of CIA funding, subsequent NSA chroniclers have generally accepted Groves' figures. But Groves' report was accompanied by no documentation of his methodology or sources, and much of the information in his chart is contradicted by what can be learned about NSA's finances from other sources.

My own analysis of the extent and nature of NSA's CIA funding is necessarily tentative. Extant Association financial records for the CIA era are incomplete. NSA maintained separate budgets for its various offices and projects, moreover, compartmentalizing its finances and frustrating efforts to develop a clear picture of the Association's overall financial status.³⁰³ But sufficient documentation exists to demonstrate the unreliability of Groves' conclusions.

In a February 1967 report on the NSA-CIA relationship, CBS News declared that public financial documents filed by the CIA's front foundations provided a comprehensive record of which of them had made contributions to NSA, when, and in what amounts.³⁰⁴ It appears highly likely that Groves had access to these filings, and that they formed the basis for his accounting of NSA's CIA-derived revenue.³⁰⁵

If Groves did in fact rely on these filings then it is likely that his account of the

³⁰³ Summary minutes of the August 21, 1953 morning NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁰⁴ Transcript, "CBS News Special Report — 'In the Pay of the CIA: An American Dilemma,'" March 13, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 62.

³⁰⁵ The case for this proposition is circumstantial, but compelling. First, where Groves' figures can be checked against NSA records of revenue from the front foundations, the numbers match — even in instances in which Groves' tallies of non-CIA revenue are contradicted by the same NSA documents. Second, Groves' report included a list of known and suspected CIA conduits and a tally of the total donations each had made to NSA — a chart which would have been trivial to prepare from the conduits' financial records, but impossible to construct from known NSA sources. Finally, Groves reported no CIA payments to NSA in 1951-52 — a year in which NSA is now known to have received funds from the CIA through channels other than the front foundations.

extent and sources of CIA funding of the Association in the 1952-67 period is substantially accurate. The first of NSA's CIA-front patrons, the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs (FYSA), was activated with NSA alumnus John Simons at its helm in the summer of 1952, and I have uncovered no evidence that significant CIA funding was directed to the Association outside the front-foundation network in the years that followed. The ultimate source of the CIA money was kept secret, but the grants themselves were given openly, and with a fair amount of transparency.

As far as can be determined, NSA budgets — and the financial reports that were distributed to the Association's members in the 1960s — accurately recorded the money NSA took in, the immediate sources of that funding, and the uses to which the money was put.³⁰⁶ While Groves' portrait of NSA's CIA revenue is corroborated by Association documents, however, his account of its non-CIA revenue is frequently contradicted by them, and contradicted in ways that strongly suggest that Groves' numbers, and not the Association's financial records, are in error, as Groves' figures for NSA's non-CIA revenue are consistently far lower than can be plausibly explained. In 1954-55, for instance, a year in which NSA received a \$29,400 grant from the Ford Foundation for a study of American student government, Groves reported the Association's total non-CIA revenue as just \$15,323.³⁰⁷ Extant NSA financial records, in short, suggest strongly that Groves dramatically understated NSA's non-CIA income, and in so doing dramatically overstated the Association's financial dependence on the CIA.

A close examination of records from 1952-53, a year for which NSA complied an unusually comprehensive retrospective financial statement, indicates the scope of the

³⁰⁶ It has been established that the Agency funded other organizations of this period — some labor unions, for instance — through cash donations, but no allegations of such funding to NSA were made in the aftermath of the disclosure of the CIA relationship, and my own research has uncovered no evidence of such activity after 1952.

³⁰⁷ Groves made no allegation that the Ford Foundation ever served as a CIA conduit, and Association documents indicate that NSA took in substantial income from other non-CIA sources that year, including more than \$12,500 in dues.

problem.³⁰⁸ In that year, the first year of systematic CIA funding through front foundations, NSA received a bit more than \$50,000 from the Agency — on that Groves' report and the Association's financial records agree. (Groves used a figure of \$55,494 for likely CIA funding for the year, and the International Commission's 1952-53 financial report to the Association reported a total of \$55,494.63 in donations from organizations that Groves would in 1967 identify as likely CIA conduits.³⁰⁹)

Groves' claim that the Association took in just \$14,145.08 in non-CIA revenue for the year, however, and that CIA revenue thus amounted to 79% of NSA's income, is hard to credit. The Association's national office reported \$20,256.33 in revenue that year, and the International Commission itself reported revenue of \$56,111.15.³¹⁰ While Groves found that NSA took in a total of \$69,639.08 in 1952-53, in other words, the Association itself reported national office and International Commission revenues totaling \$76,367.28. If one accepts Groves' figures for CIA revenues and substitutes NSA's own accounting of its overall income, one finds that suspected CIA funding drops from 79% to 73% of the total.

But this is just the beginning. A second Groves omission, more substantial than the above, is his apparent exclusion of the Association's 1953 Congress budget — by tradition calculated separately from the budgets of the national office and International Commission — from his total. Nearly all of the Congress's revenue, which amounted to \$29,924.43 in 1953, took the form of registration fees and room and board payments from Congress attendees, and a bit more than half of this money was paid out almost

³⁰⁸ All figures in this section are taken from the Groves report, cited above, or the "USNSA Financial Statement, Fiscal Year 1952-53," January 1954. [NSA Papers, Box 64.]

³⁰⁹ These donations came from four sources, two of which — FYSA and the Committee for a Free Asia — Groves identifies as known CIA conduits. If the other two donors, which he regards as possible CIA funders — The Japan Society and "William Smith, Houston, Texas" — are excluded from the CIA total, it drops to \$50,936.06.

³¹⁰ Of the domestic revenue \$10,917.50 was reported as having come from dues, with the remainder deriving from NSA's foundation, publication sales, contributions, a small profit from the previous year's Congress, and a "miscellaneous" line of \$145.00.

immediately to the host campus. But Congress fees also paid August salaries for NSA staff, Congress-associated expenses for printing, telephone calls, and supplies, and the room and board expenses of staff and invited guests. The Congress was by far the Association's most ambitious domestic undertaking of the 1952-53 year, and Groves' exclusion of it from his calculations is a gross oversight.³¹¹ Including Congress income in one's calculations reduces CIA revenue from 73% to 52%.

A third problem with Groves' figures — minor in 1952-53, but more significant in subsequent years — is that he counts as CIA revenue any Agency money that passed through the Association's coffers, whatever its ultimate destination. More than \$10,000 of NSA's CIA revenue in 1952-53, for instance, was disbursed for "Dues and Donations," and some or all of this money might properly be considered Agency support to other organizations for which NSA was used as a conduit, rather than support for the Association itself. Excluding this revenue reduces the portion of NSA income obtained from suspected CIA sources from 53% to 47%.

A fourth exclusion, of travel office revenues, is perhaps more legitimate than the prior three. The travel office was by 1952-53 a largely independent project, operating for the most part outside the Association's day-to-day control.³¹² The program was intended

³¹¹ A footnote to the 1952-53 financial report states that "the Congress Statements and the National Office Statements must be considered as an entity, as work in the two units is actually inseparable."

³¹² After the 1950 meltdown, responsibility for the travel program had been placed in the hands of a professional staff working out of a New York City office. [International Commission midterm report, International Commission Working Papers, 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.] In its first year of New York operation the department cut its debt to just \$11,000, even after providing the national office with a grant of \$1300 to defray moving expenses. [Travel Director's report, minutes of 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Minutes of the October 1951 meeting of the NSA National Interim Committee, NSA Papers, Box 14; Andert to Klopff, April 26, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.] Travel remained a problematic undertaking for NSA, however. The Travel Director was forced to quit in 1953 after disagreements with the NSA leadership, a crisis involving the denial of NSA's authorization to engage charter flights consumed a substantial amount of the officers' time in 1954-55, and another Travel Director was fired in early 1956. [Keating, "Student Government Movement," 32g,

to bring in revenue to NSA, but in a year like 1952-53, in which it operated on an essentially revenue-neutral basis, one could argue that the inclusion of its \$42,661.99 operating revenue as part of the Association's overall income would have left an inaccurate impression of the finances of the Association as a whole.³¹³

At the same time, however, the travel office *was* an NSA project, and one that NSA pointed to both internally and externally as one of its achievements as an organization. It was, moreover, a project that provided a tangible service to those of the nation's students who had the time, money, and inclination to take advantage of it. If one considers NSA's subsidy of the ISC or the CIA-funded activities of Agency-linked alumni as Association projects, as Groves does, then why not the travel office?

In sum, then, where Groves declared that the Association took in just \$14,145.08 in non-CIA funds in 1952-53, Association records show that the figure was at a minimum more than \$51,000, and arguably in excess of \$94,000. Depending on how one arrives at one's numbers, one can reasonably estimate CIA funding for NSA at as little as 29% of the Association's revenue during the year, rather than the 79% that Groves claimed, and the 1952-53 figures were in no way anomalous.³¹⁴

Again, extant financial documentation from NSA in the 1950s is incomplete, and much remains unknown about the inner workings of the NSA-CIA relationship. But if one examines the available data from the 1950s, a clear overall picture emerges. One sees an International Commission, almost entirely supported by the CIA, running a global

38; Kernish, "History of NSA," 10, 12.] Travel revenue would not emerge as a reliable source of income for the Association until the end of the decade, but it did generate substantial, if unpredictable, revenue for the national office before then.

³¹³ In 1952-53, the travel office reported a net profit of \$170.93.

³¹⁴ The 29% figure is arrived at by considering only Groves' confirmed CIA funders in the Agency total, excluding International Commission' donations and dues payments, and including travel office revenue as NSA revenue. If one treats possible CIA funds as CIA revenue, includes donations and dues as income, and sets aside travel operations, the figure rises to 52%.

network of projects that operated largely beyond national office or membership oversight.³⁴⁵ One sees a national office whose primary support came from its student base in the form of dues, Congress fees, publication sales, and travel profits. One sees a travel department that was for the most part self-supporting and — in good years — making a not inconsequential financial contribution to the national office.

As I have suggested above, and as the travel office issue underscores, the CIA-era NSA is best understood not as a single unified organization, but as an umbrella under which a variety of projects were conducted, many with little central direction or control. There is no question but that NSA's International Commission was, by the mid-1950s, operating in close concert with the CIA. Association alumni who had moved on to positions within the Agency served as mentors and advisors to the Association's international officers and staff, and the Agency supplied the vast bulk of NSA's funding for international work. The International Commission sent representatives all over the world to run Commission projects or just to observe and report, and many of these representatives had little or no background in the domestic work of the Association. Within NSA, the International Commission was a world unto itself.

The CIA relationship, as we will see, had important repercussions for NSA's stateside endeavors. But the domestic operations of the Association drew the bulk of their financial support from sources outside the Agency, and they were for the most part run on a day-to-day basis by individuals who were not aware of, or directly beholden to, the Agency relationship. Given the tremendous divergence between the aims, organization, and financial circumstances of the national office and those of the International Commission — located three hundred miles away and operating on a

³⁴⁵ According to Groves' figures, NSA received an average of a bit more than \$50,000 a year in CIA funding between 1952 and 1955, and an average of about \$120,000 a year from the agency between 1955 and 1960. After that, as we will see in chapter six, the subsidy rose dramatically.

largely independent basis — to collapse the two, as Groves did, without addressing the internal divisions within NSA obscures not just the significance of the Association’s domestic program but also the extent to which the International Commission was held in the thrall of its Agency patrons.

The other side of the question of how significant CIA funding was to NSA is how significant it was to the Agency, and there the evidence strongly suggests that in the 1950s at least, the Association was a decidedly minor project. Agency contributions to NSA gradually grew over time, but it would be 1959 before a one-year total matched what the CIA had spent to sponsor a European tour by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1952, and 1961 before it exceeded the \$300,000 it spent producing an animated version of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* in 1957.³¹⁶ CIA funding of the Association would balloon in the 1960s, as we shall see, but even at its height it appears to have amounted to no more than a tiny fraction of the Agency’s budget for covert support of voluntary organizations.³¹⁷

The International Commission’s Critics

A 1955 report from NSA’s International Advisory Board chided the Association’s members for their lack of attention to international issues, saying that “the demand for grass roots international programming” within NSA had “not been met by grass roots responsibility.” The truth is, though, that there was never much grass roots demand for

³¹⁶ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters* (New York: The New Press, 1999) 117, 125; Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 118.

³¹⁷ The only estimate I have seen for total CIA funding of voluntary organizations is the undated figure of \$15 million a year provided by an anonymous witness before the 1967 Rusk committee on covert operations. [Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, 251.] At its peak in 1962-63, NSA received \$570,000 from the CIA, less than 4% of that total.

international programming in the Association.³¹⁸ The institutionalization of the CIA relationship accelerated and deepened tendencies that had been present in the International Commission from its establishment — tendencies toward self-directedness, secrecy, and disproportionate influence over the Association as a whole. These tendencies had always provoked criticism from some NSA members, and after 1952 the critics' voices rose louder. The membership wasn't calling for the International Commission to bring its work to the schools, but for NSA to divert Commission resources to domestic programs that the membership actually did want, and their frustration at the Association's priorities regularly found voice at the National Student Congress.

At the 1950 Congress 280 students registered for Student Affairs workshops and only 60 for those of the International Commission.³¹⁹ At a plenary session that year, a delegate characterized the international program as “the least popular of NSA's work on the campus,” and asked the officers to “outline some areas in which this program could be cut down.”³²⁰ At the 1952 Congress, Bill Dentzer acknowledged the need to dispel what he called the “‘cloak and dagger’ aura” that surrounded the International

³¹⁸ Sylvia Bacon, International Advisory Board report, 1954-55 NSA Composite Report, NSA Papers, Box 3. In the fall of 1953, a generally pro-NSA editorial in Swarthmore's student newspaper summed up members' sentiment with a declaration that NSA had “an international basis, and, today, an international bias.” [“NSA ... A Wider Responsibility,” *The Swarthmore Phoenix*, December 1, 1953, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

³¹⁹ Trueblood & Klopf, *School and Society*, 1950.

³²⁰ Outgoing IAVP Herbert Eisenberg took issue with the premise of the question, and contended that the International Commission received relatively little income from NSA's general fund. [Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.] Avrea Ingram was asked a similar question at a pre-Congress NEC meeting in 1952, and replied that the problem wasn't that the International Commission was doing too much, but that the other Commissions were doing too little. [Minutes of the August 14, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2.] Questioned again at a plenary session at the 1953 Congress, he said that the membership, not the International Commission, was responsible for setting the Association's priorities. [Minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

Commission, even as he turned aside calls to consolidate NSA's domestic and international offices.³²¹

The idea of merging the two offices had, as has been noted, been raised before the advent of the CIA relationship, and pressure for such a move would not abate thereafter. In the spring of 1953 NSA executive secretary Marion Andert told the NIC that she had, upon her appointment nearly two years earlier, “viewed the national office as the centre of the Association, with service for the United States student community as its objective.” She had soon realized, however, that the offices of the travel department and the International Commission “were being developed as self-sufficient and autonomous units,” with their own priorities, imperatives, and staffs. The Cambridge and New York outposts, she warned, were “expanding their offices while crippling the national office.” The national organization had “never struck roots,” and NSA was “building on quicksand” as a result.³²² Noting that the national office's lease was due to expire in September, Andert urged NSA to seize the opportunity to place the national office, the International Commission, and the travel program under one roof — to “grow strong together” rather than “remain apart and disintegrate.”³²³

At the Congress that summer, outgoing SGVP Steve Voykovich took up the idea — he called consolidation imperative, and argued that it should be undertaken as part of a larger reform agenda.³²⁴ The primacy of the president should be abandoned, and the national officers should take on the oversight and co-ordinating role of the NIC. The

³²¹ Minutes of the August 14, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2; Minutes of the August 20, 1952 meeting of the constitutional committee, NSA Papers, Box 2. Dentzer's proposed remedy for the problem — increased presidential oversight over the Commission — indicates the extent to which NSA's international operatives were by then operating independently of even NSA's own leadership. [Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

³²² Marion Andert to Gordon Klopf and NIC, April 26, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.

³²³ Marion Andert to Gordon Klopf and NIC, April 26, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.

³²⁴ Summary minutes of the August 21, 1953 afternoon NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 3.

NEC's role should be bolstered, and all officers should be given full-time positions.³²⁵ NSA should, in short, return to the governance structure under which it had operated until 1950. The question was shunted to an ad hoc "Organization Committee," whose report to the Congress "viewed with alarm the growing separation of the three NSA offices" but did not endorse any of Voykovich's reform proposals. Instead they prodded the full-time staff to meet monthly at the national office, with the NIC joining them every other month, and asked the Travel Advisory Board and the International Activities Control Board to provide written reports to the NIC in advance of that body's bimonthly meetings.³²⁶ The committee's report was accepted without notable dissent — NSA's few gadflies had little capacity, it seemed, to divert the Association from the path set by the president and the International Commission.

The Bureaucratization of NSA And the Apotheosis of the International Commission

In early 1953 the chairman of a National Association of Student Personnel Administrators committee on relations with NSA wrote that the Association wasn't merely "a national organization *for* youth, guided by a professional staff, but one *of* youth, completely autonomous, which uses the advice of experience only as it sees fit." This would have been an accurate description of NSA in 1947, and it still held some truth six years later. But by the early 1950s NSA was far more dependent on non-student, unelected advisors and staff than its founders would have countenanced.

NSA became bureaucratized in the early 1950s, relying ever more on appointed staff and non-student advisors and ever less on student leaders and elected officers. This

³²⁵ SGVP report, minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³²⁶ Minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

shift reflected alumni and officers' wariness of incoming student leadership and the membership's dissatisfaction with the NEC as a mechanism for national oversight, and it predated the establishment of an ongoing working relationship with the CIA — though that development accelerated it.

The 1953 Congress was, like 1952's, a placid one. There were few divisive debates, and political caucusing was less evident than it had been in the past.³²⁷ Only two significant changes to NSA operations emerged from the Congress, and each served to enhance the International Commission's growing power. First, in the weeks before the gathering, an International Leadership Training Project — soon dubbed the International Student Relations Seminar (ISRS) — was held at Harvard. Funded by NSA's CIA patron the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs and staffed predominantly by International Commission staff and alumni who were “witting” — privy to the CIA relationship, in Agency lingo — the seminar brought together a dozen carefully selected students for five weeks of intensive study of foreign affairs and the international student scene.³²⁸

Later described by NSA as a mechanism for “developing trained personnel for the Association's international program,” the ISRS served at least two other functions for the International Commission.³²⁹ Because ISRS participants spent so much time together in the company of International Commission insiders, and because they had been chosen with such care, they tended to emerge at the Congress as well-informed, confident

³²⁷ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 8; Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 38.

³²⁸ Resource people and lecturers for the 1953 seminar included Simons, Harris, Dentzer, Cater, and representatives of YAC and the FYSA. Most of the rest were Harvard professors. [International Affairs Commission Working Papers, 1953.] The selection committee for the seminar included Harris, Rogers, and Ellis, along with Dean Lucille Allen and Kenneth Holland, president of the Institute for International Education and a member of the board of directors of FYSA. No NSA officers or students participated in the process. [Dick Murphy to Gordon Klopf, July 26, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.]

³²⁹ Composite report for 1954-55, NSA Papers, Box 3.

advocates for the International Commission's agenda.³³⁰ And because of the closeness with which witting staff and alumni were able to observe seminar participants, the ISRS served as a means to assess and groom candidates for the international affairs vice presidency. The very first ISRS produced that year's IAVP, and after the election of seminar director Paul Sigmund in 1954 each of the next four IAVPs followed a set pattern: seminar participant one year, IAVP the next.³³¹ Over the next decade the ISRS would be a crucial mechanism by which the Association's International Commission groomed and trained new members and perpetuated themselves in power.³³²

NSA's presidential elections were, like those of the IAVP, the subject of intense attention on the part of the International Commission, but the witting usually had less control over presidential races than IAVP contests. It was not unusual for the international affairs vice presidency to be won by an International Commission protégé who was all but unknown to the NSA membership, but the delegates took far more interest in presidential contests, and were unlikely to vote for a presidential candidate who had not won their trust and respect.³³³ As Harry Lunn, NSA's 1954-55 president and

³³⁰ When NSA set up a race relations seminar a few years later, paid for with non-CIA money, it was modeled in many ways on the structure of the ISRS. Each year's seminar, however, would be only a third as long.

³³¹ My research to date indicates that it was not uncommon in the 1950s for NSA presidents to be elected without having previously participated in the ISRS, and that on average one domestic vice president emerged from the seminar each year.

³³² The Church Committee's 1976 report declared flatly that the ISRS was "a vehicle for the Agency to identify new leaders and promote their candidacy for elective positions in the National Student Association." This declaration is all the more striking given the fact that the Committee's conclusions regarding CIA involvement in the Association were generally quite restrained. [US Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities *Final Report, Book I: Foreign and Military Intelligence* (Washington DC, GPO, 1976) 185.]

³³³ On at least five occasions in the CIA era, a first-time Congress attendee was elected IAVP. As far as I have been able to determine, no president was ever elected who had not attended the Congress at least once before.

subsequently a central figure in the CIA relationship, would put it, it fell to each year's president to "see to it that he was succeeded by someone equally trustworthy."³³⁴

Though the president was a crucial representative of the Association on international questions and served as the primary liaison and intermediary between NSA's two wings, he (and in the CIA era he was always male) also had wide-ranging domestic responsibilities, and it was the IAVP, not the president, who had day-to-day charge of the International Commission offices in Cambridge. Presidential elections were, barring outright hostility to the CIA on the part of the president, less central to the maintenance of the NSA-CIA relationship than IAVP races.³³⁵

In the 1940s the National Student Congress had been the most democratic component of NSA's organizational structure, the place where the Association's campus leaders could express their opinions directly, confer with their peers without mediation, and come together to offer guidance to the Association. But with the establishment of the ISRS, the International Commission's alumni network — and the CIA itself — further cemented their influence over the Congress.

At the same time a new field organizing initiative would seek to bring that influence directly to the campuses. Introduced by Paul Sigmund, a Harvard graduate student and Fulbright scholar who would be elected IAVP a year later, the 1953 field organizing resolution noted that "many colleges and universities do not have adequate campus international programs," and that the IAVP's staff didn't have the time to devote to the project. With those facts in mind, the resolution authorized the IAVP to hire a

³³⁴ Kotek, *Students and the Cold War*, 218. Given the influence of NSA's presidents over the plenary, Lunn said, "the CIA was not really taking a risk" in relying on them in this way. (As we shall see, Lunn's own election as president was the NSA election in which evidence for direct manipulation of the outcome is strongest.)

³³⁵ As will be discussed in chapter six, elections for the Association's domestic vice presidencies seem to have been conducted largely free of interference.

“field representative” to help member schools implement NSA’s international program and “to further ... international awareness in the college communities.” No mention was made in the resolution of the sources of the project’s funding.

James Edwards, outgoing student body president at the University of Illinois, won the NSA presidency easily in 1953. Edwards, who had chaired that year’s Student Body President’s Conference, gave up a Fulbright scholarship to serve.³³⁶ Five candidates ran for IAVP, with the first-round leader, Leonard Bebchick, garnering barely a third of the total votes. But the third- and fifth-place finishers, both active in NSA international affairs the previous year, endorsed Bebchick after the first round, and he bested his two remaining opponents by a comfortable margin in the runoff.³³⁷ Of the six new officers, only IAVP Bebchick was a first-time Congress attendee. All three of the full-time officers were men, all three of the part-time officers were women, and all six were white.

It took some time for the International Commission’s field secretary program to be implemented, but in June 1954 Harry Lunn, a former editor of the University of Michigan’s student newspaper, was hired as the first International Campus Administrator (ICA).³³⁸ With only the barest mandate from the membership, he immediately took on significant responsibilities for the upcoming Congress, as the International Commission’s power and autonomy continued to grow. By the time of the 1954 Congress the Commission’s agenda — and its personnel — were ascendant within the Association as a whole to a degree never before seen.

³³⁶ Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 38.

³³⁷ Arnold Schucter, who had finished third, had been an NEC representative to the Association’s international affairs advisory board the previous year, and Linwood Starbird, who had finished fifth, had served on the travel advisory board.

³³⁸ The enabling resolution referred to the new position as the “International Affairs Committee Regional Secretary,” but in practice the staffer was most often referred to as the ICA. In a variation that may or may not have been an inside joke, the position was at times referred to as the Campus International Administrator, or CIA. [Mary Ann Sigmund to Peg Murphy, April 20, 1956, NSA Papers, Box 4.]

The 1954 Congress revamped NSA's structure, dividing the Student Government commission into a commission on Student Government Administration and one on Student Government Programming while merging the other three commissions — Student Affairs, Educational Affairs, and International Affairs — into two. A commission on “The Student in the Campus Community” would deal with campus concerns, while “The Student Beyond the Campus Community” would address all national and international questions. This could be understood as a victory for the student government advocates in NSA — just two years earlier, the Association's president had urged that the Student Government Commission be eliminated, and now its portfolio had been doubled in size — but in practice it was for two reasons a far greater boon to the International Commission.

First, the “Beyond the Campus” commission was placed under the purview of the IAVP. Leonard Bebchick prepared the commission's working papers, while his successor, Paul Sigmund, chaired the commission at the Congress.³³⁹ Second, and even more striking, ICA Harry Lunn was chosen to chair the commission on students *in* the campus community.³⁴⁰ To the extent that the Congress would have a domestic agenda beyond the nuts-and-bolts work of student government, in other words, the responsibility for that agenda had been placed entirely hands of International Commission staffers.

Unsurprisingly, an international focus was observable throughout the 1954 Congress. The Pakistani ambassador gave a major speech to the delegates, and the US Deputy Commissioner of Education addressed a plenary session on the topic of, as a press release put it, the role of educational institutions in “the current East-West

³³⁹ Bebchick, Commission IV working papers, 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3; Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁴⁰ Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

struggle.”³⁴¹ Even the SBPC was made a platform for the International Commission — Harry Lunn was the only non-officer who participated in the conference’s sole panel session, and one of three speakers at its banquet.³⁴² The practical training emphasis that had been injected into the Congress starting in 1949 was by now little in evidence.

Participation in this passive, internationally-oriented Congress dropped to a new low. Just 166 member campuses were present — a forty percent drop from the first Congress in 1948 — and only seven non-member schools attended as observers. As much as it was able, NSA dealt with this ongoing decline by denying it — a fall letter to student body presidents who hadn’t been at the 1954 Congress called it “one of the largest and best attended” in the Association’s history.³⁴³ Occasionally, however, even the Association’s partisans gave an indication that they understood how far NSA’s focus had drifted. A humorous piece in the *Congressional Record*, the official newspaper of the National Student Congress, said that NSA had largely devoted itself in the previous year to “spending money” and “getting senators’ autographs.”³⁴⁴ Outside observers were less elliptical, and a short piece in a September issue of *Time* magazine put the case for NSA’s irrelevance bluntly — the Association, “born in 1947 to a rough and tumble fight,” had been tamed. The 1954 Congress was, it said, “conservative and resigned,” without “a wild eye in the house.”³⁴⁵

A new provision added to the NSA constitution that year reflected and reinforced this shift — after nearly eight years of debate, an exclusive “students as students” clause,

³⁴¹ Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3; NSA press release, August 27, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁴² Agenda of the 1954 Student Body Presidents’ Conference, NSA Papers, Box 4; Peter Weston, report on 1954 SBPC, NSA Papers, Box 3. One of the students tapped to help run the 1955 SBPC demanded assurances that the conference would not again be used to promote the leadership’s favored officer candidates. [Laura Parmalee to Morrie [Blumberg] and Jack [Edwards], February 28, 1955, NSA Papers, Box 4.]

³⁴³ Harry Lunn to student body presidents, September 24, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁴⁴ NSA *Congressional Record*, number 4, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁴⁵ “Conservative and Resigned,” *Time*, September 13, 1954.

rejected so often in the past, was finally adopted. Under the new article “no body acting on behalf of NSA” would be allowed to “take part in activity which does not affect students in their role as students.”³⁴⁶ (A similarly phrased 1947 bylaw, long since repealed, had included an exception for activities that contributed “to international understanding or goodwill,” but by 1954 the International Commission apparently saw no need to provide itself such a formal loophole.³⁴⁷) “No substantial part of the activities of the national and regional bodies of NSA” would “be devoted to carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation,” and both the Congress and the NEC were empowered to “prohibit and disassociate NSA from such action.”³⁴⁸

This third somnolent Congress in a row culminated in elections in which four of six officer elections were uncontested, and the presidential election was marred, as 1950’s election of Allard Lowenstein had been, by questionable procedures. There were three candidates for president that year —Wallace Longshore of UCLA, Peter Weston, student body president of the State College of Washington, and Harry Lunn. Longshore led after the first round of balloting, but Weston withdrew in favor of Lunn, and the votes he had received were apparently transferred to Lunn. No second round of voting was recorded in the minutes, and Lunn was declared the winner despite having received just 134 votes in the first round — four fewer than Longshore’s 138.³⁴⁹ Immediately thereafter, Longshore announced for NAVP and was elected without opposition, as was the International Commission’s IAVP candidate, Paul Sigmund.³⁵⁰

While the final plenary was still going on, Leonard Bebchick sent a short telegram

³⁴⁶ Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁴⁷ Minutes of the NEC, December 28, 1947, NSA Papers, Box 16.

³⁴⁸ Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁴⁹ Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers. The minutes did not record how many votes Weston received.

³⁵⁰ NSA press release, August 31, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 3; *USNSA News*, March 1955.

back to the International Commission office: “HARRY ELECTED PRESIDENT PAUL INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT GREETINGS LEN.”³⁵¹ Having dominated the Congress, the International Commission had succeeded in placing staffers in the two most powerful offices in NSA.

NSA and Domestic Politics in the Early CIA Era

From its founding, NSA had sought to articulate a set of political principles at its annual Congress, and year by year in the late 1940s it had grown more comfortable expressing them. But in the turmoil and retrenchment of the early 1950s it did little to put such principles into action. The Washington DC legislative affairs subcommission of the late forties had gone dormant, and though efforts were made to re-establish it — in Washington in 1950-51, in Chicago in 1951-52, at Wayne University and Howard University in 1952-53, and in Washington again in 1953-54 — no lasting legislative office emerged from these attempts.³⁵² NSA did not have the funding to staff a legislative program out of the national office, and none of the Association’s DC-area chapters seemed able to sustain such a project on their own.

NSA did continue to take policy stands on political questions, and it was particularly outspoken on the issue of campus civil liberties. The 1951 Congress spent two hours debating a resolution deploring what the delegates eventually decided to call “mccarthyism,” the lower-case spelling chosen so as not to associate the phenomenon

³⁵¹ Telegram from Len [Bebchick] to NSA International Commission, August 31, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁵² Allard Lowenstein to the NEC, December 14, 1950, NSA Papers, Box 16*; Educational Affairs Vice President’s report, minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Dick Murphy to student body presidents, [1953], NSA Papers, Box 3; Summary Report of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

too closely with any one individual.³⁵³ Amended several times from the floor, the resolution declared that all attacks on Americans' "basic civil liberties" were "potential threats to the student," and it passed in a commanding 218 to 48 vote.³⁵⁴

In late 1951 NSA appointed a representative to the ACLU's Academic Freedom Committee, and in the summer of 1952, Patrick Malin, Executive Director of the ACLU, addressed the NSA Congress.³⁵⁵ In his speech, he said that though he would personally "never hire a Communist because he does not have freedom of inquiry, ... loyalty oaths do not catch the real spies and espionage agents as we might believe."³⁵⁶ On the former question, NSA was arguably less rigid than Malin, as the Congress had two years before voted down a resolution that would have declared that communists were, as communists, unfit to teach.³⁵⁷ NSA also continued to allow communists to participate in the Association's activities — although the Labor Youth League's Robert Fogel never again played as dramatic role in an NSA Congress as he had with his speech against the Korean War in 1950, he attended the next several annual gatherings without incident.

NSA's civil libertarianism provoked a new wave of criticism from the right in the early 1950s. In late 1952 the College Clubs for MacArthur, which had been founded to advance General Douglas MacArthur's hoped-for candidacy for president in 1952, reconstituted itself under the name of Students for America (SFA).³⁵⁸ The following spring, SFA founder Robert Munger appeared before a meeting of the national Inter-Fraternity Conference and laid out his case against the Association. Citing NSA's anti-

³⁵³ Birenbaum and Trueblood, "Fourth National Student Association Congress," *School and Society*, December 15, 1951, 378.

³⁵⁴ Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

³⁵⁵ The December 1951 NEC passed it, and the 1952 Congress confirmed the decision. Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2; Trueblood and Klopff, "The 1952 Congress," *School and Society*. p. 279.

³⁵⁶ "Campus Politics Urged," NSA press release, August 24, 1952, NSA Papers, Box 2.

³⁵⁷ Minutes of the 1950 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

³⁵⁸ Keating, "Student Government Movement," 36; Altbach, *Student Politics in America*, 166.

discrimination stands and support for federal aid to education, he called NSA “the most insidious left-wing organization now operating on the American campus.”³⁵⁹

On the national level, such attacks had little power to damage NSA. But by concentrating its energies on the conservative south and on campuses that were considering affiliation or holding referenda, SFA was at times able to have a decisive local impact, and over time such victories had the potential to have a significant cumulative effect.³⁶⁰ In response to these attacks, NSA issued a refutation of Munger’s charges and solicited a brief report on its activities from three prominent campus organizations — the National Association of Deans of Women, the Association of College Personnel Administrators, and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators.³⁶¹ The report declared NSA to be the country’s “most representative national student organization,” and pronounced it ideologically beyond reproach.³⁶²

On the campus level, NSA presented a less activist profile in the early 1950s than it had before. It conducted several investigations of campus civil liberties violations in these years, but each such investigation forced it to confront the weakness of its position.

A report on one such effort was delivered to the pre-Congress NEC meeting in 1952. Lorraine Meisner had been expelled from Wayne University for refusing to testify before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, and NSA had been asked by the Wayne student council to intervene.³⁶³ The Association’s investigating committee found

³⁵⁹ Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 36.

³⁶⁰ Kenneth Barton, Virginia-Carolinas annual report, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁶¹ Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 36; Kernish, “History of NSA,” 7.

³⁶² “Report on the United States National Student Association,” April 1, 1953, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

³⁶³ Report to the NEC on the Lorraine Meisner case, June 1953, NSA Papers, Box 3. Meisner’s original notice of expulsion cited her refusal to testify, calling it “unreasonable” at best and “a prima facie admission of criminal intent” at worst. In a subsequent report, the university’s academic discipline committee, upholding the expulsion, went further. It said that her claim that the committee was trying to “smear

that the college had “violat[ed] ... Rights 12, 13, 16 of the Student Bill of Rights,” but conceded that “administrators do not feel bound by a document which they have not ratified.” Administrators could not properly be criticized, moreover, “for violating the Bill of Rights *if they do not even know what it is or that it exists.*” The committee reminded the student council that students’ rights would be made manifest on their campus only through local organizing, and not through outside investigations.³⁶⁴

At the 1952 Congress the plenary directed the staff to approach the ACLU and the AAUP about the possibility of establishing some sort of joint investigative body, but those talks bore no fruit and NSA soon concluded that it was not capable of performing a consistent, effective investigatory function with regard to violations of students’ rights and academic freedom, much less impelling the nation’s colleges and universities to accept its conclusions in individual cases.³⁶⁵ The Association largely abandoned its investigatory function in the years that followed.

In the year 1952-53 NSA was active in legislative advocacy, emphasizing issues that were unlikely to antagonize the Association’s conservative critics. They supported tax deductions for parents of college students. They opposed cuts to the Fulbright scholarship program — the IAVP testified before Congress on the subject.³⁶⁶ And acting on a Congress mandate, the national office pressed the Air Force to reverse a decision

Wayne University” was an inappropriate arrogation of the role of spokesperson for the university’s student body, and that her “attitude of disrespect and bad manners” before the committee was a third cause for disciplinary action.

³⁶⁴ Minutes of the August 15, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2. Emphasis in original.

³⁶⁵ Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2. In spite of this proposal, the post-Congress NEC amended the Association’s investigatory procedures yet again. [Summary minutes of the August 28-29 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2. (pages 24-5)]

³⁶⁶ Kernish, “History of NSA,”

not to offer commissions to all USAF ROTC graduates.³⁶⁷ NSA won at least a partial victory in each of these campaigns, garnering welcome publicity as well.³⁶⁸

But there was a struggle going on within NSA. It could be a lobbying organization or a tax-exempt organization, but not both, and it was going to have to make a decision.³⁶⁹ In mid-1953 it seemed that the lobbying route had been chosen, as the Congress directed the staff to register with the government as “a national organization which takes an official position on legislation before the Congress of the United States.”³⁷⁰ But in early 1954 NSA sought and received tax exempt status from the IRS, making it eligible for grants from legitimate foundations and philanthropists, and the 1954 Congress passed a resolution declaring that no substantial part of any NSA officer or staffer’s time was devoted to influencing legislation.³⁷¹ NSA would thereafter continue to take stands on legislative issues, but it would do so under these constraints.

³⁶⁷ Summary Report of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁶⁸ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 8.

³⁶⁹ In 1950-51, work had begun on the incorporation of an NSA charitable foundation, Educational Projects Incorporated (EPI). It appears that no money was placed in EPI’s care prior to the 1951 Congress, but because EPI was legally distinct from the Association, little information about the organization’s finances was provided to NSA’s membership or the NEC. A prospective NSA budget for 1952-53 included an implicit estimate of \$20,000 in EPI income for the following year — the budget included a 3% “administrative fee” to be paid by EPI to NSA, with that fee estimated at \$600 — but no indication of where EPI’s revenue was expected to come from or how it would be spent. [Minutes of the 1952 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.] EPI was rendered obsolete not long after it was created, when NSA was granted tax exempt status by the IRS, and it appears to have been shut down soon thereafter. [Summary report of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3; James Edwards to Gordon Klopff, March 8, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 18; Composite report, 1954-55, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

³⁷⁰ Minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3. The delegates directed that “no lobbying action shall be taken on a policy statement until the EAVP has ascertained that the particular motion received a substantial majority.” A constitutional amendment that would have barred the Association from lobbying on any stance that had not been endorsed by a two-thirds vote failed by a wide margin. [Summary Report of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3; Minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

³⁷¹ James Edwards to Gordon Klopff, March 8, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 18; Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

Racial Discrimination

By the end of the 1940s NSA had settled into a *modus vivendi* on the question of racial discrimination. It would stand, as a matter of policy, opposed to segregation. It would choose non-segregated cities for its national offices, and continue to hold integrated regional meetings in the South.³⁷² When the debate moved beyond lofty principles to the specifics of domestic policy, however, consensus proved more difficult to achieve. At the 1951 Congress “bitter debate” and “involved maneuverings” characterized a debate over fraternity discrimination, and eventually, a gradualist, vague position was endorsed.³⁷³ An effort to have NSA explicitly oppose separate-but-equal, and to put it on record as “urg[ing] support of the NAACP in its effort to extinguish these undemocratic laws” was proposed at the 1953 Congress, but failed to win the necessary vote for consideration on the floor.³⁷⁴

During the CIA era NSA’s racial discrimination stances and activities were developed and executed in the context of the Association’s international work, and with an eye toward an international audience. America’s racial problems were making news worldwide, and they were a recurrent theme in Soviet propaganda, so if NSA was to make a convincing pro-American case to the uncommitted students of the world —

³⁷² In both the move to Boulder and the move to Philadelphia, NSA cited the new host city’s lack of racial segregation as one of the factors that had influenced its decision. [On Boulder, see the minutes of the August 26, 1951 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2.] The Association’s record was less consistent in regard to its annual gatherings — it held its 1952 Congress in Bloomington, Indiana, a city in which many public accommodations were segregated, warning members of the NEC at the Congress’s outset that students of color should not expect to be served in the city’s bars. [Minutes of the August 14, 1952 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 2.] After the Congress, one staffer warned the next year’s Congress team to “be informed on all possible prejudices, etc. difficulties in the Congress site town in advance and warn exec. comm. and roommates [of foreign students?] to be sure no incident happens.” [“KF,” “Congress Hints,” 1953, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

³⁷³ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 6; Keating, “Student Government Movement,” 32e.

³⁷⁴ Minutes of the 1953 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

particularly students of color in developing nations — it would have to be from a position of opposition to white supremacy.³⁷⁵ As the discrimination resolution passed at the 1951 Congress declared that the US was “involved in a world struggle for the minds of men.”³⁷⁶

The Association’s response to the United States Supreme Court’s June 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision exemplified NSA’s mid-1950s approach to racial discrimination — robust rhetoric, meager follow-through, and an acute attention to the sensitivities of students abroad. In crafting that response, the 1954 Congress assembled a biracial committee, as it had several times at its early meetings.³⁷⁷ The committee worked long hours throughout the Congress, and presented its report to the delegates just hours before the end of the gathering.³⁷⁸

The rhetorical ambition of the committee’s lengthy report is conveyed by its opening sentences: “Segregation in education by race is unethical and unwise. It is now also unconstitutional.” In the approximately one thousand words that followed, the report reviewed the sources of segregationist sentiment (“family attitudes and ancient community justifications can easily overwhelm the color-less brotherliness which is the instinct and should be the heritage of all children”), and laid out a firm stand in principle (urging “the swiftest possible integration of the races at all educational levels in all parts of the country”) and a detailed blueprint for how such integration should progress.

In *Brown*, the Court had found unanimously that segregation was unconstitutional, holding over the question of whether desegregation should be

³⁷⁵ For more on the salience of domestic race relations to America’s image abroad in this period, see Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³⁷⁶ Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.

³⁷⁷ The committee was less racially balanced than those of the past. It was chaired by former NSA president (and Northerner turned Southerner) Allard Lowenstein, and included six other whites, three of them from the South, and just two blacks — a student from the University of Chicago and one from Xavier University in Louisiana. A white delegate from Mills College was the only woman. [Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3; Committee report, NSA Papers, Box 3.]

³⁷⁸ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 9.

immediate for further argument in the fall. Seen in that context, the NSA committee's report — which included provision for its dissemination to the Court, the President of the United States, and the governors of the affected states — can be read as an *amicus* brief. It called for the immediate integration of all institutions of higher education, of all public schools beyond the onetime borders of the Confederate States of America, and of all Southern schools in districts with fewer than 20% black students. Other schools would integrate at the rate of one grade per year under NSA's plan, with immediate integration of either the first two grades or of all elementary schools, depending on the black population of the district. An extended consideration of possible mechanisms to ease the transition, and of other ancillary issues raised by the ruling, followed.

The committee's proposals for NSA action were far less ambitious. The EAVP was directed to "collect and disseminate ... information on the progress of integration," and to report to the next Congress. The regions were encouraged to coordinate "discussions" and the exchange of information, and member schools were invited to act more aggressively if they chose. The ultimate conclusion was inescapable — NSA was comfortable dictating detailed agendas for action to independent entities as disparate as the Supreme Court of the United States and its own member campuses, but it would not itself do anything more than issue pronouncements, gather data, and distribute reports.

The committee's report was accepted with enthusiasm and some relief by the plenary.³⁷⁹ Just one amendment was offered — one that would have made the suggested implementation scheme for desegregation less specific — and it failed for lack of a sufficient second. The report was adopted by the body in a vote of 285 to 4, with two abstentions, and after the Congress it was translated into other languages for

³⁷⁹ Kernish, "History of NSA," 9.

distribution abroad.³⁸⁰

Early Signs of a Campus Awakening

Individual officers were at times effective advocates for student governments' concerns in this period. NAVP Leonard Wilcox, a former student body president and chair of the NSA Student Body Presidents' Conference, was one such example — a champion of the needs of student governments within NSA in 1952-53. He had helped to defeat an attempt to eliminate the student government commission at the 1952 Congress, and after his election he worked with Gordon Klopf on preparing a revised version of *Student Leadership and Government in Higher Education* for publication.³⁸¹ But the fragility of such individual efforts is demonstrated by the fact that Wilcox was only in office for a few months. Facing an imminent draft notice, he accepted a commission in the Navy halfway through his term. (As far as I have been able to determine, Wilcox was the last NSA officer to face a serious threat of induction in the CIA era.) Beyond initiatives pursued by officers like Wilcox, NSA did little ambitious work on campus issues in this period.

NSA's most high-profile project in the student government arena in the first half of the 1950s was probably its sponsorship of a Ford Foundation-funded study of student governments whose findings were published in 1955. This was the Association's first major initiative conducted with foundation support, and many others would follow in the years to come, particularly after the rise of the 1960s wave of campus activism. Ford and

³⁸⁰ *Acerca de la Realizacion de la Corte Suprema Sobre la Segregacion*, [1954], NSA Papers, Box 3.

³⁸¹ Klopf to DS Newhouse, February 3, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 18.

other foundations played a major role in higher education research and funding beginning in the 1950s, and as the nation's largest and most respected national student organization, NSA was uniquely well positioned to share in their largesse.³⁸² During the course of the 1960s, foundation grants would come to represent a significant source of revenue for NSA, as we shall see, and such grants would after 1966 do much to ameliorate the financial impact of the Association's loss of CIA funding.

The 1955 Ford study had serious weaknesses, but it served to focus NSA's attention on student government concerns and to spark debate on the appropriate scope and responsibilities of student government. Commenting on the original Ford prospectus, longtime NSA advisor Gordon Klopff had criticized its lack of ambition. The proposal defined student government too narrowly, he said, and failed to engage in a serious way with "the role of the student in the government and administration of the college," NSA's traditional and proper focus, confining itself to a consideration of "student government" alone.³⁸³

Klopff's complaints had merit — there was little to advance the Association's early-1950s "university community" analysis of campus power in the Ford study. The data collected consisted of answers to a series of multiple-choice questions, supplemented by interviews conducted on about a dozen campuses. The questions themselves were in many cases confusing, focusing more on issues of structure and demographics than on the mission of student government or students' status on campus.³⁸⁴ The way in which the data were compiled was problematic as well — most strikingly, though the survey responses were disaggregated by campus size, institution

³⁸² Thelin, *History of American Higher Education*, 282-284.

³⁸³ Klopff to James Edwards, March 10, 1954, NSA Papers, Box 18. When Klopff was asked, as a student-affairs administrator, to answer the survey that was sent to his college he declined, saying it was constructed in such a way as to preclude the collection of any significant data. [Klopff to Eliot Freidson, March 21, 1955, NSA Papers, Box 18.]

³⁸⁴ Eliot Freidson, editor, *Student Government, Student Leaders, and the American College*, 1955, NSA Papers, Box 150.

type, region, and gender of the student body, there was no attempt to contrast NSA's member campuses with non-member schools. No effort was made to use the study to illuminate crucial questions for the Association — how NSA membership influenced students' perceptions of student government, for instance, or what student government leaders saw as the mission of a national student organization.

This marginalization of NSA, and of student activist perspectives more generally, was apparent throughout the 87-page report. Of its seven chapters — five essays, a preface, and an introduction — only a brief essay by NSA president Harry Lunn was written by a student.³⁸⁵ Lunn discussed the role that orientation programs and leadership training could play in strengthening student government, but made no explicit mention of NSA's own role in such efforts until his final paragraph. Even there he merely expressed the hope that the Association's existing program of trainings, conferences, and publications would in time help to bring into existence “a more creative university student community than appears to exist today.”³⁸⁶

The Ford report demonstrated how far NSA was drifting from its base, serving as a conduit for faculty to conduct studies of students rather than articulating a student-oriented reform agenda of its own. At the same time, however, the response to the study within the Association indicated that a students' rights perspective was again on the rise in NSA, with student government if anything more central than before.

At the first NEC meeting after the publication of the report, EAVP Joel Sterns opined that the study itself had been disappointing, but that it had nonetheless served as a spur to action — at one school it had prompted the convening of a conference to completely overhaul student government. Other participants said that it had inspired

³⁸⁵ The title of Lunn's contribution, “A Student Point of View,” indicates the extent to which non-student perspectives informed the rest of the study

³⁸⁶ Freidson, *Student Government*, 88, NSA Papers, Box 150. For a somewhat more assertive take on the study's findings, see Lunn's report to the 1955 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 4.

student government reform projects and prompted new dialogue between administrators and student government at others.³⁸⁷ Thomas Mitchell of the Metropolitan New York region said that it was “hard to get people to read through the report,” but that its publication had prompted a discussion of what NSA — and the NEC itself — could do “to improve student government and strengthen USNSA.”³⁸⁸

The Association’s leadership retreated from 1954’s heavy-handed International Commission domination of the Congress in 1955, restoring the traditional commission structure and selecting commission chairs from NSA’s domestic staff.³⁸⁹ It was rewarded for this reversal, as participation in the 1955 Congress, held at the University of Minnesota, rose substantially from the previous year’s total.³⁹⁰ At the meeting the student government vice presidency was made a full-time position, and the plenary called for a phase-out of the practice of on-campus, part-time officers as soon as it was financially feasible.³⁹¹

NSA’s 1955-56 president was Stanford Glass of the University of Illinois.³⁹² The IAVP race was uncontested, as it had been the previous year, and like the previous year, the position went to someone who had been thoroughly vetted by the International Commission. Clive Gray had been an ISRS participant in the summer of 1954,

³⁸⁷ Minutes of the December 1955 NEC, NSA Papers, Box 4.

³⁸⁸ Minutes of the December 1955 NEC, NSA Papers, Box 4.

³⁸⁹ 1955 Congress pamphlet, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.

³⁹⁰ Participation grew in every region of the country, and six states and two territories that had not been represented in 1954 were present in 1955. In all 204 campuses attended, with non-members rising from seven to 26. [1954 Congress pamphlet, NSA Papers, Box 3; 1955 Congress pamphlet, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

³⁹¹ Kernish, “History of NSA,” 11.

³⁹² Glass had served as student body president and as an NSA representative on the President’s Committee on Education. He defeated John Seiler, who’d been an NEC representative and a member of the IAB the previous year, by a margin of nearly four to one. Seiler ran for NAVP as well, and lost again by a similar margin, defeated by Gene Preston of UCLA, who had attended that summer’s ISRS. [NSA press release, September 1, 1955, NSA Papers, Box 4; NSA biographical data sheet [nd], NSA Papers, Box 4.]

immediately after his graduation from the University of Chicago, where he'd served as student body president. In December he had been selected as NSA's representative to the US National Commission to UNESCO, and in the spring he was chosen to serve as a representative to that summer's ISC. His selection was an anointment — the other three representatives were NSA's president, its immediate past president, and its IAVP.³⁹³ NSA's first full-time SGVP was Ray Farabee of the University of Texas.³⁹⁴ A former student body president, Farabee had also served as state director of the Texas Intercollegiate Students' Association.³⁹⁵

The officers elected at the 1955 Congress were, as a group, young — Each was 21 or 22 at the time of his election — and new to NSA.³⁹⁶ NSA's directories indicate that none had attended a Congress before 1954, and that two — Ray Farabee and Joel Sterns — were first-time attendees in 1955. Three of the six were Political Science majors, and as in 1954-55, each was white and male.

Conclusion

NSA was, as Marion Andert said, “building on quicksand” in the early 1950s, more concerned with nurturing its image as a national union of students than with the hard work of making itself one. Its officers, increasingly enthralled to grandiose international schemes, devoted little energy to the cultivation of the grass roots. But even as the national office drifted away from the concerns of the campus, pockets of energy

³⁹³ Summary report of the 1955 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 4; *USNSA News*, January 1955. “USNSA Delegates to ISC Chosen,” *USNSA News*, May 1955. [UW Archives].

³⁹⁴ NSA press releases, September 1, 1955, NSA Papers, Box 4.

³⁹⁵ NSA press releases, September 1, 1955, NSA Papers, Box 4, NSA biographical data sheet [nd], NSA Papers, Box 4.

³⁹⁶ NSA press releases, September 1, 1955, NSA Papers, Box 4.

remained within NSA, and its members continued to press for greater attention to their wants and needs. Over time, the national office found ways to accommodate these demands, and the provision of concrete assistance to student governments remained a substantial part of the Association's work. NSA was for the most part politically inert at mid-decade, and in that it reflected the national campus mood. But that mood was beginning to shift, and just as pressure for engagement with campus problems had arisen from the membership, NSA's members would — in the late 1950s and with growing insistence thereafter — press within the Association for a deeper engagement with political questions. Though NSA's international activities would steadily expand in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the organization simultaneously experienced a real resurgence at the grass roots, sparked by the diligent work of NSA's domestic leadership in crafting and implementing an ambitious new student-government-oriented program.

The annual Congress, though compromised, remained vital to what little remained of a national student movement. It was the membership's one opportunity to directly shape the organization's structure and focus, as it had with the creation of the Student Body Presidents' Conference in 1950 and the establishment of the Student Government Vice Presidency and SGIS in 1951. Revolutions in policy were less frequent, particularly in international affairs, but if the broad thrusts of NSA's stances were generally dictated by the witting elite, the membership did ultimately constrain the parameters in which they operated. And increasingly, it was neither resolutions nor structural reform efforts that defined the Congress experience for attendees.

In late 1955 Evelyn Jones, the Executive Secretary of the liberal Students for Democratic Action, wrote an article on her experiences at that summer's Congress for the Sarah Lawrence student newspaper *Campus*. Perhaps the most important aspect of the Congress, she said, was

the general atmosphere that permeated the convention ... a real understanding of the role of the student in the university today. Underlying the deliberations was ... a continuing emphasis on the freedom of the human mind, a real concern about the well-being of one's fellow man, a conscious desire to meet one's responsibilities as a student and a genuine interest in the crucial problems which confront a democratic society.³⁹⁷

None of this was new in 1955. Jones herself said that she had experienced a similar atmosphere at previous Congresses. But in the mid-1950s the Congresses were growing longer — and, after a period of decline, larger as well. Their emphasis was shifting back from grand speeches and the crafting of legislation to participatory workshops, networking, and practical training. The Student Body Presidents' Conference and its sibling, the Student Editorial Affairs Conference, were growing and maturing. For many of the Association's members, the Congress was becoming the heart of NSA.

After a period of International Commission overreach in the early 1950s, NSA's witting elite had reached a tacit accommodation with the membership and the domestic staff — the elite would not interfere with membership-driven efforts to give direction and potency to the Association's domestic program, and in return the hoi polloi would indulge the International Commission's various endeavors. That accommodation gave the Association's witting leadership a campus base, and the national and international legitimacy that went with it, and provided the uninitiated with the benefits of participation in the nation's only national student organization of any size.

It was an arrangement that would not be seriously threatened in the 1950s. The growth of the Association's domestic program was compatible with the lengthening of its international reach, and a resurgence of self-conscious liberalism within the membership late in the decade actually served the elite's purposes, reinforcing as it did the

³⁹⁷ Evelyn Jones, "NSA Congress," *The Campus* (Sarah Lawrence College), October 26, 1955. [ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 114.]

Association's progressive image abroad. At the dawn of the 1960s, however, a new breed of students would make their presence felt in NSA — an activist faction that would seek to mobilize NSA as an instrument in larger struggles. They would not be easily accommodated within the Association as it existed, and though they would not immediately pose a threat to the NSA establishment's power, their numbers, influence, and organizational sophistication would only grow as the decade wore on.

Chapter Five Reawakening: 1956-1962

Introduction

The early 1950s had been a time of turmoil for NSA. While CIA funding facilitated a dramatic expansion of the Association's international operations, NSA's domestic wing, wracked by a series of crises, devoted less and less attention to the American campus, and to its own membership. In hindsight, however, this was the Association's nadir, and the International Commission's zenith. Although the international staff would continue to wield disproportionate power within NSA, they increasingly devoted their attention to matters within their own sphere, leaving the Association's domestic staff more freedom to pursue their own agendas.

The American campus had changed incrementally but significantly in the first nine years after NSA's founding, and in the following six years the pace of change would accelerate. Undergraduate enrollment surpassed its late-1940s GI Bill peak for the first time in 1955, and it would double in the following decade. The bulk of that increase would take place at the nation's public colleges and universities — public higher education had accounted for less than half of total enrollment when NSA was established, but by 1962 it would enroll nearly two-thirds of all students.

This growth in the size of the public higher education system was accompanied in the late 1950s by a transformation of the relationship between universities and the

federal government. Federal financial support for institutions of higher education, stagnant between 1947 and 1956, would triple in the following five years, with the October 1957 launch of the Soviet Sputnik satellite and the passage of the National Defense Education Act the following year providing the most direct spur.

When NSA was founded, a majority of American college students were studying at private colleges and universities, the federal government had only a limited role in American higher education, and *in loco parentis* was largely unchallenged. In its second decade NSA would confront a new academia, one in which its role and its own membership would be transformed.

In the latter half of the 1950s the Association would raise its visibility as a lobbying force in Washington, expand its direct services to local student government, initiate new programs to promote the student's role in university governance, and establish an annual race relations seminar for Southern students. Though such initiatives were perhaps meager by the standards of the decade that would follow, they represented a step away from the quiescence of the recent past.

NSA's new focus on the campus was accompanied by a rhetorical re-engagement with larger political questions. The late 1950s saw a stirring of campus activism in the United States, and in this period the Association's political retreat, always controversial internally, was challenged by a growing liberal faction within NSA's membership. As such students pressed the Association in the NEC and on the plenary floor, many of NSA's leaders — eager to demonstrate the Association's anti-racist and anti-colonialist commitment to student leaders abroad and, not incidentally, increasingly liberal themselves — began to advance similar positions. The McCarthy era had come and gone, and though NSA would still be red-baited in the years to come, its anti-communist critics were ever more marginal in the national political conversation and increasingly ineffectual in making the case against the Association on member campuses.

By the end of the 1950s a resurgent NSA felt secure in its position at the forefront of what its leadership now referred to as “the American student movement.” In 1959, the Association’s president expressed confidence that NSA would provide “aggressive and visionary” leadership to the student activists of the decade that followed.¹ A new wave of activists made their presence felt at the National Student Congress that year, and thereafter the Congress began to gain a reputation as a locus of student organizing.

But shifts in the campus mood would not be matched by a similar suppleness in organizational leadership at the highest levels, and it soon became clear that the activist movements of the 1960s would not, when they emerged, be led or directed by NSA. If NSA was not the engine of the student activism of the 1960s, though, neither was it superfluous. Early in the decade, when America’s student activists were isolated, disorganized, and underfunded, NSA provided them with material resources, practical assistance, and — perhaps most importantly — a venue in which to connect with each other and the students of the nation. As the decade wore on activism burgeoned at NSA’s grass roots and the Association’s witting establishment confronted a more organized and effective internal challenge than they had since the advent of the CIA relationship.

1956: Domestic Reinvigoration and International Challenge

From NSA’s first Congress in 1948, each year’s meeting had boasted an official theme — a slogan intended to encapsulate the concerns of the gathering. The 1950 theme, “The Role of the Student in the Educational Community,” had evoked the Association’s conception of students as partners in the higher education project, while the following year’s, “The Role of the Student in the World Community,” had reflected

¹ Robert Kiley memo to the NAB, May 29, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6.

the Lowenstein administration's international focus.

In the years that followed, Congress themes tended to reflect the Association's Cold War ideology — from 1953 to 1955 each incorporated the word “freedom,” for instance.² Given that history, 1956 signaled a renewed emphasis on NSA's campus concerns — for its ninth Congress, to be held at the University of Chicago, NSA's theme would be “Student Leadership in American Education.”³

At that Congress, the best-attended NSA gathering in six years, outgoing NAVP Gene Preston exhorted the delegates to make NSA a vehicle for new engagement with basic educational questions. Assailing the “intellectual, moral, and political timidity” of American students and decrying the “uncertainty” that led them to spend their time “planning social functions, and revising rules, constitutions and procedures, but never substance,” he described the coming Congress as an opportunity to abandon that excess of caution, calling on the assembled students to act to “make a difference in tuition, the quality of our education, and the environment of our campus.”⁴ Harold Taylor, a longtime NSA adviser who was then the president of Sarah Lawrence College, concretized Preston's message in a passionate keynote address. Students were not “products,” he said, or mere trainees for future employment.⁵ They were “the reason for having colleges,” and they deserved “a central role in the development of educational

² 1953's theme was “Strengthening the Forces of Freedom,” 1954's was “The Responsibilities of Freedom,” and 1955's was “Education for Freedom.” (1952's had been “The Student and the Crisis in Education.”)

³ The Congress agenda reflected the International Commission's continuing influence as well, however. Nearly two dozen foreign students addressed the plenary in 1956, for instance, several of them giving substantial speeches on international affairs. [Minutes of the 1956 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 4.]

⁴ More delegates attended the 1956 Congress than any since the first Congress in 1948, and more schools attended than any since 1950. [Gene Preston, “Timidity Inhibits Action,” *Chicago Maroon*, August 24, 1956, from clipping in NSA Papers, Box 4; “Student Timidity Blasted by National Affairs Vice-Pres,” *USNSA Congress Observer*, August 23, 1956, NSA papers, Box 4.]

⁵ NSA press release, August 21, 1956, NSA Papers, Box 4.

policy.”⁶

Little programmatic ground was broken at the Congress, as NSA, less self-assured than it had been in its earliest days, struggled to articulate a coherent new agenda.⁷ But there was an energy there, and an eagerness among the participants to learn and share knowledge. University of Southern California student Esther Avrutin represented her school at the Congress that year, and in a report to her student government she called it “the most valuable, memorable experience” of her undergraduate career.⁸ Expressing an enthusiasm shared by many of her fellow delegates, she said she had returned

drowned with a maze of material, not only in the actual knowledge I gained, but in values, goals, and purposes of student government, student leadership, and the college experience itself ... cognizant of the problems, as we really face them, which students in other colleges, other situations, other sections of the country and of the world, know and live with and are working to solve.

The Congress had given her tools to bring back to her campus, and in so doing had made her “a much more valuable person” — to USC, her fellow students, and the world.

Despite this domestic reinvigoration, NSA’s new officers had barely settled into work that fall when an international crisis drew their attention. In October 1956 a

⁶ “New Frontiers Proposed for Students,” *USNSA Congress Observer*, August 21, 1956, NSA Papers, Box 4.

⁷ In that year’s presidential race Harald Bakken of the University of Minnesota defeated two challengers. Bruce Larkin, the 1954-55 NEC chair and the anointed candidate of the International Commission, was easily elected IAVP. In the race for educational affairs vice president Ann Beckner of Denison College in Ohio defeated James Forman, the student body president at Roosevelt University, who would later be a prominent figure in the civil rights movement, serving as the executive secretary of the SNCC in the early 1960s. [Minutes of the 1956 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 4; *United States National Student Association News*, October 29, 1956, UW Library.]

⁸ “NSA Report to the ASSC [University of Southern California] Senate,” March 13, 1957, NSA Papers, Box 4.

popular revolt against the Hungarian communist government arose — an uprising in which Hungary's students and student organizations played leading roles.

This was a heady moment for NSA's International Commission, which had for years been working to sow discontent with the USSR among students around the world. For them, the uprising was an indigenous, student-led attack on communism, a repudiation of the USSR from within the communist sphere, and a portent of things to come. The uprising captured the imagination of NSA's leadership like no event since the Association's founding — not even *Brown v. Board of Education* had spurred a comparable reaction.⁹ To the internationally minded in NSA's leadership Hungary demonstrated the potency of the world's students, and by inference the importance of their own work. For the domestically oriented, it lent credence to the belief that American students could themselves play a larger role in national affairs.¹⁰

The International Commission sent six mailings to member student governments during and after the crisis, apprising them of new developments and urging them to speak and act in support of the rebels.¹¹ After the uprising was put down by a Soviet invasion in early November, the Association sponsored several Hungarian students on speaking tours of US colleges. NSA and the World University Service raised money for the cause in a campus drive that reportedly took in more than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, while Clive Gray, the Association's 1954-55 IAVP, went to Vienna under NSA auspices to help organize a committee for Hungarian refugee assistance.¹²

⁹ Three and a half years later, the Association's national leadership would respond with similar alacrity to the student civil rights sit-ins of the American South.

¹⁰ For a retrospective assessment of Hungary as a turning point in NSA history, see Curtis Gans' August 1960 NAVP report to the NEC, NSA Papers, Box 158*.

¹¹ National Student Association, *The American Student: Profile and Promise*, 1957. Author's collection.

¹² Gray's work was most likely coordinated with the Central Intelligence Agency — a number of CIA agents are known to have been active in Hungarian refugee affairs in Vienna in the fall of 1956, and Gray was accompanied to Austria by Avrea Ingram, a former NSA IAVP with strong Agency ties. [National Student Association, *The American*

In his report to the 1957 Congress, outgoing president Harald Bakken declared that the students of Hungary had brought “the meaning of student contribution ... home to their American brothers in a way no other recent event has done.” Bakken overstated the impact of the uprising on the American campus as a whole, but his claim reflected the extraordinary resonance of Hungary for student leaders in NSA’s circle.¹³

Even as events in Hungary were inspiring NSA’s leaders, events on the American campus seemed to be indicating a new awakening at home. In March, 31 students were arrested at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology after a 500-student protest over a hike in room-and-board rates turned violent.¹⁴ A week later the Mississippi State College Board expelled the entire student body of Alcorn Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes after they defied an order to end a three-day student strike mounted in response to critical comments about the NAACP that had been made by a professor.¹⁵ In April more than half of the students at Maryland State College staged a walkout in protest of campus regulations and sub-standard facilities, while students at Amherst College disrupted construction of a new classroom building to express their opposition to the building and to the college's policy of compulsory chapel attendance.¹⁶

The American campus was changing in the mid-1950s, and the American student was growing restless. Public universities were growing larger and more specialized.

Lecture classes were taking the place of seminars, and graduate student instructors and

Student: Profile and Promise, 1957, page 12-13. Author’s collection; Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*. New York: New Press, 1999. Page 304; Stuart H. Loory, “Student to Agent: Mystery Death Hides CIA Ties,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 26, 1967.]

¹³ Harald Bakken, president’s report to the 1957 National Student Congress, August 21, 1957, NSA Papers, Box 5. The event had cultural resonance beyond NSA as well, of course — in January 1957 *Time* magazine named “The Hungarian Freedom Fighter” Man of the Year. [*Time*, January 7, 1957.]

¹⁴ “31 Face Charges in MIT Rioting,” *New York Times*, March 4, 1957. Two fraternities and a student newspaper put up bail money for the students.

¹⁵ “Students Ousted By Negro College,” *New York Times*, March 10, 1957.

¹⁶ “College Students Balk,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1957; “Amherst Students Shovel Displeasure At Proposed Building Into a Deep Hole,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1957.

teaching assistants the place of professors. The university was coming to seem more corporate, less personal, less responsive. These changes would accelerate in the years to come, but they were already underway in 1957, and their effects were already being felt.

An editorial that appeared in the University of Michigan *Daily* that August indicates both the significance of Hungary for NSA's partisans and the broader shift in mood that was afoot on the American campus.¹⁷ Michigan was hosting the Congress that year, and the editorial, "Student Has Major Role in College Affairs," appeared in an issue of the *Daily* that was distributed to Congress attendees.¹⁸

The editorial drew parallels between the Hungarian revolt and other events around the world. In France the national union of students had, "through the threat and occasional carrying out of a national 'student strike,'" impelled the government "to provide heavily subsidized student cafeterias and to include the 'young intellectual workers' in the social security system." American students had recently won the right to participate in faculty hiring at Antioch College and the selection of a new chancellor at the University of Denver, while at Alabama's newly-integrated Spring Hill College students had physically defended their campus against a Klan attack.¹⁹ Students were demonstrating a new assertiveness across the nation and around the world, the editorial declared, and it was the duty of the Congress to build an NSA committed to supporting their efforts and to "expanding the arena in which they may perform their role."

In calling on NSA to expand the arena in which it acted, the *Daily* editorial articulated a shift in student self-perception that would transform American society in

¹⁷ The piece was written by *Daily* editor David Eckstein, who had spent the summer as a participant in the Association's International Student Relations Seminar.

¹⁸ Peter Eckstein, "Student Has Major Role in College Affairs," *Michigan Daily*, August 20, 1957. NSA mailed copies of that issue of the *Daily* to all its member campuses after the Congress. [Ray Farabee presidential memo, December 1957, NSA Papers, Box 14.]

¹⁹ Antioch and Spring Hill were NSA member schools at the time. The University of Denver was not.

the following decade. In the past NSA had frequently described student government, and even the Association itself, as a sort of rehearsal for democratic participation, but in the latter half of the 1950s students in and around NSA increasingly looked to student organizing as a means of effecting more immediate change both on and off the campus. As Harald Bakken put it, to justify student involvement by reference to potential

future contribution ... stifles the creative potential which students have. It forgets what a few thousand students in Hungary did to change their world. It forgets what American students have done on college campuses where they were free to give as well as receive. The student's unique position as one dedicated primarily to the search for truth makes him capable of contribution to the solution of the great problems of his day.

The nation's students were ready to embrace this new role, Bakken argued. All they lacked was "a commitment which grips [their] emotions and demands from [them] sacrifices of self-interest for something more."²⁰

Domestic Programming and Political Debate in 1957 and After

As the Hungarian uprising inspired the Association's leadership and students on the nation's campuses began to grow restive, developments in NSA's domestic wing, notably the establishment of the Student Editorial Affairs Conference, the election of Ray Farabee as NSA president, and the growth of the Student Government Information Service further invigorated NSA at the grass roots.

The Student Editorial Affairs Conference (SEAC), a meeting of student newspaper editors held in advance of the Congress for the first time in 1957, proved a

²⁰ Harald Bakken, president's report to the 1957 National Student Congress, August 21, 1957, NSA Papers, Box 5.

real boon for NSA.²¹ Even in its inaugural year, many of SEAC's participating editors chose to stay on for the entire Congress, giving the meeting unprecedented coverage in the nation's student press and predisposing the fifty student editors who attended toward favorable — or at least informed — coverage of NSA in the year that followed.²²

At their conference the SEAC participants addressed themselves to a variety of practical issues associated with running a campus paper, but gave particular attention to interference by administrators and student governments.²³ They resolved to create a national editors' organization, and their efforts got a boost with the election of their chair, Reginald Green, as NSA's student affairs vice president. Though student affairs was a part-time vice presidency, Green, a graduate student, approached it as a full-time job, helping to maintain the momentum that SEAC had begun to build.²⁴ He organized ten regional SEAC conferences that year, drawing an aggregate participation of more than a hundred editors, and collaborated with his successor as SEAC chair in producing a 45-page NSA handbook for campus newspaper editors.²⁵ In the fall of 1957 two editors from the University of Texas *Daily Texan* launched a SEAC newsletter that addressed issues of editorial policy, exposed local violations of academic freedom, and reprinted

²¹ SEAC was the outgrowth of a small editors' meeting that was held at the 1956 Congress. [Fred Powledge to campus editors, May 5, 1956, NSA Papers, Box 4.] There had been an attempt to hold an analogous gathering at the 1953 Congress, but it encountered strong institutional resistance within NSA, and seems to have been forgotten by 1956. [Harold Goodman et al to campus editors [1953], ADA Papers, Series 1 Number 114; Leonard Mitchell memo to regional chairs March 7, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 3; NEC minutes, August 27, 1953, NSA Papers, Box 3.] In addition to SEAC, a workshop for deans and student advisors was also held for the first time at the 1957 Congress. Each would become, like the Student Body Presidents' Conference, an annual fixture, boosting NSA's ties to influential campus constituencies.

²² Reginald Green memo to selected National Student Congress staff, November 26, 1957, NSA Papers, Box 6. Nearly eighty editors attended the 1958 Congress SEAC, and attendance rose again in 1959.

²³ SEAC Newsletter [October 1957 and November 1957], NSA Papers, Box 152.

²⁴ A student at Harvard, Green took no classes during his term of office. As a part-time officer he received a salary of only \$200 during the year. [Reginald Green, SAVP's annual report, August 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6.]

²⁵ Reginald Green, SAVP's annual report, August 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6.

stand-out instances of campus investigative journalism.²⁶ Mounted as an annual Congress event after 1957, SEAC would grow in significance to the Association and the nation's campus press over time.

Ray Farabee was the delegates' clear choice for the NSA presidency in 1957. An earnest liberal from the University of Texas, he had served as NSA's first full-time SGVP in 1955-56, and as the director of a statewide student association in Texas before that.²⁷ He had seen the student government vice presidency as a liaison between the Association and the nation's campuses, and spent much of his term as SGVP on the road, visiting more than a hundred schools.²⁸ Student government reform was centerpiece of his work, and he frequently helped local student governments conduct self-evaluation programs during his visits.²⁹ Farabee matriculated at the University of Texas law school after his term, but he returned to the Congress a year later, was convinced to run for office a second time, and won the presidential election handily.³⁰

Farabee believed that NSA's vitality was dependent on that of its member campuses, and NSA mounted campaigns around financial aid, university reform, and educational desegregation during his presidency.³¹ Though he was aware of the CIA

²⁶ SEAC Newsletter [October 1957 and November 1957], NSA Papers, Box 152. The two editors of the newsletter were Bud Mims, that year's *Texan* editor, and Robb Burlage, his successor. Burlage had attended the Congress for the first time as a high school student in 1955, and his participation in NSA would lead, several years later, to early involvement with Students for a Democratic Society. [See Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity*, 35-7, for more on Burlage's time at the University of Texas in the 1950s.]

²⁷ NSA biographical data sheet [1955?], NSA Papers, Box 4.

²⁸ Ray Farabee speech to the 1956 Congress, from the draft minutes of the Congress, NSA Papers, Box 4.

²⁹ Minutes of the December 1955 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 4.

³⁰ The presidential election matched Farabee against Robert Kiley of Notre Dame and UCLA student body president Willard Johnson. Farabee came within a handful of votes of a first-ballot majority, and when Johnson endorsed him before the second round, Farabee won the presidency by a wide margin. Later Kiley defeated Mark Chesler of Cornell by a substantial margin in the SGVP race.

³¹ Draft minutes of the 1956 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 4.

relationship, Farabee was less involved with the Association's international activities than any other NSA president of his time — all the other presidents of his era spent time in the service of the International Commission after leaving office, but Farabee would return to Austin to finish his law degree after his term.³²

In his speech to the 1956 Congress, NSA president Stanford Glass had tiptoed around the “controversial issue” of federal aid to higher education.³³ But the 1957 Congress endorsed a national scholarship program, and after October's Sputnik launch any remaining cavils lost their force. Under Farabee NSA's subcommittee on “student economic welfare,” previously charged with servicing the torpid student discount program, turned its attention to lobbying for aid to students and colleges, while Farabee wrote to member student governments to explain pending federal legislation and urge them to take action.³⁴ Though representatives of the Association had given congressional testimony infrequently before 1957, it became commonplace thereafter.³⁵

NSA's campus base responded enthusiastically to the national leadership's new vigor, as it did to the expansion of the Student Government Information Service, an archive of practical information for student government use.

SGIS had been founded in 1951, and the growing popularity of the program appears to have played a part in NSA's rejuvenation, but to provide such information to

³² Ray Farabee, *Making it Through the Night and Beyond: A Memoir*, (privately published, 2008). Of the eight NSA presidents whose terms surrounded Farabee's — the four who came directly before him and the four who came directly after — seven subsequently served with the ISC or as overseas representatives of NSA. The one exception, Stanford Glass, twice served as director of the ISRS and later headed NSA's travel affiliate.

³³ Stanford Glass, speech to 1956 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 4. Where Glass supported federal aid to higher education gingerly in 1956, Farabee told the 1958 Congress that there was “an immediate need” for a federal scholarship program.

³⁴ Reginald Green, SAVP's annual report, August 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6; Farabee memorandum to the NEC and NAB of February 27, 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6.

³⁵ NSA president Richard Rettig wrongly claimed in 1961 that NSA had never given testimony to congressional committees before the 1957 Congress. [Richard Rettig open letter to Kay Wonderlic, April 21, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 8.]

students across the country was a mammoth project.³⁶ The cost of producing large quantities of each of the many documents in the archive was prohibitively high, and the technology for making individual copies on demand was beyond NSA's reach. As a result, in many cases the materials NSA provided to campuses through the SGIS were the Association's original copies, and it was an ongoing challenge to ensure that they would be returned in a timely fashion.³⁷ Students' initial requests for information were also often vaguely worded or overly broad, necessitating — in an age when long-distance telephony was too expensive for everyday use — time-consuming follow-up by mail.

SGIS was given a full-time staffer in 1955, and gradually expanded its mandate thereafter. It prepared reports, compiled data, and served as a sort of clipping service for the student press — SGIS subscribed to student newspapers across the country, culling articles of interest for its files and for NSA's officers and staff.³⁸ Utilization of SGIS grew as it was given more resources — there were three times as many requests to the service in the fall of 1956 as there had been the previous autumn.³⁹ By 1961 SGIS had on hand some two thousand pieces of reference material organized under nearly 150 topic headings, and was responding to more than a thousand queries a year.⁴⁰

³⁶ When SGIS was created, a proposal to restrict access to it to NSA member schools was rejected in a 146 to 127 vote. [Minutes of the 1951 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 2.] The policy making SGIS materials available to non-member schools was not always implemented in the years that followed, but it remained a goal of the Association's efforts. [Ann Wall, SGIS Research Editor's report to December 1955 NEC, NSA Papers, Box 4.]

³⁷ Ann Wall, SGIS Research Editor's report to December 1955 NEC, NSA Papers, Box 4.

³⁸ Gene Preston, NAVP's report to the December 1955 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 4; Ann Wall, SGIS Research Editor's report to December 1955 NEC, NSA Papers, Box 4.

³⁹ EVP's report to the December 1956 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 3; Ann Wall, SGIS Research Editor's report to the December 1955 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 4.

⁴⁰ Valerie White, SGIS Director's report, 1959-60, NSA Papers, Box 7; Mary Fogarty, SGIS Director's report, 1960-61, NSA Papers, Box 8. White said in her report that in 1959-60 the ten most common broad topics on which information was requested were student government, student orientation programming, leadership training, honor systems, course and faculty evaluation systems, bookstores and book exchange programs, "current issues," shared campus governance, campus judiciaries, and fraternities and sororities.

NSA and Campus Governance in the Late 1950s

NSA's formal demands regarding student participation in campus governance were modest in the Farabee era. With the coining of the phrase "student power" still years away and the concept of the educational community having fallen into relative disuse during the International Commission's apotheosis, NSA's emphasis in the late 1950s was on "student responsibility."

After the passage of the Association's Student Bill of Rights in the late 1940s the Bill's critics had pressed for a corresponding statement of students' obligations. In 1954 a "Bill of Responsibilities" was appended to the original document — responsibilities that included included "the responsibility ... to seek, discuss, and promulgate the truth" and "the responsibility ... to use the appropriate channels when exercising [one's] rights."⁴¹ In the conservatism of the early 1950s, NSA thus conceptualized the student as a sober, reliable, unthreatening member of the campus community. Later in the decade, however, the term "student responsibility" would be deployed less as a reminder of students' obligation to behave responsibly, and more as an assertion of their obligation to *take* responsibility for the direction of the university itself.⁴² A turning point in this regard was the Student Responsibility Project.

Unlike the Ford Foundation-sponsored student government study of 1955, the Student Responsibility Project would be led by students rather than established academics, and its mandate would be to initiate educational reform, not merely to study

⁴¹ Minutes of the 1954 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3.

⁴² For further discussion of the evolution of NSA's conception of student responsibility, see Stephen Clement Schodde, "Certain Foci of the United States National Student Association and their Implications for Student Personnel Administrators," Columbia EdD, 1965, 88-101.

the campus as it existed.⁴³ The major work of the project was to take place on fifteen campuses, where groups of students, working with only loose direction and coordination from above, would develop pilot programs in one of three areas — curricular and pedagogical reform, peer counseling, and faculty development. The student teams were expected to work with other campus constituencies, but their emphasis was to be on creating programs that students themselves could develop and maintain, such as orientation programs or counseling centers.⁴⁴ The Project achieved only mixed results — at least a third of the local programs initiated under its auspices collapsed during the life of the grant.⁴⁵ But a few did take root, and the project provided a template for more ambitious efforts in the years that followed.⁴⁶

As early as 1956 NSA had begun to look for ways to, as Harald Bakken put it, “stimulat[e] student leaders to new approaches to campus problems,” and in 1957-58 Reginald Green was a linchpin of this activity.⁴⁷ In addition to his work with SEAC, Green wrote and distributed eight issues of a student affairs newsletter, reporting on his own activities and outlining projects — from campus parking reform to financial aid lobbying — that student governments could take up themselves.⁴⁸ He also devoted

⁴³ The project grew out of NSA’s participation in the 1956 White House Conference on Education. The idea for the project was floated in conversations surrounding that conference, plans were formalized in the early months of Farabee’s presidential term, and funding was secured from the Ford Foundation in early 1958. [Willard Johnson and Eleanor Coleman, eds, *Student Responsibility in Higher Education: A Guide to Campus Programming*. Philadelphia: USNSA, 1958.]

⁴⁴ Johnson and Coleman, *Student Responsibility in Higher Education*.

⁴⁵ Reginald Green, report to the November 1948 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

⁴⁶ NSA Codification, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6.

⁴⁷ Executive vice president’s report to the December 1956 NEC meeting; NSA Papers, Box 3; Harald Bakken, president’s report to the 1957 Congress; NSA Papers, Box 5.

⁴⁸ Due to funding constraints, the circulation of the newsletter was limited to “100 student leaders ... who had evinced a special interest in the [Student Affairs] program.” [SAVP’s annual report, August 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6.]

unusual attention to NSA's regions, long an organizational weak link, co-ordinating several dozen regional conferences, most with a student affairs emphasis.⁴⁹

By 1958 it was obvious to even casual observers that a new energy was animating the Association. More schools participated in that summer's Congress than any since 1949, and total individual attendance rivaled NSA's largest gatherings ever.⁵⁰

The Congress, held at Ohio Wesleyan University, was given the theme "Student Responsibility In an Age of Challenge." In a return to the late 1940s and early 1950s conception of the meeting as a site of skills training for student leaders, a series of workshops were offered, providing attendees with practical organizing advice on subjects ranging from student government administration to curricular reform to leadership development with the goal of giving participants the tools they needed to take new initiatives upon their return to the campus.⁵¹

In his valedictory speech to the Congress, Ray Farabee noted that four programs initiated by the 1957 Congress — the Student Responsibility Project, financial aid lobbying, desegregation work, and international student exchange — had subsequently been implemented by the national office, and called on the Congress to again create a viable "program of action" for NSA and student governments in the year to come.⁵²

Where Gene Preston had in 1956 complained of the cautiousness that led student governments to confine themselves to "planning social functions," Farabee proclaimed

⁴⁹ SAVP's annual report, August 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6. As chair of the NIC Green had complained that regional conferences were too often "uninspired resolution-passing sessions." [Green to Harald Bakken, November 16, 1956, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

⁵⁰ The 1958 NSA elections produced greater continuity among the Association's officers than ever before, as SGVP Robert Kiley was elected president, EAVP Willard Johnson was elected IAVP, and SAVP Reginald Green was chosen as EAVP.

⁵¹ Minutes of the March 15, 1958 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16; Eleventh Congress pamphlet [1958], NSA Papers, Box 6. For a detailed description of the Student Affairs workshops at the 1958 Congress, see Reginald Green, "Student Affairs Notes," May 5, 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6. See Green's report to November 1958 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16, for an analysis of the Congress's strengths and weaknesses.

⁵² Ray Farabee, report to the 1958 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 6.

that “dance-planning” was “giving way to social concern” on the nation’s campuses, and lauded NSA’s role in the shift.⁵³

Civil Rights and the Southern Seminars

NSA was, as Farabee noted, acting with new vigor in the civil rights arena. In the immediate aftermath of the *Brown* decision NSA had largely restricted its anti-segregation efforts to the dissemination of statements of integrationist principle.⁵⁴ But Farabee, a Texan, had traveled extensively in the South as SGVP, and by the time of his 1957 election as president he had come to believe that the Association could play a role in speeding a transformation that seemed to him both inevitable and desirable.

As Farabee saw it, one of the most difficult problems posed by segregation was that of ignorance. He hoped to create a space within NSA in which student activists at segregated and desegregating campuses would come together to study and discuss the racial dilemmas of the day — learning from the material presented, as the students in the ISRS did, but also from the simple fact of sustained interaction across racial lines.

Farabee secured support from the Marshall Field Foundation for the creation of a Southern Student Human Relations Project, whose centerpiece, an annual summer seminar, would bring white and black student leaders from the South together on a Northern campus for several weeks of intensive study. Discussions would range beyond the potentially heated topic of integration — the students would be faced with broad

⁵³Gene Preston, “Timidity Inhibits Action,” *Chicago Maroon*, August 24, 1956. From clipping in NSA Papers, Box 4; “Congress Wrap-up,” NSA draft press release, August 30, 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6.

⁵⁴A move was made at the 1956 Congress to have the EAVP convene a meeting of Southern student delegates to discuss desegregation, but no such meeting was ever held. [“American Student Congress to Thresh Out Current Problems,” *Riverside* [California] *Press*, [1957], clipping in NSA Papers, Box 5.]

questions about the nature of the South as a region and its place in the nation. Drawing on the insights of other Southerners, they would jointly explore their native region's past, present, and possible futures. The seminars were to culminate with participation in the NSA Congress.⁵⁵

Planning for 1958's inaugural seminar proceeded unsteadily, and applications were slow in coming, particularly from black students.⁵⁶ Will Campbell, a prominent white liberal clergyman and a seminar advisor, expressed dismay that the scheduled speakers and background materials' authors were, as far as he could tell, all white. Since the seminar intended to give at least some attention, he told Farabee, "to the discussion of 'resources in the Negro community,' or 'what the Negro wants,'" it might be wise to consider making use of "some of the observations of NEGROES about this."⁵⁷

While Campbell was noting the exclusion of black perspectives, others urged the seminar leadership not to close out the white conservative. As the Field Foundation reminded the project's staff, the seminar's core constituency was not students who were already opposed to racism, but "those who need convincing."⁵⁸ Accordingly, several

⁵⁵ Ray Farabee, Report to Southern Project Advisory Committee, June 15, 1958. Southern Student Human Relations Project archives, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia (hereafter cited as Southern Project Papers), Box 6.

⁵⁶ By the date on which the selection of participants was to take place, 25 applications had been received, less than half of them from black colleges. [Ray Farabee, Report to Southern Project Advisory Committee, June 15, 1958. Southern Project Papers, Box 6.]

⁵⁷ Campbell suggested that articles by Walter White and Martin Luther King Jr. be added to the seminar's bibliography, and proposed Kenneth Clark, Thurgood Marshall, and Roy Wilkins, among others, as resource people for the seminar. None of these suggestions were implemented for the 1958 seminar, though some were in later years and a few black authors and resource people were added for 1958. [Will Campbell, undated memorandum to Ray Farabee. Southern Project Papers, Box 6.]

⁵⁸ Charles Jones, letter to Ray Farabee. May 6, 1958. Southern Project Papers, Box 6.

segregationist students were selected for the seminar in its first year, and considerable time was devoted to debating whether schools should integrate, rather than how.⁵⁹

Even among white students who were not in principle opposed to integration, there were barriers to overcome — one attendee praised the program for broadening his racial horizons even as he complained bitterly about the fact that he had been forced to share a room with a black student. In his evaluation, that participant wrote that he had found the discussions of “personal feelings” one of the most productive parts of the seminar, and that the “gain of knowledge and understanding by the individual” had been its “most important and realistic purpose.” For that reason, he praised the seminar’s organizers for giving the participants the chance to eat and socialize together. But it had been “unfair,” he argued, to house black and white students in shared rooms without giving them the option to decline. “I am sure,” he wrote, “that the outcome would have been just as good if the negroes had roomed together and the whites had roomed together. Perhaps I’m overemphasizing this, but it had a great effect on me.”⁶⁰

The 1958 seminar’s curriculum had an academic orientation. Students were saddled with cumbersome reading lists and written assignments, and the first week’s sessions were devoted to sociological and historical analysis.⁶¹ The second week was oriented towards activism, after a fashion, opening with a panel on “the responsibilities

⁵⁹ Most of the students in the 1958 seminar were white. Participants were selected under a formula mandating that one-third of the participants come from white schools, one-third from black schools, and one-third from those that were integrating, and because the schools in the third category were still overwhelmingly white, the mechanism made African Americans a minority. [Will Campbell, undated memorandum to Ray Farabee. Southern Project Papers, Box 6.]

⁶⁰ Evaluation of Southern Seminar, Southern Project Papers, Box 6.

⁶¹ The prospectus for the first seminar declared that its purpose was to “develop understanding of the problems and complexities of race relations in the South, and to provide an educational experience which will prepare these students to make a responsible contribution to the solution of the human relations problems facing them.” [“Southern Student Human Relations Seminar.” Southern Project Papers, Box 6.]

of a student leader on a desegregating campus,” but the seminar staff urged caution over confrontation throughout — in a session entitled “Cooperation with Faculty and Administration,” student threats of class boycotts and “articles in the student press” were deprecated, and participants were counseled not to “demand student rights without realizing that there are also administrative rights and student responsibilities.”⁶²

Subsequent sessions reinforced this preference for incrementalism, none more so than “Preparing and Working With the Community,” a workshop that incorporated two contrasting roleplays. In the first, a white student body president “has a talk” with a local restaurant owner, asking him to serve blacks. The owner is hesitant, but once “all his arguments are met” he “reluctantly agrees to try it for a while, letting the Negroes use the back booths.” In the second, two students, one white and one black, enter a restaurant and sit down together. The owner “calls the white student aside” and explains to him that he can’t serve them — that “he has a family to support and cannot let his business be ruined.” The role play ends there.⁶³

In each of these scenarios, a white student was cast as the intermediary between blacks and the white power structure. The restaurant owner was depicted as susceptible to simple persuasion, and a shift from exclusion to segregation was presented as an unambiguous victory. The bare fact of a sit-in’s appearance on the curriculum is striking, however, as the sit-ins that sparked the creation of SNCC were a year and a half away as the seminar met, and recent lunch-counter sit-ins had been brief and ill-publicized.⁶⁴

⁶² “Report: Southern Student Human Relations Seminar, August 3-28, 1959.” Southern Project Papers, Box 6. The centerpiece of this session was a role-play of a confrontational meeting between students and their campus president — not about segregation, but about a demand that class attendance be made voluntary.

⁶³ Report: Southern Student Human Relations Seminar, August 3-28, 1959.” Southern Project Papers, Box 6.

⁶⁴ Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 192-3. Morris appears to suggest that there may have been one or more sit-ins in 1957, but refers to a series of August 1958 Oklahoma protests as the first of the “cluster of the late 1950s.” Lunch counters in

Also intriguing, given the popular image of a quiescent 1950s student body, is the fact that the seminar organizers felt the need to impress upon the seminar participants the dangers of excessive assertiveness. In preparing the seminar agenda its staff, all of whom had spent substantial time on Southern campuses, appear to have been less concerned with combating the supposed apathy of their era than with channeling and containing a potentially “irresponsible” student propensity toward rash action in support of civil rights — a concern that suggests that they saw the seminar participants as less averse to disruption than late-1950s students have traditionally been given credit for.⁶⁵

Evaluations submitted by the seminar participants bear this analysis out. Of the nine who filled out the forms, seven complained about the lack of emphasis on practical training for civil rights work.⁶⁶ Six criticized the amount of reading assigned, its theoretical orientation, or both. Dan Ellis said too little time had been spent on “concrete programming” and on “the techniques of change.” Charles Jones, who would go on to be an early leader of the sit-in movement, said that the seminar’s major failure had been its lack of emphasis on training students to take “positive action regarding the acceleration of desegregation and integration,” and Earl White expressed doubt that “the most important purpose of the seminar” — developing “leadership in the segregation-desegregation battle” — had been achieved. Art Moore, a white student who urged that

St. Louis, Washington DC, and Baltimore had been desegregated in the early 1950s as a result of organizing in those cities, but I have so far found no concrete reference to prior sit-ins in the post-*Brown* era. [James H. Laue, *Direct Action and Desegregation, 1960-1962: Toward a Theory of the Rationalization of Protest* (Brooklyn: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1989; originally published in 1965 as a Harvard University dissertation), 66-71.]

⁶⁵ One group of students of the era who were clearly not averse to disruption, albeit disruption in the service of the established order, were those segregationist white Southerners who attempted to thwart the efforts of black students to enroll and attend classes in segregated colleges. But little work has been done on these obstructionist students, and none at all — as far as I am aware — has been undertaken examining their tactics from within the history of student protest.

⁶⁶ After returning to campus in the fall, one seminar participant from the University of Texas apparently convinced two local restaurants to desegregate. [“1958 Southern Student Seminar Evaluation.” April 1959. Southern Project Papers, Box 6.]

“careful plans ... be made to insure against this ever becoming an ‘integration’ seminar,” was the only one to take the opposite view.

Another theme of the black participants’ evaluations was their dissatisfaction with the seminar’s treatment of their community’s efforts to win civil rights.⁶⁷ Gloria Haithman asked that more women and blacks be included as lecturers and discussion leaders, while Charles Jones wrote that “the negro and his actions in the process of desegregation” had been inadequately presented and that the NAACP had been unfairly tarred as extremist — he also urged that more attention be given to the role of traditionally black colleges in the desegregation struggle.⁶⁸

For 1959 the Southern Project leadership de-emphasized diversity of opinion about segregation among seminar participants, targeting students who were both committed to desegregation and “predisposed to action.”⁶⁹ Haithman, the lone woman of color associated with the first seminar, served as a liaison to the committee that organized the second, and her concerns were addressed — more blacks were brought in as discussion leaders, sessions on black history and on Southern women were added, and rough gender parity among the participants was sought and achieved.⁷⁰

The seminars’ new attention to black perspectives transformed the experience for all its participants. In 1958 only two white students had expressed appreciation for their

⁶⁷ Campbell had addressed this issue in his letter to Farabee. “[O]ne-third of the students in the seminar will be Negro,” he had written, “and they deserve to know about their own resources just as the white participants.” He added that the white participants would benefit from exposure to this information as well, since “the resources in both communities,” at least “the sincere ones, are ... resources for progress and better human relations without distinction.” Letter to Farabee, Southern Project Papers.

⁶⁸ 1958 Seminar participants’ evaluations. Southern Project Papers, Box 6.

⁶⁹ Ray Farabee, letter to Martha Morrison (quoted), March 27, 1959. Morrison, letter to Farabee. April 5, 1959. Both in Southern Project Papers, Box 7.

⁷⁰ “United States National Student Association Second Southern Human Relations Seminar, August 9-September 3, 1959: Report to the Marshall Field Foundation.” Southern Project Papers, Box 8.

exposure to blacks' views, but such sentiments were widespread in 1959 — Jim Apthorp spoke for many when he said the seminar was

tremendous. For the first time really, though I might have thought so before, I have seen the Negro in a situation where he is free to say what he pleases. This is a great revelation to me. Although I knew it was true that the Negro has deep-seated, seldom-expressed feelings it is meaningful to see them come to the surface free from fear of contradiction.

Several black participants expressed a parallel appreciation for the attention paid to white perspectives — something no African American had done in 1958.⁷¹

Shifts in Programming, International and Domestic

NSA's travel department had been a major factor in the Association's 1950-51 financial crisis, and it remained a source of consternation for the Association as the decade progressed. The project, by then dubbed Educational Travel Incorporated (ETI), lost more than ten thousand dollars in 1955-56, and the national office was forced to prop it up with a loan the following year.⁷² The travel operation drained NSA's energy, as a nervous national office encouraged schools and regions to appoint travel officers and to set time aside at conferences and regional meetings for ETI presentations — diverting NSA's scarce grassroots resources to an entrepreneurial venture that even the Association's leaders admitted had little educational content.⁷³

With profits so unreliable and the program distracting from the practical work of the Association, why were those who urged NSA to get out of the travel business not

⁷¹ 1959 Seminar participants' evaluations. Southern Project Papers, Box 7.

⁷² Minutes of the February 2, 1957 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16; Minutes of the November 24, 1956 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

⁷³ Minutes of the November 24, 1956 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16; Minutes of the November 15, 1958 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

heeded?⁷⁴ Two answers suggest themselves. First, paradoxically, ETI was protected by the fact that its revenue was unpredictable. When the travel operation was profitable it provided sorely-needed cash to a chronically underfunded national office, and when it lost money NSA usually didn't discover the problem until it was already in debt.⁷⁵ When business was booming it seemed like folly to quit, and when business was bad it seemed impractical. Second, ETI's activities were by now being integrated into the work of the International Commission, giving the program a value beyond the bottom line. As early as 1956, ETI had tailored its tour offerings to the International Commission's preferences, and although tours to Africa, Latin America, and Asia that the IAVP had promoted were cancelled that year due to lack of interest, a tour of Poland, mounted in cooperation with the Polish national union of students, was carried out successfully a year later.⁷⁶ John Simons, NSA's liaison to the CIA-front FYSA, had by then been installed as the chair of the NSA-ETI Travel Advisory Board, a position he retained in 1960-61 when ETI began to coordinate visits by foreign student delegations to the US.⁷⁷

ETI was not the only arena in which the distinction between NSA's "witting" and "unwitting" activities was beginning to blur. As the Association's domestic work became more robust the lines between its international and domestic wings were gradually being effaced. NSA had been conducting domestic student programming on international issues since the establishment of the ISRS and the International Campus Administrator

⁷⁴ On calls for NSA to shut down ETI, see Ray Farabee to Phillip Berry, January 24, 1958.

⁷⁵ Ray Farabee to Phillip Berry, January 24, 1958.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the November 24, 1956 and April 20-21, 1957 meetings of the NIC, NSA Papers, Box 16; unsigned summary of IC activities, December 8, 1957–January 7, 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6. NSA, *The American Student: Profile and Promise*, 1957. Author's collection.

⁷⁷ Harald Bakken, president's report to the 1957 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 5; Kernish, "The History of USNSA," 18-19. On at least one occasion in the late 1950s a newly-hired ETI staffer was directed to attend the ISRS as part of his orientation. [Robert Kiley memo to the NEC, March 21, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6.]

position, but such efforts expanded dramatically as the 1950s wore on. Regional ISRSes were an established presence on NSA's annual calendar by 1956-57, and in the spring of 1959 the Foundation on Youth and Student Affairs sponsored an "Eastern Seaboard SEAC" — a seminar on international issues for campus editors.⁷⁸ In 1956 NSA launched a new international program, the Foreign Student Leadership Project, which brought students from overseas for a year's study on an American campus.⁷⁹

While international funding flowed freely, money for domestic work was often hard to come by. Dues income had remained stagnant since the Association's founding, and there was pressure to keep Congress fees low in order to maximize turnout. NSA's few foundation grants were targeted to specific programs, and obtaining support for new projects was an ongoing struggle. Though some ambitious projects were launched successfully in this period, more often when NSA conceived a new domestic program — a "Current Issues Seminar" modeled on the ISRS, a national conference on rising campus enrollments — it would be forced to abandon or scale back the project for lack of financial support.⁸⁰ The Association was growing, but it was growing unevenly. The International Commission was growing fat while domestic projects went hungry. As this imbalance grew, so did the temptation to divert international funds to domestic needs.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Summary of International Commission activities, December 8, 1957 – January 7, 1958; NSA Papers, Box 6. Margaret Murphy, "USNSA: Founded By Fraternity Men ... Friend of Fraternity," 1957, NSA Papers, Box 6; Robert Kiley memo to the NEC, [fall 1958], NSA Papers, Box 6.

⁷⁹ NSA Composite Report, 1957, NSA Papers, Box 5. Initially funded by a \$128,000 grant from the Ford Foundation and housed in Philadelphia, the Project had an ambiguous relationship to the rest of the international program. [Ray Farabee memorandum to the NEC and NAB [November 1957], NSA Papers, Box 6.]

⁸⁰ Explanatory notes on agenda for the NAB meeting of March 9, 1957; NSA Papers, Box 14. Harald Bakken and Dan Idzik memo to the NEC and NAB, March 20, 1957; NSA Papers, Box 14; Harald Bakken and James Pomroy memo to the NEC, January 16, 1957; NSA Papers, Box 4. Report on February 8, 1959 staff meeting; NSA Papers, Box 5.

⁸¹ In 1958-59, ten percent of the Association's total domestic expenses were underwritten by the CIA through inter-office transfer.

The Rise of the NIC and the Decline in Internal Oversight

As NSA expanded the Association's membership found it increasingly difficult to exercise meaningful oversight over its operations. The NEC was in theory both a check on and a resource for the national office, but it was a large and unwieldy group, made up of full-time students with pressing obligations on campus.⁸² The day-to-day work of the Association was conducted by the officers and a growing staff, and the NEC had little opportunity to so much as observe that work, much less direct it.

Although NSA's constitution mandated that the NEC meet "at least twice between annual sessions of the Congress," the body generally met just once during the academic year.⁸³ Communication between the NEC and the national office was often lackadaisical, and continuity of participation was minimal — from year to year, and even at times from meeting to meeting.⁸⁴ Though some officers made efforts to involve the NEC in the work of the Association others derided occasional NEC efforts to advise or direct the officers as "the blind leading the not so blind."⁸⁵ Most years, the NEC was given little opportunity to provide substantive input on national or international office decisions.⁸⁶

⁸² The NEC was made up of one or two elected representatives from each of NSA's approximately twenty regions.

⁸³ To preserve technical compliance with the constitution, the first NEC meeting was generally held at the end of the Congress and the last at the start of the following one.

⁸⁴ For an overview of the role of the NEC in NSA's first decade, see Cynthia Courtney's memo to the NEC [June 1957?], NSA Papers, Box 5.

⁸⁵ "T.D." to Donald Clifford, NSA EVP, August 4, 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6. See also Paul Potter's report to the December 1961 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14. As president in 1957-58 Ray Farabee instituted a practice of sending the NEC monthly memoranda on developments within NSA. [NSA Papers, Box 6.] By the following spring, however, his successor was declaring the "demise" of the NEC as a force within the Association, saying that NEC inactivity had left the officers operating in a "vacuum" during his term of office. [Robert Kiley memo to NEC, March 21, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6.]

⁸⁶ Donald Clifford memo to NSA officers and staff, July 24, 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6. See also Cynthia Courtney memo to NEC [spring 1957], NSA Papers, Box 5.

As the NEC was sidelined, the National Interim Committee, a five-member body composed of students and alumni that had been established in 1951, was given ever more authority.⁸⁷ In a nod to democratic practice the NIC was elected by the NEC at the start of its term, but the bylaws required that only two members be chosen from within the NEC itself, and the remaining three tended to be alumni selected by the president.⁸⁸

Where the NEC was unreliable and occasionally obstreperous, NIC members — generally former officers and students with aspirations to officer status — tended to behave predictably. And because the NIC was so small, the interpersonal dynamic at its meetings, which were frequently held at NSA’s national office, encouraged further deference to the officers and staff. As the NIC’s authority grew, the functions the NEC retained — approving budgets, prioritizing the mandates set down by the Congress, and confirming staff appointments — were ever more frequently carried out by postcard ballot, ratifying decisions that had long since been implemented.⁸⁹ Other important votes, including the approval of appointments of NSA’s overseas representatives, were generally scheduled for the close of the Congress when the newly-elected NEC, at its greenest and most exhausted, was least likely to challenge the officers’ authority.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ One NSA insider described the NIC as “in effect” a “small NEC,” though it was not “constitutionally” permitted to perform that role. [Minutes of the November 1957 NIC meeting.]

⁸⁸ NSA Bylaws, 1957-58 Codification, NSA Papers, Box 6.

⁸⁹ Minutes of the March 15, 1958 NIC meeting; NSA Papers, Box 16. For an instance of the president bypassing both the NEC and the NIC in making appointments, see Ed Salowitz to Ed Garvey, October 14, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 15.

⁹⁰ Cynthia Courtney memo to the NEC, [June 1957?], NSA Papers, Box 5.

Student Government and the Rise of Activism on the Campus of the Late 1950s

Since the advent of the modern student government movement in the early 20th century, American student government had tended toward conservatism. Fraternities and sororities had possessed obvious organizing advantages in student government elections, residency-based structures of representation had encouraged apolitical voting, and the wealthy and the socially prominent had been able to make good use of their campus status in campaigns that were often literally popularity contests. As student governments' authority grew slowly more substantial, however, and as students began to grow more conscious of campus power relations, more and more political activists began to contemplate the possibility of organizing within student government.

Examples of such organizing can be found across the nation in the middle decades of the 20th century, from the successful efforts of the Independent Party at the University of Idaho to end fraternity control of the student government there to the 1951 decision of the administration of New York's Brooklyn College to eliminate one-student-one-vote balloting in its Student Council, having failed in all previous attempts to dislodge leftist students from control of that body.⁹¹ In early 1958, however, a new era in student government dawned with the establishment of the SLATE party at the University of California at Berkeley. A coalition of co-operative members, religious organizations, radicals, and other independent students, SLATE was an ambitious organizing effort at a high-profile campus, and though its activities were constrained by the university administration and it had only limited success in student government elections, it paved

⁹¹ Angus Johnston, "Hats Off to Bill Johnson!" unpublished manuscript, 2003; Murray M. Horowitz, *Brooklyn College: The First Half-Century* (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1981), 121-122.

the way for a rush of similar groups in the years that followed.⁹² From VOICE at the University of Michigan to PSL and SCOPE at Oberlin to the Student Party at the University of Texas, by 1962 more than three dozen new student political parties had been created nationwide.⁹³

Organizing on campuses that were still largely apolitical, such activist parties tended to be cautious and culturally moderate. They presented themselves as reformers, not radicals, and frequently drew their leadership from the ranks of student newspaper editors and other campus leaders. They were assiduous organizers, however, and adept public speakers, and as early as 1959 they would begin to make their presence known at NSA Congresses. For the first time since the advent of the CIA relationship, factional politics would take center stage at the Congress, and NSA's witting establishment would have to accommodate itself to an organized internal challenge the likes of which it had never before seen.

The 1959 Congress and the Return of Politics to NSA

Over the course of the 1950s, as movements for national independence advanced across the globe, both the International Union of Students and the NSA International Commission strove to present themselves as allies of the students of the developing world.⁹⁴ For the International Commission of the mid-1950s, this was a straightforward task — they publicized NSA's opposition to racial discrimination at home, fostered practical assistance programs and other services on their own and through the ISC, and

⁹² George R. Vickers, *The Formation of the New Left: The Early Years* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1975), 27.

⁹³ "Campus Political Parties: Selected Readings," NSA 1963, NSA Papers, Box 9.

⁹⁴ For an analysis of the geopolitical tensions under which the IUS was operating in this area in the 1950s, see Magnelia, "International Union of Students," chapter nine.

shepherded a series of appropriate expressions of principle on international issues through a mostly uninterested National Student Congress.

In the late 1950s, however, the national unions of students to whom the International Commission sought to appeal were growing more assertive, just as NSA's new liberal bloc was beginning to take its own interest in the Association's international affairs. In 1959 these two constituencies would have to be served simultaneously by the plenary for the first time, bringing international issues to the fore at the Congress for the first time since the Korean War. The subject of this debate was nuclear testing.

In 1957 and in 1958, NSA had passed resolutions endorsing informational campaigns on nuclear issues, but in its 1959 meeting the International Student Conference had gone much farther, expressing a "profound desire" for "an effective and definite agreement" to end nuclear testing, leading eventually to "general disarmament."⁹⁵ The Association's International Commission, concerned that the Association not be seen as too beholden to the US government, was convinced of the political necessity of supporting the ISC's stand. At the Congress Robert Kiley argued that with student opposition to nuclear testing "almost unanimous" worldwide, American students would be seen as shirking their global responsibilities if they did not adopt a similar resolution of their own.⁹⁶

The anti-testing resolution, written by former International Campus Administrator Irv Stolberg, garnered wide support among the Congress's liberals, centered around the nascent activist faction mentioned above. These students — Paul Potter of Oberlin perhaps most prominent among them — supported a test ban and were

⁹⁵ National Student Association, 1959-60 *Summary Report and Codification*, page 68; NSA Papers, Box 6. Harvard Student Council report on NSA, 1959; NSA Papers, Box 7.

⁹⁶ Ed Moscovitch, "Debate on Students' Role in World Affairs Highlights NSA Summer Congress in Illinois," *Oberlin Review*, September 25, 1959. Clipping in NSA Papers, Box 6. As will be discussed in chapter six, the 1959 ISC had also seen several national unions of students press for closer relations with the IUS.

eager to see NSA broaden its conception of “students in their role as students.” With the International Commission and the Association’s new liberal wing in alliance against the conservatives and the campus-issues-only faction, plenary debate on the resolution lasted for nine hours.⁹⁷ In a preliminary vote that liberals saw as a victory on the underlying principle, the delegates affirmed that it was within NSA’s purview to endorse the position of the ISC.⁹⁸ In its final form, however, the resolution was moderated in the interest of unity — it merely affirmed the importance of international questions to American students and expressed “confidence” in the actions of the ISC.⁹⁹

In the nuclear testing resolution, the interests of the International Commission and NSA’s campus activists came together to give the two factions a shared victory that neither would have been as likely to win on its own. It would not be long, however, before the two groups’ interests began to diverge sharply.

The lengthy debate on the testing resolution forced the tabling of more than a third of the other resolutions on the Congress agenda.¹⁰⁰ Liberals won a series of victories on the items that were considered, however, passing strong resolutions in support of federal civil rights enforcement and financial aid programs and in opposition

⁹⁷ “PP” [Paul Potter], “NSA Redefines Student,” *Oberlin Review*, September 25, 1959. Clipping in NSA Papers, Box 6.

⁹⁸ “PP” [Paul Potter] “NSA Redefines Student;” Harvard Student Council Report on the National Student Association, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 7. The Harvard report summarized the delegates’ position as holding that because the promotion of international understanding among students was part of the “student role,” and because “the armament race between the major power and in particular ... nuclear weapons testing” made it more difficult for students from different nations to maintain harmonious relations, nuclear issues did in fact concern the student in his or her role as a student.

⁹⁹ NSA Codification, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6.

¹⁰⁰ Alan Richman, “NSA Takes Stand on A-Tests,” *Hunter [College] Arrow*, September 21, 1959. Clipping in NSA Papers, Box 6.

to loyalty oaths and HUAC.¹⁰¹ All were aware, however, that the implementation of these resolutions would depend on NSA's officers and staff.

By 1959 NSA officers were increasingly coming from positions of leadership in campus student organizations — four of the five elected that year had served as either student body presidents or student newspaper editors. But they were ever-more carefully vetted and groomed by the International Commission as well — four of the five had been participants in the International Student Relations Seminar.

NSA's new president would be Don Hoffman, a law student and former president of the University of Wisconsin student government.¹⁰² Hoffman would prove an enthusiastic booster of the civil rights organizing that flourished the following spring. In that he had an ally in the University of North Carolina's Curtis Gans, a liberal anticommunist somewhat in the Allard Lowenstein mold, who was elected NAVP after losing the presidency to Hoffman.¹⁰³

The race for IAVP revealed the risks of International Commission intervention in divisive Congress issues, and showed how much political capital the Commission had expended in securing the adoption of the nuclear testing resolution. Their candidate was Irv Stolberg, the author of the testing resolution, but Stolberg's stand had been controversial enough to create an unprecedented opening for a non-establishment candidate to win the election.¹⁰⁴ Isabel Marcus, the Barnard student body president, beat Stolberg, and as IAVP she was reportedly kept out of the loop by the Association's international staff and alumni — after NSA's ties to the CIA were revealed in 1967,

¹⁰¹ Ed Moscovitch, "Debate on Students' Role in World Affairs Highlights NSA Summer Congress in Illinois," *Oberlin Review*, September 25, 1959. Clipping in NSA Papers, Box 6.

¹⁰² After his term as NSA president and a stint working with the government, Hoffman would enter the practice of law. He has spent most of his career in private practice, serving two years in the 1970s as City Attorney of New Orleans.

¹⁰³ For Gans's political views, see his report to the 1960 pre-Congress NEC meeting. [NSA Papers, Box 158*.]

¹⁰⁴ Donald Hoffman speech to 1960 SBPC, NSA Papers, Box 7.

Marcus was identified as the only IAVP of the CIA era not to have been let in on the secret.¹⁰⁵

Marcus had the additional distinction of being the only woman among the 1959-60 officers. In the 1940s and 1950s a dozen women had been elected to national office in NSA, and though most had served in secretarial or part-time positions, several had wielded significant influence. After Marcus, however, it would be more than a decade before another woman served as an officer of the Association in any capacity.

NSA's activist faction saw validation in the decisions of the 1959 Congress, and some saw the gathering as an opportunity to press for greater changes in the future.¹⁰⁶ As Paul Potter, who would later serve as an officer in both NSA and the Students for a Democratic Society, put it in the *Oberlin Review*, NSA had that summer chosen

to introduce to this country a concept of the student which has never before been present: that is, the student, not as the 'future leaders of our country' but as an integral and vital part of the society of which he is a member. Perhaps, in its almost brazen disregard of the reality of American students, the National Student Association has created a discrepancy between it and its constituency which will arouse the reactions needed to direct the role of the American college student toward mature and appropriate responsibility in his nation and the world.¹⁰⁷

When the NSA Congress met again a year later, it was clear that students were beginning to assume the responsibility that Potter envisioned. That NSA would be able to direct their efforts was not as obvious.

¹⁰⁵ Sol Stern, "A Short Account of International Student Politics and the Cold War With Particular Reference to the NSA, CIA, Etc," *Ramparts*, March 1967. Extant records reveal little about Marcus' ideological and factional orientation at the Congress.

¹⁰⁶ Ed Moscovitch, "Debate on Students' Role in World Affairs Highlights NSA Summer Congress in Illinois," *Oberlin Review*, September 25, 1959. Clipping in NSA Papers, Box 6.

¹⁰⁷ "PP" [Paul Potter], "NSA Redefines Student."

The Sixties Begin

By 1959, elements within NSA had for several years been anticipating the emergence of a more activist studentry, and creatively experimenting with ways to enable NSA to better nurture such organizing. Reformers had succeeded in refocusing the Association in those years — forging new ties with the campus, devoting increased attention to educational reform, and expanding NSA’s political mandate. NSA had emerged from a major structural overhaul as well — between 1955 and 1959 its officer structure had been altered every year but one, but after 1959 it would be four years before another such change was made. The year thus marked the culmination of the most extended period of expansion and renewal in NSA’s history to date.

There had been promising developments on the campuses simultaneously with this ferment in NSA, feeding it and being fed by it. The late 1950s had seen the rise in local organizing noted above, visible not only in the spread of progressive campus political parties but also in a new wave of issue-based activism. A student peace movement was born in the East and Midwest, visible in the work of the Student Peace Union, the Campus Peace Union, and Student SANE, all active in organizing against nuclear testing and encroaching militarism.¹⁰⁸

The fall of 1959 was a fresh start for NSA — for the first time since 1955 there were no holdovers among the year’s officers. The International Commission had finally been consolidated with the national office in Philadelphia, and new regional offices were set to open in Atlanta and Berkeley. Two traveling program vice presidents would spend

¹⁰⁸ Altbach, *Student Politics*, 185-6.

the year on the road, dividing the country between them and working to build the Association at the grass roots.¹⁰⁹

SEAC was particularly active that autumn, launching the University Press Service, an intercollegiate press collective. By the end of 1959 more than a hundred campus papers had subscribed to the service, and SEAC was seeking foundation support for a full-time staffer.¹¹⁰ In the spring of 1960 SEAC conducted its first-ever investigation of an instance of campus press censorship, in response to charges of administrative interference with the Brooklyn College *Kingsman*.¹¹¹

The Southern Project received a boost in the fall of 1959 when it received funding for a year-round office in Atlanta. The Association hired Constance Curry, an ebullient white Southern alumna, as the project's new director. Curry, a graduate of a small Georgia women's college, had been the chair of NSA's Great Southern Region in the early 1950s, in which capacity she had forged relationships with student leaders white and black. She was an energetic addition to NSA's staff.

But the Association as a whole was slow to get moving that fall. Jim Kweder, the East Coast program vice president (PVP), was shocked to discover how little most member schools knew about NSA, and how little most students knew about organizing.¹¹² He was enthusiastic about the potential of many of the schools he visited, but lacked the time, the travel funds, or the staff to do serious organizing work on more than a handful

¹⁰⁹ Beginning in 1955 the student government vice president had been designated as a traveling field representative of the Association. In a 1959 organizational restructuring, the SGVP, educational affairs vice president, and student affairs vice president had been replaced with a national affairs vice president and two PVPs.

¹¹⁰ Florence Casey, Public Relations Director's report to the December 1959 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 7.

¹¹¹ Curtis Gans, NAVP's report to the 1960 pre-Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 158*.

¹¹² The Association's student government vice presidencies had been replaced with program vice presidencies at the 1959 Congress.

of campuses.¹¹³ West Coast PVP Richard Rettig was similarly frustrated, calling NSA a “top-heavy giant ... supported more by its horizontal relations with people and organizations of national prominence than by its vertical relationships with the regions and the local campuses.” “The giant,” he concluded, “has feet of clay.”¹¹⁴

In 1959 NSA president Robert Kiley, reflecting on the “tremendous task” that faced the Association, had declared that “the need for aggressive and visionary student leadership [had] never been greater.”¹¹⁵ But over the course of 1960, the campus climate would shift dramatically, and NSA’s ability to lead — or even remain relevant to — the new student activism would be tested.¹¹⁶ In January the Student League for Industrial Democracy, which had seen its heyday more than two decades earlier, became the Students for a Democratic Society and began to rebuild. In February students in North Carolina staged a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter, sparking a wave of protests across the South and the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.¹¹⁷ In May students from the University of California at Berkeley were beaten by police while demonstrating outside a closed meeting of the House Un-American Activities Committee.¹¹⁸ In June the University of Michigan’s Al Haber was elected the first president of the new SDS, and in September students from more than forty colleges

¹¹³ Jim Kweder, Program Vice President’s report to the December 1959 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 7.

¹¹⁴ Richard Rettig, West Coast PVP’s report to the December 1959 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 7.

¹¹⁵ Robert Kiley memo to the NAB, May 29, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6. After a post-NSA stint working for the CIA, Kiley would become one of the world’s most eminent experts in public transportation, heading the public transport agencies of Boston, New York, and London.

¹¹⁶ For a discussion of NSA’s “role as protector of student rights, as mobilizer of the student movement, and as student voice” in the early months of 1960, and of its prospects for maintaining that role, see Curtis Gans’ NAVP report to the 1960 Congress. [NSA Papers, Box 158*.]

¹¹⁷ Carson, *In Struggle*, 20-24.

¹¹⁸ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1989), p. 82.

gathered at William F. Buckley's Connecticut estate to form the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), an association of conservative students.¹¹⁹

The 1960 NSA Congress, held that August at the University of Minnesota, was about the same size as the previous year's, but its mood and composition reflected the transformation that was taking place on the American campus. A handful of students who would go on to play important roles in the student movements of the 1960s had attended the previous year's Congress, but when one reads the 1959 Congress directory today the names that stand out are those of future politicians and diplomats — Vanderbilt delegate Lamar Alexander, Notre Dame student body president Bruce Babbitt, and Macalaster College Foreign Student Leadership Project participant Kofi Annan.¹²⁰ By the summer of 1960, though, many of those who would be the decade's most prominent activists had found NSA — future SNCC leaders Charles McDew, Jane Stembridge, Charles Jones, Sandra "Casey" Cason (later known as Casey Hayden), and Ed King were at the 1960 Congress, as were future SDS leaders Al Haber, Tom Hayden, Paul Potter, and Rennie Davis.¹²¹ And while there is little evidence that Alexander, Babbitt, or Annan made much of a contribution to the Congress in 1959, the young activists of 1960 would work assiduously to transform the Association, then and in the years that followed.

What brought these activists to Minnesota? In some cases it was campus politics — Tom Hayden was the incoming editor of the University of Michigan *Daily*, and Potter

¹¹⁹ John A. Andrew III, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 55-7.

¹²⁰ Alexander was later the Governor of Tennessee and a United States Senator, Babbitt served as the Governor of Arizona and the US Secretary of the Interior, and Annan would in 2001 be made the seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations. Also present at the 1959 Congress were Paul Potter, who would later serve as an officer in both NSA and SDS, and Charles Jones, Betty Garman, and Tim Jenkins, who would play important roles in NSA before gravitating toward SNCC.

¹²¹ Cason is best known as Casey Hayden, and so I refer to her by that name here.

and Davis were leaders in Oberlin's Progressive Student League. In other cases it was NSA's own organizing work — Casey Hayden and Chuck McDew had been recruited through the Southern Project. But there was also the fact that if a person wanted to connect with students — students who were politically conscious, politically open, politically ambitious, or all three — the NSA Congress was the place to be. The Association's leadership might not have been uniformly supportive of activism, but in mid-August 1960 there would be more student activists and incipient student activists on the University of Minnesota campus than could be found anywhere else in the country.¹²² NSA would serve as a clearinghouse for information on the protean student organizing throughout the early 1960s, and as a site of recruitment and discussion.

Al Haber spent much of the summer of 1960 writing a policy statement on "The Student and the Total Community" for NSA, and Tom Hayden flirted with running for NAVP in 1961.¹²³ When the League for Industrial Democracy, SDS's parent organization, threatened to fire Haber that year he told them that he was going to work for the Association, and Hayden actually did wind up on the International Commission's payroll for a while, writing pamphlets on "civil rights and the student left" for distribution overseas at a salary of sixty dollars a week.¹²⁴ SNCC made Connie Curry a member of its executive committee, relying on her Atlanta office for practical assistance and on NSA's national staff for fundraising and campus outreach. Curry and other NSA leaders would frequently be tapped to participate in high-level civil rights movement meetings, while YAF made NSA reform one of its highest organizational priorities.¹²⁵

¹²² For more detail on NSA's role in activist recruiting in the early 1960s, see O'Brien, "The Development of a New Left," 240-1, and Tom Hayden, *Reunion: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1988), 35.

¹²³ Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*, 49.

¹²⁴ Sale, *SDS*, 31; Tom [Hayden] to Paul [Potter], July 3, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 49*.

¹²⁵ Report of the May 26, 1961 meeting of the Southern Christian Leadership Council. Author's collection. See also Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 477.

SNCC, SDS, and YAF were all heartily critical of NSA in the early 1960s, and each would become far more critical of it as the decade wore on. But each was, in its early history, entwined with the Association. Within a few years, SNCC would be a pillar of the Black Power movement, SDS would be the institutional heart of the New Left, and YAF would be the most important conservative student group in American history. None would have risen so far so fast without NSA.

The Southern Project, Civil Rights, and the Birth of SNCC

By the time Connie Curry had taken office as the Southern Project's director in late 1959, she had begun to rethink the project's summer seminars' mission. No longer would they serve as "a conversion period for students still confused," she decided — instead, their explicit goal would be "training students for action," as seminar participants would analyze campus power relations, examine case studies of past organizing efforts, and explore possibilities for working in the community.¹²⁶

Curry's vision would be vindicated in the early months of 1960. On February 1 four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College staged an impromptu sit-in at the lunch counter of a Greensboro Woolworth store, confounding the store's owner and employees. That evening the students told their friends what they had done, and they returned the next day with two dozen new recruits. Soon an expanding circle of students from Southern colleges and high schools were following their lead. By the end of the month sit-ins had sprung up in thirty cities, and by mid-

¹²⁶ "Minutes of the Southern Advisory Committee Meeting, December 12-13, 1959." Southern Project Papers, Box 1.

April, protests had engulfed the South.¹²⁷ A native North Carolinian, Connie Curry was at home in Greensboro when the first protest took place, and by February 2 — the second day of the sit-ins — Curtis Gans had arrived to provide whatever help he could.¹²⁸

The sit-in movement began to coalesce into something more substantial when student leaders from throughout the region gathered in Raleigh, North Carolina that April to create SNCC. Curry had worked with the sit-in protesters throughout the spring, and when SNCC was formed she was one of three “adult” representatives — the other two being Ella Baker and Harry Belafonte — who were named to its executive committee. Because her Southern Project had support from a well-heeled and sympathetic foundation, Curry became an important source of funds for the cash-strapped SNCC, often paying the group’s rent or phone bill with a gift or a loan.¹²⁹

Under the leadership of Curtis Gans and Don Hoffman, NSA’s national office responded as well, hosting a two-day Washington DC conference in May for sit-in leaders and Northern student supporters and conducting large-scale outreach to the Association’s member campuses. NSA sent nearly a dozen mailings on civil rights to its membership that spring — fundraising, encouraging formal expressions of support for the activists, and keeping students informed of developments in the movement. They sponsored several demonstrations of their own as well, including one in New York in early March that drew hundreds of city students to the Woolworth’s at Herald Square.¹³⁰ Local campus demonstrations against chains which discriminated in the South, urged on and cheered on by NSA, would become commonplace that spring.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Carson, *In Struggle*, 9-11.

¹²⁸ Branch, *Parting the Waters*, 273.

¹²⁹ Casey Hayden would later say half-jokingly that “Connie got invited to be an adviser because she paid our phone bill.” [Greenberg, ed, *A Circle of Trust*, 134.]

¹³⁰ Emanuel Perlmutter, “Sit-Ins Backed By Rallies Here,” *New York Times*, March 6, 1960.

¹³¹ McCandlish Phillips, “Campuses in North Back Southern Negro Students,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1960.

The 1960 Southern Project seminar, Curry's first, was the most activist yet — perhaps the most oriented toward training student leaders in activism of any of the seminars, before or after. A 1959 session on “pressure groups” that Charles Jones had criticized for demonizing the NAACP was retired, and sessions on “Preparing for Desegregation” and “Cooperating with Faculty” were replaced with a full day on “Techniques of Action” led by sit-in veteran James Lawson. New material on politics and the role of labor in the South was added to the agenda, and the seminar closed with a speech on “The Student's New Role.”¹³²

Curry, who would go on to work for the American Friends Service Committee when she left the Southern Project in 1964, encouraged a new emphasis on ethical and religious issues as well, inviting minister Will Campbell to lead a full day's discussion on the moral and spiritual aspects of the struggle.¹³³ Curry was also committed to internal diversity within the seminars — she chose participants with an eye toward gender balance, and replaced the old one-third, one-third, one-third formula for achieving institutional balance with an effort to recruit equal numbers of blacks and whites.¹³⁴

The 1960 seminar was a transformative experience for its participants, and their letters and evaluations make its impact clear. A few students were disappointed in or alienated by the seminar, but more rhapsodized about its beauty and its impact on their work. Many wrote to Curry to say that life in the community they had returned to had been made unbearable by the brief glimpse of something better. As one alumna put it in

¹³² “United States National Student Association: The Third Southern Student Human Relations Seminar, August 1-September 1, 1960: Report to the Marshall Field Foundation.” March 1961. Southern Project Papers, Box 5.

¹³³ United States National Student Association: The Third Southern Student Human Relations Seminar, August 1-September 1, 1960: Report to the Marshall Field Foundation.” March 1961. Southern Project Papers, Box 5.

¹³⁴ December 12-13, 1959 Advisory Committee minutes. Southern Project Papers.

a 1961 letter, “I’m still not sure whether or not to thank you [for] the seminar ... I’m not yet sure that it hasn’t destroyed me for good.”¹³⁵

SDS, the Activists, and the 1960 Congress

SDS’s inaugural convention in June 1960 was a far less auspicious beginning than SNCC’s had been in April. The two dozen students who attended were outnumbered by their adult “guests,” and the turnout would have been even more pitiful if Haber, a Michigan graduate student, hadn’t brought ten friends with him from Ann Arbor. Haber was the organization’s primary spark, and by virtue of that fact — and the votes he brought with him — he left the conference as the SDS’s first elected president.¹³⁶

Among the activists at the 1960 NSA Congress, it was Haber who made the greatest contribution to NSA’s ongoing transformation. In the past those who had sought to expand the scope of NSA’s mandate — like those who had framed statehood for Alaska and Hawaii as educational questions at the 1957 Congress — had argued that off-campus questions had on-campus relevance, but Haber turned that approach on its head.¹³⁷ His proposed Basic Policy Declaration on “The Student and the Total Community” stated that the student’s role encompassed not just academic study, but also “the development

¹³⁵ Sally [Hobbs], letter to Constance Curry, September 1 [, 1961]. Southern Project Papers.

¹³⁶ Sale, *SDS*, 23-7.

¹³⁷ As noted in previous chapters, NSA’s governing documents had long limited NSA involvement in issues that did not affect “students in their role as students.” The proper scope of NSA activity was heatedly debated in the late 1950s, beginning at the 1957 Congress when the delegates declared, over passionate opposition, that statehood for Alaska and Hawaii was encompassed by the “students as students” clause. (According to the resolution the territories needed the status of states in order to secure for their institutions of higher education “freedom comparable to ... similar universities in the US.”) [Minutes of the 1957 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 5; NSA, *The American Student: Profile and Promise*, 1957, author’s collection.]

of the skills and habits of mind necessary for responsible participation in the affairs of government and society.” Students had *as students*, he argued, an obligation to “confront ... crucial issues of public policy,” and NSA had an obligation to facilitate such engagement.

Like NSA’s mid-1950s leadership, Haber emphasized the importance of activism in “preparing [the student] for leadership in a democratic society,” rather than as an end in itself. Rhetorically, this was arguably a step backward. But this retreat provided the opening for a much more significant advance, as Haber’s “The Student and the Total Community,” a document that would carry the force of bylaw within NSA, presented the Association with a new mandate. Under it NSA would provide “guidance and direction” to local campus organizing. It would work with other groups to promote such organizing efforts on and off the campus. It would take stands “on such of the major issues of the day as have come particularly to the attention of students.” And it would no longer be constrained by narrow or arbitrary definitions of “student issues” — instead, in the words of a final clause proposed from the floor by outgoing president Don Hoffman,

USNSA shall be guided in the actions it takes by the criteria of the importance and efficacy of the action considered, the expressed or potential interest of students in the issues, and the competency of students to evaluate the facts and come to a reasoned and responsible decision.¹³⁸

Haber’s “The Student and the Total Community,” as amended by Hoffman, was adopted by a vote of 274 to 29.

The sit-ins were an absorbing, and galvanizing, subject of discussion at the Congress. When the Association put together a panel on the topic, it selected only

¹³⁸ Draft minutes of the 1960 Congress, NSA Papers; NSA Codification, 1960-61, NSA Papers, Box 7.

movement leaders and supporters to speak, leading a few delegates to complain of bias. Another panel was hastily arranged, consisting of four white Southerners — a segregationist, two “moderate integrationists” who opposed the sit-ins, and Southern Seminar participant Casey Hayden, the panel’s token civil rights activist.¹³⁹ But if the sit-ins’ opponents had hoped to use the panel to build support for their position they were disappointed — Hayden brought down the house with an impassioned speech on civil disobedience as a moral imperative, and the delegates went on to overwhelmingly pass a resolution endorsing the sit-ins and directing NSA to “cooperate in every way possible with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.”

Haber and Hayden weren’t the only activists who were busy at the 1960 Congress. Tom Hayden was a prominent participant in that year’s SEAC conference and the chair of the subcommittee on “Political and Social Awareness.”¹⁴⁰ Hayden, Haber, and Paul Potter were all active in plenary debate, and at the end of the Congress Potter, Tom Hayden, and Casey Hayden were each nominated for national office, though each declined to run.

In the election for president, West Coast PVP Dick Rettig defeated NEC chair Gary Weissman handily. In the IAVP race an International Commission insider — Jim Scott of Williams College, who had been an NSA overseas representative for the previous two years — defeated Tim Jenkins, the activist student body president of Howard University, 273 to 84. After those results were announced, “the body,” as the rough

¹³⁹ The characterization of the participants in the panel is taken from an NSA press release of August 25, 1960, NSA Papers, Box 7.

¹⁴⁰ Notes from a SEAC discussion on the national press, 1960; NSA Papers, Box 7. Minutes of the Congress subcommittee on Political and Social Awareness; NSA Papers, Box 7.

minutes of the Congress put it, “demanded that Mr. Jenkins run for NAVP.” All the other candidates for that office withdrew, and Jenkins was elected by acclamation.¹⁴¹

Liberals, Activists, and YAF in NSA

1960’s was not a closely divided Congress — most votes on legislation and all of the recorded tallies in the national officer elections were lopsided. The Congress was as whole-hearted in its affirmation of an activist agenda for the Association as its left wing could have hoped for, and candidates of the activist faction won the national affairs vice presidency and at least one PVP position. But these victories masked deep ideological divides in NSA’s membership and an incipient rift between the Association’s activists and its liberal establishment.¹⁴²

Though NSA had grown far more liberal over the course of the 1950s, it was by no means ideologically monolithic at decade’s end. A straw poll taken at the 1959 Congress had showed 45% of attendees supporting Republican candidates for president, with Richard Nixon, at 37%, the most popular candidate from either party.¹⁴³ The breadth of the Association’s base was a strength, as it gave NSA’s liberals and outside activists an audience among the unconverted, but it was a restraining force as well. In the fall of 1959, for instance, PVP Richard Rettig had been eager to organize opposition to the

¹⁴¹ In the first PVP race Don Smith, a junior at the University of Texas, faced NEC member Dan Johnston and Carl Golanski. None of the three achieved a majority on the first ballot, but Smith was declared the winner after Golanski dropped out — apparently because Golanski ceded his votes to Smith. Johnston, who had been nominated by Paul Potter, then defeated Golanski in the election for the other PVP position. [Draft minutes of the 1960 National Student Congress, NSA Papers.] For a complaint that the officers had used their power to strengthen the activists’ hand at the Congress, see the letter from Utah regional representativeness to Don Hoffman, August 31, 1960, NSA Papers, Box 8.

¹⁴² For a contemporary analysis of this split, see Al Haber, “NSA: Problems,” November 21, 1962 (ADA Papers, Series 8), which I discuss in detail in chapter six.

¹⁴³ The National Student Congress *Daily Delegate*, August 28, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6.

University of California's restrictive Kerr Directives on the scope of student government, but because the UCLA and Berkeley student governments hadn't objected to the directives, he had felt constrained from acting.¹⁴⁴

The activists' dilemma was how to awaken and broaden NSA's base without alienating it. NSA's 1959-60 domestic leadership "realized early on," said NAVP Curtis Gans, "that student government was not the source of action ... that action must in most cases be stimulated from the outside." They had prodded student governments through mailings, the University Press Service, and NSA's *National Student News*, but more needed to be done. NSA could not just work to bring along the student governments it inherited, Gans said, it had to channel activists into student government positions, cultivate potential student leaders, and instruct students in effective activism, both through programs like the Southern Seminar and through direct programming at the local and regional level.¹⁴⁵ But such efforts would have to be undertaken gingerly if they were to rouse the membership without precipitating a backlash, and they would have to be implemented in the face of opposition from a growing conservative movement on the nation's campuses.

Conservative activists had been on the ascendance within the national Young Republicans since 1957, and several of them came to the attention of older conservatives in 1959 and 1960 through their work in support of Barry Goldwater and the National Defense Education Act.¹⁴⁶ After the Republican National Convention of 1960, at which Goldwater was passed over for the vice presidential nomination in favor of the more

¹⁴⁴ Richard Rettig, PVP's report to the December 1959 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 7.

¹⁴⁵ Curtis Gans, NAVP's report to the August 1960 NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 158*. Gans also identified the ISRS as a possible mechanism for such efforts.

¹⁴⁶ NSA had been outspoken in opposition to Section 1001(f) of the NDEA, which required students who received federal loans or fellowships to swear oaths of loyalty to the United States. The Association had lobbied against Section 1001(f) in 1959-60, and encouraged its members to do the same. [Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 25-6; NSA Codification, 1959, NSA Papers, Box 6.]

moderate Henry Cabot Lodge, William F. Buckley reached out to some of the most talented of the young conservatives, securing jobs for two of them with his ally Marvin Liebman and offering them the use of his estate for a weekend conference that would launch “a national Conservative youth organization.”¹⁴⁷ The conference was held that September, and Young Americans for Freedom was the result.

YAF defined the term “young” loosely, accepting members as old as 39. It was not particularly committed to internal democracy, and its membership figures were difficult to pin down.¹⁴⁸ But it spoke to a passionate minority of American students, and it received generous support from its elders in the conservative movement — in its first nine months of existence, it received donations totaling \$69,000.¹⁴⁹ Few in YAF had ever been involved with NSA — most had been active in conservative campus groups rather than student government or newspapers — but the Association quickly became a prime YAF target.¹⁵⁰

Conservative criticism of NSA, vocal in the late 1940s and early 1950s, had been muted since then.¹⁵¹ The Association had grown steadily more liberal in the intervening years, however, and by moving with such alacrity to provide direct support to the new student activism — particularly civil rights work — it had left itself more vulnerable to charges of radicalism than at any time since the 1940s.

¹⁴⁷ Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 55, 65.

¹⁴⁸ Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 79, 90.

¹⁴⁹ Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 91, 83.

¹⁵⁰ It appears that just two of the twenty YAFers elected to leadership positions at the Sharon Conference had attended the 1960 National Student Conference a few weeks earlier: Board member Howard Phillips, the Harvard student body president, and secretary Carol Dawson, who had attended the Congress as a representative of College Youth for Nixon. [Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties*, 74-6. Directory of the 1960 National Student Congress; NSA Papers, Box 7.]

¹⁵¹ An article accusing NSA of fellow-traveling had appeared in the *American Mercury* in 1958, and received a bit of attention at the time, but it was almost comically overblown and was shrugged off by the Association. [JB Matthews, “USNSA (United States National Student Association),” *The American Mercury*, Summer 1958.]

The early-1960s conservative attacks on NSA would, moreover, incorporate criticisms that had the potential to transcend ideological lines. YAF and others charged that the Association was too secretive about its finances, that a student and alumni elite wielded excessive power, that NSA leadership was isolated from the campus, and that democratic procedures were often violated within the Association.¹⁵² These charges were serious. They had merit. And although NSA's critics had no inkling of it at the time, they spoke directly to the corrosive effects of the CIA relationship. Such complaints would soon be taken up by the Association's left wing, and they would not be easily dismissed.

NSA's Finances at the Turn of the Sixties

In 1958 Robert Kiley had declared that NSA's "financial position [was] probably the best ever."¹⁵³ The Association had finally begun to attract significant funding for its domestic efforts, including major grants from the Ford Foundation and the Field Foundation. Inter-office transfers from the International Commission and ETI were, as noted earlier, providing regular, substantial infusions of cash to the Association's domestic coffers. CIA funding to the International Commission held stable through the end of the 1950s, then grew dramatically.

But such positive indicators masked the constraints that NSA operated under. In general, domestic expansion did more to increase the Association's expenses than its revenues. With membership growth prioritized over dues income, each new initiative

¹⁵² Kay Wonderlic, "An Analysis of Structural and Functional Aspects of the United States National Student Association," March 1961, NSA Papers, 1983 Accession, Box 6. Some of Wonderlic's charges fell wide of the mark, as when she accused the NEC, a largely ineffectual body, with having arrogated unconstitutional power to itself.

¹⁵³ Robert Kiley memo to the NEC [1958], NSA Papers, Box 6.

brought new costs. In some cases outside revenue was found to defray new expenses, but in others the money had to be found in the Association's general operating fund.

In the fall of 1960 NSA's leadership realized that the Association was once again facing a serious financial crisis, and that its options for extricating itself were dwindling. The International Commission's move from Cambridge to Philadelphia had proved more expensive than anticipated, as had the operating costs of the PVP program, and ETI revenue had slumped in the summer of 1959.¹⁵⁴ NSA's promotion of the civil rights activism of the spring of 1960 was even more costly — by the end of the fiscal year each of NSA's domestic officers had overspent his travel budget, and national office outlay for telephone and telegraph had swollen to twice its budgeted figure.¹⁵⁵ The officers hoped that foundation support would fill these gaps, but as in the past NSA found such funding hard to come by, and grants to cover operating expenses scarcer still. In February 1961 the NIC took dramatic steps to balance the budget — adopting an austerity plan that recalled the PVPs to the national office and suspended publication of the *National Student News* for the remainder of the year.

The 1961 Congress: High Noon?

In spite of NSA's fiscal woes, participation in the Congress soared in 1961. Nearly a hundred more students attended than the previous year's impressive total, making the Congress NSA's largest gathering ever.¹⁵⁶ The year saw a sharp increase in applications to

¹⁵⁴ Curtis Gans, NAVP's report to the 1960 pre-Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 158*; Kernish, "The History of USNSA," 19.

¹⁵⁵ National Office operating statement, June 30, 1960, NSA Papers, Box 7.

¹⁵⁶ The directory for the 1961 Congress indicates that more than 800 students from about 270 campuses attended.

the Southern Seminar as well, spurred by a surge in white interest, even from segregated schools which had previously had no contact with NSA.¹⁵⁷

An activist spirit had animated the 1960 Congress, and in 1961 the student organizations that had arisen from that activism brought their influence to bear. Observers had noted a rise in partisanship among Congress attendees as early as 1958, but in 1961 both NSA's right and its left were more vocal — and, crucially, better-organized — than either had been in a decade. The Association cannily exploited the factions' organizing in the run-up to the gathering, portraying the Congress as High Noon for student organizers and winning the attention of news media ranging from NBC television to the *Times* of London.

SDS was present at the Congress in force, with a mission of recruitment and conversion. Its soapbox would be the Liberal Study Group (LSG), a grouping of left-of-center delegates that would hold informational meetings, publish a daily Congress newsletter, and distribute a series of position papers that — as Kirkpatrick Sale put it a few years later — “became the bulk of SDS's literature list during the rest of the year.”¹⁵⁸

NSA's right wing, led by YAF, was better funded than its left, but less numerous — YAF had shallow roots in the Association and little experience with student organizing. YAF operatives flashed walkie-talkies in the Congress's conference halls and corridors, but they tended to huddle in their hotel rooms instead of mingling with the other delegates, and they left many with the impression that they would rather score

¹⁵⁷ “Minutes of the Southern Project Advisory Committee Meeting, June 2, 1961,” Southern Project Papers, Box 1. NSA faced severe barriers to organizing in the South. In addition to student and administration hostility, the association had to contend with government strictures — colleges in both Georgia and Mississippi were banned by state law from NSA affiliation.

¹⁵⁸ Sale, *SDS*, 34. The LSG was co-sponsored by Campus Americans for Democratic Action in 1961. It was distinct from, though it overlapped in membership with, NSA's Liberal Caucus — the LSG was oriented toward outreach to delegates, and the LC toward plenary strategizing. On early planning for the LSG, see SDS, “Memorandum re: The 14th USNSA National Student Congress,” [1961], ADA Papers, Series 8.

rhetorical points than win plenary victories. None of the structural reforms or policy stands they put forward was adopted by the body — and their highest-profile stunt brought them an overwhelming repudiation by the NEC.¹⁵⁹

The Congress was held on the University of Wisconsin campus once again, and the state's Democratic governor Gaylord Nelson opened the gathering with a blistering attack on the John Birch Society and their ideological ilk.¹⁶⁰ Stung, YAF pushed NSA to grant equal time to a conservative speaker, but they were rebuffed — first by the National Executive Committee and then, in a 208-187 vote, by the plenary itself.¹⁶¹

After the plenary vote the conservatives announced that William F. Buckley would give an open-air address off campus, and Buckley eventually made his speech to a late-evening crowd of several hundred in a hotel parking lot. There he declared NSA's criticisms of colonialism to be "geographically and anthropologically illiterate," deriding the proposition that, as he put it, "we can have freedom for the Mau-Maus." Asked by a Ceylonese student leader whether it was consistent to oppose self-determination for African colonies while exalting the American Revolution, Buckley mocked the student's comparison of America's forefathers with the "semi-savages in the Congo."¹⁶²

This statement, made directly to a student whose own country had only recently gained independence, put NSA in a position once again in which the passions of its activist wing and the interests of its International Commission coincided. When NAVP Tim Jenkins stood up to respond, he did not mince words — Buckley had, he declared, "unmasked ... the debased colonial, repressive, slave-owning kind of mentality" behind

¹⁵⁹ Several of the structural reforms that YAF put forward in 1961 were, however, subsequently embraced by other critics of NSA. See chapter six for a full discussion.

¹⁶⁰ Samuel C. Reynolds, "As NSA Congress Opens, Nelson Attacks John Birch Group," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 21, 1961.

¹⁶¹ "NSA National Executive Committee Defeats Motion to Censure Officer," NSA press release, August 22, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 8.

¹⁶² "NSA National Executive Committee Defeats Motion to Censure Officer," NSA press release, August 22, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 8. The Ceylonese student was a guest of NSA's International Commission at the Congress.

“the façade of the conservative image.” A conservative NEC member called for Jenkins to be censured, but after an all-night emergency NEC meeting his motion was resoundingly defeated.¹⁶³ Organized conservatism’s first foray into NSA had ended in debacle.

As noisy as the Buckley fracas was, the bitterest debate of the Congress concerned a more substantive issue — whether NSA should formally affiliate with SNCC. That debate would prove that defeat for the right in the new NSA did not necessarily portend victory for the left.

In 1961 the Association was, as Reginald Green had put it a few years earlier, “both overextended and underdeveloped” with regard to its organizational relationships. It had extensive international involvements, of course, and close ties to a few educational associations, but its relations with other American student groups were “scanty, patronizing, and inefficient.”¹⁶⁴ Six of the eight organizations listed on national office letterhead as “associated” with NSA at the time of the 1961 Congress were international in focus, covertly linked to the CIA, or both.¹⁶⁵

Fearful of subversion and infiltration from within, NSA had in its pre-CIA days set high barriers to formal affiliation with other organizations. In the 1950s it had often circumvented these requirements by establishing a quasi-affiliation under a different name. But given the controversial character of SNCC, the new scrutiny NSA faced on the right, and the fact that any SNCC-NSA relationship would be an active working alliance rather than a *pro forma* endorsement, such maneuvers wouldn’t be acceptable this time, and it would take a two-thirds vote of the Congress to approve affiliation.

¹⁶³ NSA National Executive Committee Defeats Motion to Censure Officer,” NSA press release, August 22, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 8.

¹⁶⁴ Reginald Green, Educational Affairs Commission report to the November 11, 1958 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁶⁵ NSA letterhead, 1960-61, NSA Papers. The exceptions were the American Council on Education and the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students.

A resolution of support for SNCC had passed overwhelmingly in 1960, and there was little expressed opposition to the civil rights movement at the Congress in 1961. And indeed, when the resolution came to a vote after relatively brief debate, SNCC's supporters garnered a healthy majority, falling just short of the required two-thirds margin.¹⁶⁶ A shift of just nine votes out of 363 cast would have produced a different result, and NSA's officers would later say that the SNCC vote failed because they had underestimated the need to make a compelling affirmative case to the delegates.¹⁶⁷

Because the vote had been so close, NAVP Tim Jenkins arranged for the motion to be reconsidered the next day. But in the second debate they faced a new and unanticipated opponent — Curtis Gans, NSA's 1959-60 NAVP. Gans, a white North Carolinian, had been a vocal supporter of the sit-in movement while in office, but in the plenary he argued that affiliation with NSA would leave SNCC vulnerable to charges that they were linked to "northern agitation." It was as a supporter of SNCC, he said, that he opposed the resolution. The resolution failed by a far wider margin than before, winning majorities in just three of NSA's regions. Harvard delegate Barney Frank put forward a substitute resolution of support for SNCC, but a furious Jenkins denounced the gesture as "idle and empty," and the substitute resolution passed by only a narrow margin.¹⁶⁸

The 1961-62 officer elections presented another test for NSA's activist wing, and as with the SNCC resolutions, the result was neither a clear victory nor quite an outright defeat. Paul Potter ran for president as the candidate of NSA's activists, facing several opponents, with Wisconsin student body president Ed Garvey the strongest. Neither Potter nor Garvey achieved a majority on the first ballot, but Garvey, a more moderate

¹⁶⁶ "NSA Confab Features Student Politics," The University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal*, September 12, 1961.

¹⁶⁷ "The Officers of the National Student Association" to "The Members of the Student Non-Violent Co-ordinating Committee," September 14, 1961.

¹⁶⁸ "NSA Confab Features Student Politics," The University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal*, September 12, 1961. Frank would be elected to the United States House of Representatives as a liberal Democrat in 1980.

liberal, won decisively in the run-off. Tom Hayden considered running for NAVP, but withdrew in favor of Potter, who defeated New England NEC representative Tim Zagat in a close vote.¹⁶⁹ For the second year in a row, an activist had been elected NAVP after coming up short in an attempt to win one of the offices — IAVP in 1960, president in 1961 — most closely guarded by the Association’s establishment. The activists wielded considerable influence within NSA, but real power — and access to the Association’s inner sanctum — still eluded them.

Education Reform and Student Rights

NSA’s activists’ greatest influence was with the membership, and they seized on the issues of educational reform and students’ rights in the early 1960s.¹⁷⁰ For them, the project of reforming the university was valuable both as an end in itself and as a way of encouraging students to think politically. Paul Potter made the case strongly in a statement that was paraphrased in the minutes of a summer 1962 NEC meeting:

There is a tendency now [in which] we have channeled student interest off the campus (peace, civil rights, civil liberties movements). Our role should be to search the campus from which they come to improve it intellectually. Students should be brought in touch with things that are immediate. How do broader concerns refer to things that are immediate.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Hayden, *Reunion*, 50-1; Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 102. “Garvey Picked NSA President: Vows ‘Change, Not Destruction.’” The University of Wisconsin *Daily Cardinal*, September 12, 1961. Zagat and fellow NEC member Mike Neff of Illinois were then elected to the Association’s two Program Vice Presidencies. (Zagat would in 1979 be the co-creator of the Zagat restaurant guides.)

¹⁷⁰ On NSA’s 1961-62 turn toward educational reform, see Ed Garvey’s comments in the minutes of the August 15, 1962 NEC meeting. [NSA Papers, Box 15.]

¹⁷¹ Minutes of the 1962 pre-Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14.

Some went further than Potter, arguing — as Dan Johnston, another early-sixties NSA officer who later gravitated toward SDS, did — that activism was part of the mission of the university, and thus of NSA. “To those who complain that NSA is not concerned with campus issues,” Johnston said at the 1961 Congress, “NSA must reply that one of the major campus problems is that higher education is doing nothing about the development of socially conscious people.”

Educational reform was a crusade that could hardly be criticized as a distraction from NSA’s mission, and for some time education reform projects had been the only domestic programs other than civil rights for which the Association had had any success garnering significant financial support. In 1961-62, the Association received funding from the Norman Foundation for a full-staffer working on academic freedom issues, and from the Johnson Foundation for a fall conference on “The Aims of Education.”¹⁷²

The Academic Freedom Project was the more substantial of the two programs. It was led by Neal Johnston, a former NEC member and editor of the University of Chicago *Maroon*, and tasked with working directly with individual campuses, mounting regional and national conferences and investigating specific violations of academic freedom.¹⁷³ At the end of the year, Paul Potter called the project “the most effective and efficiently run aspect of the [National] Commission’s work.”¹⁷⁴ In 1962, to augment this and similar

¹⁷² For analyses of the Aims of Education conference, see Paul Potter’s report to the December 1961 NEC meeting [NEC minutes, NSA Papers, Box 14] and the minutes of the December 8, 1961 meeting of the NAB [NSA Papers, Box 14]. NSA had hoped that the conference would become an annual event, but the Johnson Foundation, which had sponsored and hosted it, declined to support its continuation. [Minutes of the February 1962 NIC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14.]

¹⁷³ Ed Garvey memo to NEC [fall 1961]; NSA Papers, Box 14. Garvey to Eugene Fontinelli, October 31, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹⁷⁴ Potter, NAVP Report to December 1961 NEC meeting; NSA Papers, Box 14. For more on the first year of the project, see Neal Johnston to Student Body Presidents, NSA Coordinators, Editors, and Deans of Students, October 5, 1962; NSA Papers, Box 14.

efforts, new enforcement mechanisms for NSA's Student Bill of Rights and Academic Freedom policies were enacted into NSA bylaw.¹⁷⁵

At least as important as this programmatic work, however, was the internal educational campaign waged within NSA by the activists. The Association had passed a Basic Policy Declaration (BPD) on "The Student and the Total Community" in 1960, and a new BPD on *in loco parentis* in 1961. These were followed by statements on Procedural and Substantive Due Process in 1962, as well as a resolution — originally intended as a BPD — on "Higher Education and the Cold War."¹⁷⁶ Each of these documents had been written and championed by members of the Association's activist faction, as part of an attempt to advance their vision of the university not just within NSA but on its member campuses as well. As the nation's students became more engaged with attempts to alter the conditions of their education, NSA's activist faction sought to advance their efforts, and to give them a coherent grounding and direction.

NSA Relations with SNCC and SDS in the Early 1960s

Ed Garvey and Paul Potter, NSA's new president and NAVP, traveled to Mississippi to meet with SNCC leadership just days after the 1961 Congress ended.¹⁷⁷ They assured SNCC that they wished to pursue a close working relationship in the coming year, and NSA was granted formal observer status at future SNCC meetings.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁵ NSA Codification, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 8.

¹⁷⁶ "Legislative Digest," *Liberal Bulletin*, August 27, 1962. WHS Library.

¹⁷⁷ They took with them a two-page memo signed by all of NSA's new officers, explaining the Congress vote, regretting the "misunderstanding" that had accompanied it, and pledging their "resolve, determination, hope, and ... commitment" to work with SNCC in the coming year. [NSA officers' memo to SNCC, September 14, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 8.]

¹⁷⁸ Ed Garvey, memo to NEC, fall 1961, NSA Papers, Box 14.

But Garvey and Potter came away dismayed at SNCC's disorganized state.¹⁷⁹ SNCC had expanded dramatically in recent months, and there seemed to be little clarity as to the organization's structure or direction. These concerns were shared by many in SNCC, and in October a meeting was called in Atlanta to craft a new governance apparatus for the group. Potter and Connie Curry were both invited to attend, as was Tom Hayden of SDS. A new SNCC structure, centered around a seven-member "temporary executive committee" to whom SNCC's staff would be responsible, was agreed upon in Atlanta, and it satisfied most of Garvey and Potter's concerns.¹⁸⁰

The Atlanta meeting was interrupted by developments in the Deep South. That summer Bob Moses had launched a voter registration project in McComb, Mississippi. The project had encountered violent resistance from the start — Moses and others were repeatedly jailed and beaten. On September 25 a local project volunteer named Herbert Lee was shot and killed by a state legislator, and on October 4 a hundred high school students were arrested at a SNCC-sponsored protest of Lee's murder.¹⁸¹ When news of the mass arrests reached Atlanta several SNCC staffers left for McComb, and Potter and Hayden went with them, intending to use their NSA and SDS connections to draw national attention to the events.¹⁸²

When Potter and Hayden arrived in McComb they were told by the authorities to report to the local stationhouse, and given a police escort to take them there. While they were en route, however, their escort disappeared, and the two were pulled from their car and beaten. The attack was witnessed by journalists, and photos were soon published

¹⁷⁹ Ed Garvey to Mark Furstenberg, October 19, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 16. Paul Potter memo to Timothy Manring "Re: Work of the National Commission" [1962], NSA Papers, Box 56*.

¹⁸⁰ Minutes of the October 8-10 1962 SNCC staff meeting, Connie Curry personal papers. Ed Garvey to Mark Furstenberg, October 19, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁸¹ Carson, *In Struggle*, 46-9.

¹⁸² Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*, 58-9.

across the nation.¹⁸³ The news stories that followed that attack, and Potter and Hayden's own reports back to their respective constituencies, did much to raise awareness of the McComb situation.¹⁸⁴

Potter's predecessor, Tim Jenkins, had spent much of his energy on civil rights movement support in 1960-61, and after the McComb trip both Potter and Garvey took steps to ensure that Potter did not become consumed by such work to the detriment of his other duties.¹⁸⁵ In early October NSA established the Southern Student Freedom Fund (SSFF), a body intended to build support for the cash-strapped SNCC on the nation's campuses and to keep NSA's membership informed of developments in the civil rights struggle.¹⁸⁶ Walter Williams, a former student body president at Jackson State College who had been expelled for civil rights activity, was hired to lead the fund, and by the end of April SSFF had raised more than \$9,000 for SNCC, most of it through the sale of SNCC pins to students.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Ed Garvey to Mark Furstenberg, October 19, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁸⁴ For NSA, the attention was not all welcome. While in Mississippi Potter had at one point identified himself as a "stringer" for the *New York Post*, and though this was an innocent misstatement (he had, in fact, intended to file reports to that paper during his trip,) the slip gave NSA's conservatives an opening. Pointed questions were raised about Potter's self-description, and about his relationship to the liberal *Post*. [Kay Wonderlic, "NSA — Serious Threat to the Academic Community," *The Crescent* [1961-62], undated clipping in NSA Papers, Box 15.]

¹⁸⁵ See Garvey to Furstenburg, and Garvey and Potter's comments in the 1962 pre-Congress NEC minutes. [Both in NSA Papers, Box 14.]

¹⁸⁶ For Williams' civil rights newsletters, prepared regularly in the spring of 1962 to NSA member campuses, see the ADA Papers, Series 8.

¹⁸⁷ Ed Garvey to Eugene Fontinelli, October 31, 1961, NSA Papers, Box 14. Williams had represented Jackson State at the 1961 Congress, the Jackson State administration had dissolved its student government for its involvement in civil rights organizing, and Williams — who had been involved in that work — was expelled for protesting the student government's dissolution. [SSFF Prospectus [1961], NSA Papers, Box 62*; "Funds Raised for SNCC," *National Student News*, May 1962, NSA Papers, Box 7.] SSFF also mounted an August 1962 benefit concert at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, with performers including Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins, Tony Bennett, 'Moms' Mabley, and Dave Brubeck. Its contributions constituted a substantial source of revenue for SNCC, whose total income in the first five months of 1962 amounted to just \$23,571. ["Music Notes," *The New York Times*, August 11, 1962; SNCC Financial Report [May 1962], NSA Papers, Box 49*.]

Additional NSA support for SNCC continued to come from Connie Curry. Curry and the Southern Project gave SNCC ongoing logistical assistance and organizing advice, and her generous grant funding from the Field Foundation made it possible for her to offer timely loans and small grants when SNCC was unable to pay its bills.¹⁸⁸ Curry's summer Southern Seminar was another point of connection between her office and SNCC — staffers from the civil rights group regularly spoke and led workshops at the seminars, whose alumni eventually included activists Casey Hayden and Bob Zellner and SNCC chairman Chuck McDew.

NSA's ties to SDS in the early 1960s were less formal than its connections to SNCC, but in many ways they ran deeper. Many of SDS's early leaders met each other for the first time at NSA events, and the group initially had a focus on campus organizing and campus reform that SNCC never developed in any significant measure. The 1961-62 SDS — with little campus reputation and virtually no members — was not yet a force for the Association to take much note of. It was, though, coalescing into a congenial haven for NSA's left — the dozen activists elected to SDS's executive committee at Christmas 1961 included past NSA officers and staff and several future members of the NSA National Executive Committee.¹⁸⁹

Conclusion

Ed Garvey's defeat of Paul Potter in the 1961 presidential race was hailed in some quarters as a decisive victory for the nation's mainstream students over its suddenly-

¹⁸⁸ James Forman to Connie Curry, January 12, 1962, Connie Curry papers; Greenberg, *Circle of Trust*, 132.

¹⁸⁹ Sale, *SDS*, 40.

prominent activists, with *Times* of London succinctly wrapping up the Congress with an article entitled “Cool Heads Succeed the Beatniks.”¹⁹⁰ And despite the activists’ other victories at that Congress and in the year that followed, the conventional wisdom was in this instance right — the activists had failed to capture NSA, and they would find the Association a much less congenial place in the next few years than they had between 1959 and 1961.

In contrast, SDS in June 1962 adopted its first manifesto, the Port Huron Statement. It was an ambitious, sprawling document, touching on issues ranging from economic development in Asia to agricultural policy at home, but it gave a special prominence to the defects and potentialities of the campus, and to SDS’s position as a campus-based organization. “We are people of this generation,” it began, “bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities.”¹⁹¹ It looked to the university as SDS’s base — it aimed, as Tom Hayden put it, “to reach well into the liberal campus community and radicalize it.”¹⁹²

NSA’s highest officers would have no such ambitions between 1962 and 1965, but in no small part because of the efforts of activists like Paul Potter, the students of NSA would in the mid-1960s grow increasingly impatient with the limitations of their role in the Association. In the early 1960s NSA had begun to step up the pressure for a more democratic, less paternalistic university, and now its members would with mounting urgency press for a more democratic, less paternalistic NSA.

¹⁹⁰ “Cool Heads Succeed the Beatniks,” *The Times* of London, [1961]. Clipping in NSA Papers, Box 1.

¹⁹¹ The Port Huron Statement is reproduced in full in Miller’s *Democracy is in the Streets*, pp 329-374.

¹⁹² Hayden memo to SDS Executive Committee and others “Re: Manifesto” [spring 1962], NSA Papers, Box 49*.

Chapter Six Transformation: 1962-1967

Introduction

In the early 1960s NSA's activists were the primary architects of its domestic policy statements, and in 1960 and 1961 they won some victories in NSA's national elections. Articulate and compelling, they attracted converts and advanced their platform at every Congress. But they were only able to prevail by assembling *ad hoc* coalitions — around a strongly-felt issue, a compelling project, a charismatic candidate. They had little success in transforming their strengths into lasting institutional gains. To an extent this was a reflection of the lingering centrism of the Association's membership, and of the fact that activism was not as strong a force on the American campus as it soon would be. But in larger part it was a result of the enduring power of NSA's establishment — the “witting” staff and alumni who exercised such enduring influence within the Association.

The NSA establishment was not monolithic, as we have seen. Though all of the Association's early-1960s presidents participated willingly in the CIA relationship, several also worked closely with the early leadership of SDS and SNCC, and with activists within NSA itself. Between 1959 and 1962 in particular, the line dividing the Association's liberals from its activists was not a particularly sharp one.¹ The 1962

¹ Earlier in the 1950s as well, officers like Ray Farabee and Reginald Green had rendered NSA a more congenial place for the self-described activists who would follow them.

Congress would see a turn away from activism on the part of the Association's national leadership, however. For the next three years it would hold itself at a remove from the critical centers of American student activism, rendering itself increasingly irrelevant to the campus organizing of its day just as that organizing was becoming a real force on the nation's campuses. This turn reflected the witting establishment's unease with the increasing radicalism of American student protest as well as the activists' increasingly penetrating critiques of American institutions — and of the NSA establishment itself.

In a speech to the 1963 Congress, outgoing president Dennis Shaul said “the charge that there is an ‘elite’ which dominates and runs the Association” was itself part of “an effort by elite groups ... on the left or on the right” to “take over the Association.”² Grass-roots pressure for the democratization of NSA would not be turned aside by such rhetorical legerdemain, however. The CIA relationship remained a closely guarded secret, but the influence of the International Commission and select alumni over the Association was apparent to all, and as the principle of student self-determination on campus and in the larger society took hold at NSA's grass roots, the Association's membership grew ever less willing to defer to elites within NSA itself.

American student discontent had been visible on a few campuses as early as the late 1950s, and after 1960 student activism would transform students' relationship to American higher education. Students attacked *in loco parentis* on innumerable campuses — winning far more often than they lost — and that activism helped spur off-campus developments that weakened *in loco parentis* still further. Beginning with *Dixon v. Alabama*, a 1961 court ruling that mandated that public universities adhere meet due process standards when disciplining student protesters, government actions

² Shaul speech to the Congress, August 18, 1963 , NSA Papers, Box 10.

strengthened students' status as independent adults, beyond the authority of parents both actual and virtual.³

In the 1964-65 academic year the political climate of the campus and the nation would change dramatically. The Berkeley Free Speech Movement transformed the tactics of campus activists, the escalation of the war in Vietnam raised the stakes of protest, and the intensity of campus protest grew markedly. Though the Association's establishment responded equivocally to these developments, they swelled the ranks of the activists in NSA's membership, and that surge brought a new energy to the 1965 Congress.

There would be no coup in NSA that summer, no overt repudiation of the establishment, but there was a pronounced — and ultimately decisive — shift. The delegates embraced the Berkeley protesters' cause and challenged NSA's International Commission more forcefully than ever before, and at the end of the Congress they elected a president who would, over the next year, quietly begin working to extricate NSA from its relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency. NSA's ties to the CIA would be revealed to the world — and to NSA's own membership — a year and a half later. In those 18 months, protest would spread dramatically on the nation's campuses, NSA would end its dependency on CIA funding and begin to re-engage with its student base. And its membership, in decline since 1962, would begin to climb again.

³ David Alexander Ellis, "An Historical Overview of Academic Consumerism in American Higher Education." PhD diss., Boston College, 1987. For *Dixon v. Alabama* see 42-3.

The 1962 Congress

The 1961 Congress had been held at the University of Wisconsin, NSA's first home — a tolerant campus with a supportive student body in a liberal community. Ohio State University, the site of the 1962 Congress, shared none of Wisconsin's virtues.⁴

In January 1962 NSA and OSU signed a contract committing the university to host the Congress. On June 7, however, Ed Garvey received a letter from OSU dean John Bonner Jr., informing him that all non-student Congress speakers would be screened by a university committee, and that no one would address the gathering without Bonner's approval. Bonner did not "anticipate any difficulty" with faculty or government speakers, but any proposed speaker who was neither a professor nor a public official would be subject to close scrutiny.⁵ The letter was accompanied by a copy of the relevant university regulations, which said that speakers "who are subversive or those who are allied to them in purpose or action or those whose views do not contribute in some way to the University's educational program" were not welcome on campus.

Garvey flew to Ohio to meet with Bonner, and was given an ultimatum — submit to the policy, or take the Congress elsewhere.⁶ With just two months remaining before the Congress, Garvey contacted the AAUP and the ACLU, both of which pledged their support. Attorney Joe Rauh of Americans for Democratic Action offered legal advice, and the dean of students at the University of Chicago said that his campus would be able to

⁴ Richard A. Lambert to Morris Riger, January 31, 1962. ADA Papers, Series 8.

⁵ John T. Bonner, Jr., to Ed Garvey, June 5, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 8.

⁶ Ed Garvey to Richard Lambert [1962]. ADA Papers, Series 8.

host the Congress on as little as two weeks' notice, if necessary.⁷ Ohio State eventually capitulated on the speaker regulations, but not before weeks of tense negotiations.⁸

The university's paternalism caused additional problems at the Congress itself. OSU maintained a curfew for its female students, and before the Congress NSA agreed to enforce that curfew — female attendees would have to be in their dorms by 1:30 am each night.⁹ But in 1962, as at every Congress, formal and informal meetings went on until the early hours of the morning — the NEC, for instance, was scheduled to convene at midnight every night, and its meetings rarely started on time. It was not possible for a delegate to fully participate in the Congress while making a 1:30 bed-check, and by the third night it was obvious that the curfew was being widely flouted.

At the next day's plenary the Congress Steering Committee chair announced that fifty female Congress attendees had been cited for curfew violations, and that each would be required to perform three hours of work for the Congress secretariat as punishment. This announcement was met with shouts of "in loco parentis!" and "male chauvinism!" from the plenary floor.¹⁰ Under fire, the NEC rescinded the punishments.¹¹ The NSA of the 1950s had confronted the students of the 1960s, and the students had prevailed.

⁷ Richard Lambert memo, June 21, 1962; Sheila [McCann?] to "Dick [Richard Lambert], June 19, 1962. ADA Papers, Series 8.

⁸ OSU administration requested a pledge from NSA that they not invite any speakers who had previously been banned from the campus. NSA rejected this proposal as well, and OSU ultimately settled for an assurance that though NSA reserved "the right to invite any speakers it desire[d]," it was "confident that those speakers selected [would] be individuals who in any circumstance would be welcome" on campus. [Minutes of 1962 pre-Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14; Paul Potter to John T. Bonner, Jr., June 27, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 8.]

⁹ Congress information packet, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 9. Exemptions from the policy had been secured for female members of the Congress staff.

¹⁰ "Curfew Fight — On and Off," *Liberal Bulletin*, August 23, 1962. Wisconsin Historical Society Library.

¹¹ "Curfew Fight — On and Off," *Liberal Bulletin*, August 23, 1962; Wisconsin Historical Society Library. Minutes of the August 22, 1962 NEC meeting; NSA Papers, Box 14. The NEC ruled that delegates would be given warnings and hearings before any punishment. There is no record that anyone was punished for a curfew violation that year.

At prior Congresses NSA's activist faction had created two informal institutions to assist their efforts — they proselytized among the delegates using the study papers and *Liberal Bulletin* of the Liberal Study Group, and organized through the smaller and somewhat more disciplined mechanism of the Liberal Caucus.¹² The conservative faction, out-organized by the activists in 1961, adopted their approach in 1962, holding “Conservative Conference” meetings and publishing a Congress newsletter of their own.¹³

The delegates passed several assertive new policy statements on the student's role in the university in 1962, and faculty and administration members present at the Congress complained of the delegates' adversarial, even intransigent, approach to issues of university governance.¹⁴ But this was a Congress effectively managed by the Association's elite, a fact demonstrated most clearly in the presidential election, which matched Notre Dame's Dennis Shaul against incumbent PVP Tim Zagat. Both were insiders — Zagat was an officer and an alumnus of the ISRS — but the winner, Shaul, was perhaps the most *inside* insider to win the NSA presidency since Harry Lunn was elevated from the International Commission staff in 1954.¹⁵

¹² “Liberals Set Study Sessions,” August 19, 1962 *Liberal Bulletin*, WHS Library; “Liberals' Caucus,” *Liberal Bulletin*, August 23, 1962, WHS Library.

¹³ For an assessment of the conservatives' approach, see “Join With Us,” *Liberal Bulletin*, August 22, 1962, WHS Library.

¹⁴ Angela M. Covert and Donald R. Mauken, “The Continuing Challenge to the Student Community,” *School and Society*, March 23, 1963. The delegates also debated a resolution on the McCarran Act for more than three hours, and one on nuclear testing for six, but neither in its final form contained much that was truly novel. [John L. Anderson, University of Illinois, “Report on the 15th National Congress of the National Student Association,” 1962, NSA Papers, Box 8.]

¹⁵ *Liberal Bulletin*, August 30, 1962; Public Relations and Development Director's report, spring 1964, NSA Papers, Box 16. No formal records of NSA elections from this period survive in the Association's archives. In the early years of NSA, the Association had distributed the official minutes of the Congress to its membership each year, but they discontinued the practice in 1957, when they began publishing an annual codification of the Association's policies. Partial or draft minutes for the 1958, 1959, and 1960 Congresses are retained at the Wisconsin Historical Society, but no such documents are on file for the 1961 through 1966 Congresses.

The 1962 Congress was Shaul's fifth. He had been the student body president at Notre Dame in the late 1950s, and a Rhodes scholar in 1960-61.¹⁶ He served as the director of the CIA's Independent Research Service during the Helsinki Youth Festival in the summer of 1962, and by the time of the Congress he had been out of school long enough that it was necessary for the Association's leadership to provide him with *pro forma* credentials from a campus to which Shaul had no academic connection — the graduate school of Harvard University.¹⁷

Shaul's victory would prove a huge setback for NSA's activist faction. They would have, moreover, no compensating victory in 1962 comparable to Paul Potter's 1961 election to the national affairs vice presidency — Potter's old Oberlin roommate Rennie Davis was a candidate for NAVP, but he lost to Timothy Manning, a Washington State student with no visible connection to activist movements who forged close ties with the Association's International Commission by the end of his term of office.¹⁸

The Cold War and the Establishment-Activist Struggle

NSA's International Commission had always expressed regret about American students' lack of interest in international issues, but as noted in previous chapters this neglect worked to their advantage. If the membership of NSA saw the Association's

¹⁶ Candidate profile, *Liberal Bulletin*, August 30, 1962, WHS Library. "Ohioan Chosen as President of National Student Group," *New York Times*, September 1, 1962.

¹⁷ Stern, "A Short Account of International Student Politics;" Candidate profile, *Liberal Bulletin*, August 30, 1962, WHS Library; "Ohioan Chosen as President of National Student Group," *New York Times*, September 1, 1962; Margaret Cronin, "Groves' Credentials Challenged," *Congress News*, August 23, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁸ Davis would be appointed to lead SDS's ERAP project in late 1963, and as an antiwar leader later in the decade he would be indicted as one of the Chicago Seven.

international work as irrelevant to their own concerns, they might occasionally grouse, but they would give the International Commission latitude to pursue its own agenda.

But as the nation's student activists — inside and outside NSA — became more politically sophisticated, international questions, formerly given little attention, became the subject of considerable discussion in NSA. In the debate over nuclear testing in 1959 and the grilling of William F. Buckley in 1960, students from outside NSA's international elite had begun to make forceful arguments about international policy. In 1962 and 1963 NSA's membership began to openly debate the role of the American university in the Cold War, and as the decade wore on, they would raise increasingly insistent questions about the international activities of the Association itself.

The federal government's involvement with higher education, growing steadily since the Second World War, had for most of NSA's existence been seen within NSA as an unalloyed good. Government action had strengthened higher education institutions, expanded access to college, and combatted racial discrimination. By the 1960s, however, government's role in academia was coming to seem problematic to some on NSA's left wing. Government research funding was being used in the service of a geopolitical struggle of which many student activists were growing ever more skeptical, raising questions about the university's independence and integrity.

At the 1962 Congress both Tom Hayden and Paul Potter gave speeches to the Liberal Study Group on the subject of the university and the cold war, and these discussions led to the passage of a resolution on the topic by the plenary.¹⁹ That resolution declared that federal government funding for academic research entangled the nation's universities and government, breeding a "pervasive apprehension" about retaliation for criticism of these relationships. The resolution urged the nation's students

¹⁹ "Aims of Education," *Liberal Bulletin*, August 21, 1962. WHS Library.

“to examine and redefine the intellectually and psychologically harmful institutions of the cold war,” but included no mandate for NSA action.²⁰

The resolution was not a radical departure, given NSA’s previous statements, and it passed in the plenary by a comfortable margin. But it took a more critical position in relation to cold war institutions than president Dennis Shaul was comfortable with. After the Congress, Shaul prepared an anthology of readings on the subject of the cold war university, writing the lead essay himself. In it, he said that some government “restriction” was the “inevitable” and unobjectionable consequence of federal funding for university-based research.²¹ In the entire essay, only one sentence expressed concern about the intellectual consequences of such arrangements.²²

Paul Potter wrote an essay on the same subject that year, and it was included in Shaul’s anthology. In it, Potter bluntly challenged not just the Shaul position, but also the Congress’s reformism. To divest the universities of their ties to the defense establishment would remedy certain “obvious evils,” he wrote, but it would not fundamentally transform the universities themselves. In a passage that anticipated the NSA-CIA revelations, Potter rejected the proposition that “the Universities accepted the Defense Department as a benefactor only because of desperate financial need.” The university was an eager partner of the military, not a victim or a stooge, and any attempt to transform it must take account of that “obvious” fact. “The only course” for those who wanted real change was “to stand outside the existing traditions and on the basis of our

²⁰ 1962 Codification, NSA Papers, Box 8.

²¹ Dennis Shaul, “Students, the Cold War, and Education,” in Shaul, ed, *The Cold War and Higher Education*, NSA 1963, NSA Papers, Box 9.

²² “Second, because the government owns the research facilities in many cases, and holds the purse strings in many others, the independence of the universities benefiting from federal aid is far from assured.”

own intellectual, economic, political and human resources develop alternatives to the system so compelling as to obtain basic concessions.”²³

When the NSA-CIA relationship was established in the early 1950s, the government was a marginal force on the American campus, and the world beyond America’s shores was peripheral to most student activists’ sense of their mission. By 1962, however, with the government playing an increasingly prominent role in the academy and some student activists beginning to see global issues as central to their own work, such activists were groping for an analysis that would integrate their understanding of the university with their approach to larger questions. Such analyses would be foregrounded after the American military escalation in Vietnam, but they were developing well before then.

New Student Critiques of the University

The most influential early statement of sixties campus radicalism came from the Students for a Democratic Society. SDS’s Port Huron Statement, adopted at a 1962 conference, was the nascent New Left’s first major attempt to define itself and to lay out an agenda for student activism.

Although its primary focus lay beyond the campus, the Statement included a section on the university and on the student’s role within it that owed much to debates and perspectives that had been developed within NSA. The Statement’s authors saw failings in the nation’s students — passivity, disconnection from subjects studied, concern for the trappings of college more than the educational process itself — and they

²³ Paul Potter, “Higher Education and the Cold War,” in Shaul, ed, *The Cold War and Higher Education*, NSA 1963, NSA Papers, Box 9.

blamed infantilization in the classroom, overspecialization in the curriculum, and what they called the “let’s pretend’ theory” of student involvement in governance for students’ alienation. “Apathy,” they wrote, “is not simply an attitude; it is a product of social institutions, and of the structure and organization of higher education itself.” Inured to the fact of faculty and administration control, students were being trained to “accept elite rule within the university” and in society as a whole, while the American university of the sixties was undergoing a “shift ... toward the value standards of business and the administrative mentality.”²⁴

In a striking essay that appeared in an Oberlin student magazine in 1963, undergraduate Roger Siegel explored the implications of this business model of academia, and identified a crucial weakness of that model from the student perspective. He said that an “unusually potent” argument used against student advocates for institutional reform was the “commodity’ theory of higher education.” Each college provided a certain kind of educational experience, the argument went, and those who were unsatisfied could simply transfer to one of the school’s “competitors.” But such an approach to education, he argued, was fundamentally misguided. “Colleges,” he wrote, “are not soap. The concerns of education, the human spirit, the human condition, are not soap. One’s ... grievances about a school,” he continued, “only secondarily arise from ... ‘economic’ considerations.” It was the “ethos” of the institution with which activist students were most concerned.²⁵

Siegel overstated his case to a certain degree. Beginning with the dining hall riots of the colonial era, students had always been attentive to the services their colleges provided. But his emphasis on the “ethos” of institutions anticipated the concerns of the

²⁴ Miller, *Democracy is in the Streets*, 335.

²⁵ Roger Siegel, “The College Commodity,” reprinted in Mitchell Cohen and Dennis Hale, eds., *The New Student Left: An Anthology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

Berkeley Free Speech Movement the following year, and those of many of the campus protests that it helped to inspire.

The NSA Establishment Searches for the Center

In 1961-62 Young Americans for Freedom had pressed its case against NSA on selected campuses, winning several high-profile disaffiliations, but they had simultaneously argued that NSA could and should be reformed.²⁶ After the 1962 Congress, YAF increasingly argued that procedural reform would not be effective in transforming NSA. Seeing little chance of redirecting NSA in any dramatic way, YAF's board of directors passed a resolution later that year that called on all campuses to withdraw from the Association.²⁷

Their attack included forays into 1950s-style red-baiting. By the early 1960s the Communist Party was essentially moribund, but Danny Rubin, its National Youth Director, had been a visible presence at the 1962 Congress, a fact that YAF was eager to publicize. In the fall of 1963 the American Legion would take up the cause, declaring that NSA "policies and programs" with regard to campus affairs "embrace the important lines of the Communist Party."²⁸ Many in NSA, and far more in campus activist circles, saw such charges as toothless anachronisms. To Dennis Shaul, however, they were a call to arms, and he rose with vigor to defend NSA's patriotism.²⁹ In a speech to the 1963

²⁶ Ed Garvey memo to "Organizational Representatives for Discussion on Right Wing Groups," [1961-62]. ADA Papers, Series 8.

²⁷ YAF, *NSA Report*, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 1*.

²⁸ William Schulz, "Leftist Lobbies at Student Meeting," *Human Events*, January 5, 1963. Dennis Shaul to Marc Roberts, February 12, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 14. Greg Gallo to Sidney Hertzberg, December 19, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 14.

²⁹ On left impatience with NSA anticommunism, see Paul Potter to Greg Gallo, June 27, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 49*.

Congress he called NSA “the natural and eternal enemy” of the Communists, and said there should “be no doubt ... that the Association has its own integrity and will not give it up without a fight.” NSA constituted a threat to communism at home and abroad, he continued, because it “mobilize[d] students toward the construction of a better society, a democratic society.”³⁰

Shaul was, despite this oblique appropriation of SDS, no friend to the nation’s student activists. He did not share his recent predecessors’ personal ties to NSA’s activist faction, and he worked as president to distance the Association from the activist movements of the time, particularly the civil rights movement. In late 1962 he forbade Connie Curry to continue as a member of the SNCC board of directors, and in his valedictory speech to the 1963 Congress he condemned what he called “the many crimes that are committed in the name of civil rights,” citing “those within the movement” who “condemn all law because some laws have been unjust.”³¹

Shaul presented NSA’s disengagement from activist movements as a defensive measure, characterizing the attacks on NSA that were launched during his term as “partly right-wing, but more anti-activist.”³² His successor, Greg Gallo, would go further, claiming that NSA had rendered itself vulnerable by “going out on the limb” on civil liberties and civil rights at the 1960 and 1961 Congresses.³³ Both men argued that NSA’s

³⁰ NSA Report on the 1963 Congress. Shaul’s speech was the high-water mark of NSA anticommunism in the 1960s. For more on the debates over inclusion in NSA, see my “Questions of Communism and Anticommunism.”

³¹ Dennis Shaul, letter to James Forman. December 17, 1962, SNCC Papers; Shaul speech to the National Student Congress, August 18, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 14. Shaul proposed that Paul Potter — who did not live in the South, and who was by then no longer affiliated with NSA — replace Curry.

³² Shaul to the NEC, November 2, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 14.

³³ Gallo to Ray Farabee, August 3, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10. See also Gallo to Martha Peterson, May 26, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 14.

activist posture had driven campuses away, and that it could only preserve its strength through return to the center.³⁴

To the extent that this analysis can be subjected to evidentiary verification, however, it appears to have little merit. It was frequently asserted, for example, both inside and outside the Association, that NSA was abandoned by large numbers of white Southern schools as a result of its early-1960s civil rights activism. But in fact Southern white membership fell by only two schools — from 90 to 88 — between 1959 and 1963, and the Association’s civil rights work was rarely emphasized by its conservative critics. More broadly, the argument that NSA could defend itself against such critics by marginalizing its activists was one that rested on a fundamental misreading of the early-1960s campus mood and a profound — and perhaps willful — misconstrual of the YAF project.³⁵ YAF often stressed non-political criticisms of NSA, and where they attacked NSA’s politics they were at least as likely to highlight the Association’s international platform as any of its domestic policies.³⁶ The struggle within NSA was in the early 1960s

³⁴ This analysis quickly became conventional wisdom within and without NSA. [See Donald Janson, “Students Assail Vietnam Bombing,” *New York Times*, September 3, 1965; Sol Stern, “A Short Account of International Student Politics and the Cold War With Particular Reference to the NSA, CIA, Etc,” *Ramparts*, March 1967; Frank Millspaugh, “By Any Means Necessary,” manuscript submission to *Mademoiselle* magazine, October 1967, NSA Papers, Box 159*.] In his 1974 *Student Politics in America*, Philip Altbach argued that conservative attacks “forced the liberal [NSA] leadership to move slowly for fear of alienating even larger numbers of their constituents.” [127] I, however, find Paul Potter and Tim Zagat’s argument that a lack of awareness of NSA on the campus deserved the blame for the Association’s membership difficulties far more compelling. [Minutes of the 1962 pre-Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14.]

³⁵ There was in some respects a rough parallelism in the role of YAF and the activists in NSA in the early 1960s. On each side, there were new national networks with a real influence on the campuses and in the Congresses. Both sides had to contend with the national office’s control over NSA policies and procedures, and with the deference that NSA’s membership showed to them. Both recognized that NSA’s establishment relied upon organizational procedure to maintain its power, and both believed that shifts in structure might well lead to shifts in power. Accordingly, the two sides sometimes joined together in support of specific reforms.

³⁶ For right-wing criticism of NSA’s international positions, see William Schulz, “Leftist Lobbies at Student Meeting,” *Human Events*, January 5, 1963; Young Republican

a struggle within liberalism — a fight between what SDS’s Steve Max referred to as “the left liberal and socialist position (the New Left) on the one hand, and the ... Kennedy liberal position on the other.”³⁷ A victory by the witting elite’s “Kennedy liberals” in such a struggle would neither placate YAF nor strengthen NSA’s campus base.³⁸

NSA’s turn to the center was presented as a membership strategy first and foremost, and by that measure it was an abject failure. Under the presidencies of Shaul and Gallo, when NSA conspicuously pulled back from the activist left, its membership dropped precipitously. A membership roll distributed in May 1963, a few months before the Shaul Congress, had shown NSA with 382 campuses, but by the fall of 1964 the number stood at 335 and by the fall of 1965 it had dropped to 288. NSA had, in other words, lost a quarter of its membership in just two and a half years.³⁹ Similar trends are visible in Congress attendance. 1960 and 1961 had been among NSA’s most activist Congresses, while the three annual meetings that followed took a studiedly — and increasingly — moderate tone.

If the activism of the 1960 gathering had alienated significant numbers of students, one would expect attendance to have fallen in 1961 and 1962, and begun to rebound in 1963 and 1964. In fact, the opposite happened — attendance rose by 28 schools between 1960 and 1961 and by another 28 the following year. More schools attended the 1962 Congress, in fact, than had attended any NSA gathering since the 1947

College Service Committee, “Issue Paper: The National Student Association,” August 1962, NSA Papers, Box 9*; YAF, *NSA Report*, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 1*.

³⁷ Steve Max, “Thoughts of Sorts,” [1962-63?] ADA Papers, Series 8.

³⁸ Indeed, the Shaul-Gallo repudiation of the activists won them no friends on the right. After the 1964 Congress, perhaps the decade’s least radical, a right-wing press release issued in its aftermath claimed that an “ultra-leftist take-over” of the Association had transpired there. [Tom Charles Huston, “Ultra-Leftist Take-Over of NSA Prompts Formation of New National Student Group” [1964], SDS Archives.]

³⁹ NSA’s figures may understate the Association’s early-1960s losses, since there was at times a lag of as much as two years between a campus’s last dues payment and its’ being struck from the membership rolls. (When campuses formally withdrew from membership, they were generally removed from the lists more quickly.)

Constitutional Convention. It was only after the 1962-63 turn to the center that Congress attendance began to decline — it dropped dramatically in 1963, and fell again in 1964. The policy of disengagement, it appears, alienated the left without either appeasing the right or appealing to the center.

The Activist Retreat and the Limits of Early-1960s NSA Reform

The Shaul election and its aftermath soured some activists on NSA completely, while those who still held out hope of transforming NSA into a more activist organization grew increasingly frustrated with the Association, and ever more convinced of the need for fundamental reform. The most prominent expression of this activist push for a newly accountable NSA was an eight-page, single-spaced memo that Al Haber wrote in November 1962.⁴⁰ Entitled simply, “NSA: Problems,” and distributed in advance of the December NEC meeting, the memo was an incisive analysis of NSA’s weaknesses and its potential. It enumerated a number of areas in which NSA was failing, and proposed more than a dozen specific reforms to Association procedures, all intended to revitalize NSA as a responsive democratic organization.⁴¹

Haber’s first complaint was that delegates to the Congress were underprepared and overtaxed. Echoing previous generations of NSA critics, he declared that too many items of business were brought to the floor each year, and that delegates were given too little chance to orient themselves before the Congress. These conditions led, he argued, to a situation in which insiders could wield disproportionate influence. NSA’s two

⁴⁰ The memo reflected Haber’s inclination, articulated that spring, “to see *any* organization ... as being primarily vehicles, tools, weapons ... through which smaller groups can operate,” and his desire to see NSA transformed into a more effective tool. [Haber to Pete Allen, February 26, 1962, SPU Papers, Box 4.]

⁴¹ Al Haber, “NSA: Problems,” November 21, 1962, ADA Papers, Series 8.

dominant factions, Haber argued — “the liberal caucus and SDS types” on the one hand and the “establishment and inner elite” on the other — openly manipulated the Congress each year, with the Liberal Caucus pushing favored legislation and “past officers and staff” working to influence elections. Between them, they deprived “the average delegate of control of the Congress,” weakening grass-roots support for NSA and its work.⁴²

Haber’s proposals for reform were thorough, and grounded in a commitment to democratic process and an intimate understanding of NSA. Student speakers should take the place of outside speeches at the Congress. The national office should involve the membership in Congress planning. The political caucuses should be given formal representation on Congress committees, and candidates for national office in NSA should be required to meet in debate prior to the elections. The plenary should be given a more robust policymaking role, the NEC should be given greater authority to direct NSA’s activities, and the officers should be made more accountable to the membership.

With the establishment firmly in control of NSA, however, Haber’s critique was not engaged in any coherent way within the Association, and the 1963 Congress would be the most disheartening for the left since the mid-1950s.⁴³ Behind the scenes, NSA was becoming ever more enmeshed with the Central Intelligence Agency, and in its public face, it was becoming ever less congenial to its activist wing, even as the activists’ agenda and analysis of the university were gaining purchase among the nation’s students.

Where Haber had called for a re-imagining and re-invigoration of the NEC, the 1963 Congress abolished the NEC entirely, replacing it with a new, smaller National

⁴² Haber noted that three recent landmark position papers on students’ rights “were each drafted by one person, almost without consultation, and their passage was more engineered than democratically debated.” (Haber himself had written the first of these.)

⁴³ For a detailed critique of the left’s posture at the 1963 Congress, and an argument as to how that faction could better realize NSA’s untapped potential, see Rennie Davis, “Davis Scores Left at 13th,” *Liberal Bulletin*, August 29, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 9*.

Supervisory Board (NSB). As noted in chapter five, the small, establishment-dominated National Interim Committee had in the late 1950s come to largely supplant the oversight role of the NEC. At the 1962 Congress the plenary had enacted a bylaw change mandating that all five members of the NIC be elected by the NEC from within its own membership, but this reform was only in place for a year.⁴⁴ In 1963 IAVP Don Smith won approval for a plan that abolished both the NEC and the NIC, replacing them with a ten-member NSB.⁴⁵ The NSB would be composed of two or three representatives from each of four super-regions, known as “areas,” chosen by direct election by the relevant delegations during the Congress.⁴⁶

The Association’s regional structure had always been weak, and this change weakened it further, stripping the regional chairs of most of their national responsibilities and depriving the regions of their power to elect the NEC. In the past, there had been twenty or more distinct local constituencies within NSA, each with the capacity to choose its representatives to the national body. As noted in earlier chapters, students who were politically or culturally marginal on a national level were able to gain a seat at the table because of the demographic idiosyncrasies of their regions, or simply through grass-roots organizing on the local level. That route to influence was closed off

⁴⁴ NEC, Proposed Constitutional Amendments [1962] , NSA Papers, Box 9. Ten NEC members ran for the NIC that year, and the five who were elected reflected NSA’s diversity — they ranged from former Campus International Administrator Mary Beth Schaub to SDS insider Bob Ross. [NSA Codification, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 8.]

⁴⁵ The NSB was first proposed as part of a much more ambitious overhaul of the Association’s regional structure, one which would have expanded the number of PVPs to four and strengthened regional structures. [Don Smith, “Reform of the Structure and Function of the National Executive Committee” [1962-63] , NSA Papers, Box 14.]

⁴⁶ The chairs of NSA’s regions would serve as a Congress Steering Committee — assisting with Congress preparations during the year, and helping to direct the Congress as it occurred, and the CSC soon arrogated to itself some of the prerogatives of the old NEC.

by the creation of the NSB. The change — presented by the IAVP one year after a grass-roots-initiated reform of the NIC — enhanced the establishment’s power considerably.⁴⁷

The number of campuses participating in the Congress dropped by 25% from 1962 to 1963, reducing it to the lowest total since 1955. Most activists stayed away, and the establishment had a free hand. Staff manipulation of the proceedings was blatant, and violations of democratic procedure routine — at one point a narrow plenary majority, lacking the two-thirds margin that they needed to postpone a scheduled recess, voted to conduct the Congress, being held in Indiana, on Rocky Mountain Time for the rest of the evening so that debate could continue.⁴⁸ The *Liberal Bulletin* complained frequently of the Association’s “middle-of-the-roadism” that year, most bitterly when the plenary passed a Shaul-supported resolution that called for a “balance” between civil liberties and national security.⁴⁹ SNCC staffers had drafted a plan for NSA to sponsor six SNCC field secretaries in the coming year — three teams of two traveling staffers assigned to work exclusively on southern college campuses — but the proposal was killed in committee.⁵⁰

NSA addressed the conflict in Vietnam for the first time in 1963, passing a resolution that had the establishment’s imprimatur. The resolution was harshly critical of the Diem government of South Vietnam —NSA strategy on such questions, as noted in

⁴⁷ See Greg Gallo to the NSB, March 17, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 16, for a discussion of the deleterious effects of this reform on NSA’s regional programming and coordination.

⁴⁸ Joel Dubow, “Notes on the Past, Present, and Future NSA,” *Polytechnic Reporter* [Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn], October 17, 1963. Clipping in NSA Papers, Box 159*.

⁴⁹ Stephen C. Schodde, “College Students Speak Out,” *School and Society* November 16, 1963; Paul Booth, “NSA Congress Goes ‘Moderate’: A Trend?” *SDS Bulletin*, October 1963, NSA Papers, Box 159*. The “balance” resolution was adopted but later reversed.

⁵⁰ Stephen C. Schodde, “College Students Speak Out,” *School and Society* November 16, 1963; “SNCC Needs,” *Liberal Bulletin* [August 21 1963?], NSA Papers, Box 9. CADA had voted several months earlier to underwrite the salary of SNCC field worker Charles Sherrod, raising the money through a national campus fundraising drive. [Ann Cook, “CADA-SNCC Field Worker to Be Supported,” *Campus ADA Bulletin*, April-May 1963.]

chapter five, was to cultivate students of the developing world by staking out a critical position in relationship to the United States government. The distance between NSA and the government was carefully calibrated, though — the establishment joined with the Congress’s conservatives to turn back a Liberal Caucus amendment calling for a withdrawal of US aid to Diem, even as they allied with the Liberal Caucus to win passage of a separate resolution calling for the termination of US military aid to the Shah’s government in Iran.⁵¹

At the end of the Congress, activists Paul Booth and Stokely Carmichael nominated Bruce Rappaport, a leader in the Liberal Caucus, for president.⁵² But Rappaport lost decisively to Greg Gallo, the establishment’s choice.⁵³ As president, Gallo would declare that NSA’s political stands had been guided more “by emotion than reason,” and that the Association should properly respond to, rather than attempt to lead, its member campuses.⁵⁴

1963: The CIA Relationship Metastasizes

The CIA’s original interest in NSA was overwhelmingly in the Association’s international activities and relationships. When the Association approached CIA-front

⁵¹ Paul Booth, “NSA Congress Goes ‘Moderate’: A Trend?” *SDS Bulletin*, October 1963 , NSA Papers, Box 159*; NSA 1963-64 *Codification of Policy*, NSA Papers, Box 9.

⁵² Carmichael, who would become the chair of SNCC in 1966, was at that time active in Howard University’s student government. Booth, who would become SDS’s national secretary in 1965, was then an undergraduate at Swarthmore.

⁵³ Paul Booth, “NSA Congress Goes ‘Moderate’: A Trend?” *SDS Bulletin*, October 1963 , NSA Papers, Box 159*.

⁵⁴ Dean Gottehrer, “Out of the Depths,” *Congress News*, August 18, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10.

foundations for help with domestic programming prior to 1963, it was rebuffed.⁵⁵

Between 1951 and 1963 the Agency cultivated the Association as an anti-communist force in international affairs, showcased it to burnish the image of American students abroad, leveraged its infrastructure in support of projects it considered worthy, used it as a conduit for the dissemination of funds to students and organizations it could not support openly, and deployed its staff to gather information about foreign student leaders and their activities, but it did not fund specific domestic projects of the Association.⁵⁶

The extent of CIA funding of NSA's domestic projects in the early 1960s can be seen in the Association's domestic operating budget for 1961-62.⁵⁷ That year, the Association's domestic general fund revenue, which amounted to a total of \$113,567.02, was derived from four broad sources.⁵⁸ Dues, Congress fees, and publication sales — revenue, generally speaking, from the provision of membership and other services to American students — accounted for about 60% of the total. Profit from NSA's travel company provided another 18%. In all, one can trace perhaps ten percent of the total national office general fund revenue back to the CIA.⁵⁹

Before the 1959 physical merger of NSA's domestic and international operations, the two wings operated largely independently of each other, with only the Association's

⁵⁵ NSA appears to have asked its CIA backers for an administrative grant in 1961-62, requesting more than \$50,000 a year in funding for various purposes, and in late 1962 Dennis Shaul approached one CIA-backed foundation asking for help in closing what he described as a \$18,500 deficit, but there is no record of a favorable CIA response to either of these overtures. [NSA Prospectus for Administrative Costs, [1961-62], NSA Papers, Box 64; Shaul to Paul Hellmuth, December 15, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 66.]

⁵⁶ By "domestic programs" I refer here to NSA projects that were carried out within the US and concerned with domestic issues. The CIA did at times fund internationally-minded NSA projects that were developed with domestic audiences in mind.

⁵⁷ This budget incorporated NSA's domestic operations, excluding grant-funded projects.

⁵⁸ "Statement of Income, Expenses and Equity for the Years Ended September 30, 1963 and 1962," NSA Papers, Box 64.

⁵⁹ Because the International Commission consumed some of the resources of the national office, and because it was perennially more flush than NSA's domestic wing, a policy of Intra-Association Transfer was established under which the Commission would make an annual contribution to the operating funds of the national office. In 1961-62 the IAT amounted to about 7% of NSA's domestic general fund revenue.

president as a bridge. The barrier between the two began to erode after that, and after the 1963 Congress the distinction disappeared — in 1963-64, and in the two years that followed, Agency money would be used on a much larger scale to fund the basic domestic operations of the Association.

At the 1962 Congress outgoing president Ed Garvey had declared NSA to be “in relatively good shape” financially, predicting a deficit for the year of between one and two thousand dollars after the Congress receipts were all in.⁶⁰ But three months later, in a memo to the NEC, new president Dennis Shaul painted a far darker picture.

The Southern Student Freedom Fund, NSA’s SNCC-fundraising project, had finished the year \$4,100 in the red, Shaul told the NEC. The national office had overspent by more than \$11,000, going over budget on salaries, travel, telephone, postage, and publications. A shortfall in Congress revenue brought the total deficit to more than \$20,000. ETI profits would likely be smaller than anticipated, creating another hole of perhaps five thousand dollars in the budget before the end of the year. Shaul reminded the NEC that a smaller deficit in 1960-61 had done significant damage to NSA, and announced that he would be reducing staff. He would investigate the possibility of fundraising, he said, but he was not optimistic about its prospects.⁶¹

ETI, the travel office, was by that time providing NSA with substantial revenue, and several proposals for comparable projects — business ventures from which NSA could draw revenue without imposing new levies on its member student governments — had recently been floated.⁶² Some, such as a charter plane service, had been investigated and deemed unworkable. Others, like a collaborative venture with *Current* magazine,

⁶⁰ Minutes of the 1962 pre-Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁶¹ Dennis Shaul to the NEC, November 2, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 14. In an October 1963 letter Shaul’s successor Greg Gallo said that neither Garvey nor Shaul had succeeded in balancing NSA’s budget, with the Garvey administration losing more money than Shaul’s. [Gallo to Sidney Hertzberg, October 7, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 14.]

⁶² Minutes of the December 1961 meeting of the NAB, NSA Papers, Box 14. Minutes of the 1962 pre-Congress and Congress meetings of the NEC, NSA Papers, Box 14.

were implemented but produced little revenue. Still others, notably a plan to sell NSA-branded insurance to individual students, seemed to languish indefinitely.⁶³

It was in this context that Shaul opened negotiations in the spring of 1963 with the International Student Cooperative Union (ISCU), an organization that ran student bookstores on several Midwestern campuses. Few records of the negotiations between NSA and the ISCU exist, as Shaul apparently proceeded without the ongoing assistance of legal or financial counsel or close consultation with the NEC.⁶⁴ But in a contract that was signed on August 16, just three days before the opening of the Association's Congress, it was agreed that NSA would take ownership of the ISCU, leaving day-to-day control of operations with its current management on an interim basis. By then NSA had provided \$15,000 in operating funds to the ISCU and another \$20,000 in collateral for the co-op's fall textbook purchases.⁶⁵

It became clear almost immediately after the Congress that the ISCU's owners had failed to provide Shaul with a full accounting of their debts. NSA deposited additional cash in co-op accounts in September and October, hoping that strong book sales would improve ISCU's balance sheets, but each week brought new revelations of financial trouble and mismanagement. The Association belatedly sought advice from alumni, including former officers with legal expertise, but none could suggest a way to right the situation. On November 1, just eleven weeks after taking control of the ISCU, NSA divested itself of the co-op, selling it back to its prior manager for a small sum of

⁶³ The insurance project was put in place in the spring of 1964. [Minutes of the December 8, 1961 meeting of the NAB, NSA Papers, Box 14; "USNSA Activities Report 1963-64" in Harvard report on the 1964 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 10.]

⁶⁴ In July 1963 Shaul said that he had sent previously the NEC a single letter informing them of the ISCU plan, and had received only one reply. [Shaul to Marc Roberts, July 16, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 14.]

⁶⁵ Gallo to Bebchick [1964], NSA Papers, Box 66. [Shaul to Marc Roberts, July 16, 1963, NSA Papers, Box 14.]

money and a share in any future revenue. The extent its losses were still not clear — subsequent estimates ranged as high as \$70,000.⁶⁶

The co-op debacle was a significant financial crisis for NSA, and it represented a potential leadership crisis as well. Because Shaul had negotiated the deal outside of proper channels, he — and by extension the NSA establishment — would face massive public humiliation and a possible membership revolt if the crisis were not somehow resolved before the 1964 Congress. NSA had only one patron who could prevent this impending disaster — the CIA.

The Agency had never before provided large-scale unrestricted grants to the Association's national office, but now they did just that — in the summer of 1964 individuals and foundations acting as fronts for the CIA donated \$50,000 to NSA's general fund, funding of a kind and scale that the Association's domestic wing had never before received. These donations shielded NSA's officers and staff from any serious membership investigation of the co-op venture — the crisis was hardly mentioned in the Congress, and no effort was made to hold Shaul or anyone else accountable for their misjudgments.⁶⁷

After the co-op crisis, the compunctions the CIA had previously held about funding NSA's domestic operations evaporated. The reasons for this change of heart are unknown, but its effects are clear. In 1964-65 and 1965-66 the Agency again provided NSA with a series of large grants earmarked for the maintenance and expansion of NSA's domestic operations. The Intra-Association Transfer tripled from \$6,900 in 1963-64 to \$20,650 in 1964-65. The Association received \$25,000 in building and moving expenses

⁶⁶ NSA president Greg Gallo, in an early 1964 letter to an NSA alumnus, said losses to date amounted to approximately \$25,000. [Gallo to Bebchick [1964], NSA Papers, Box 66.] The \$70,000 figure appeared in the 1967 *Ramparts* article that disclosed NSA's relationship with the CIA. [Stern, "A Short Account of International Student Politics."]

⁶⁷ Gallo told the 1964 Congress that as a result of "an intensive fund raising drive," the Association's financial position at the end of his term was a strong one. [*Congress News*, August 18, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10.]

grants that year, \$20,000 of it from a known CIA conduit. The following year they received more than \$20,000 in such grants, including \$5,200 from the CIA-front FYSA. In all, CIA cash contributions to domestic operations, which had amounted to as little as seven percent of NSA revenue in 1961-62, made up a third or more of the total in the three years that followed. These figures, moreover, do not include the substantial subsidy that the Association received from the Agency in the form of a long-term rent free lease on new national offices, as discussed later in this chapter.

Transition in NSA's Southern Project

NSA's Southern Project had been one of its most significant contributions to the student activism of the late 1950s and early 1960s, but as the decade progressed the Project struggled to adapt to changing conditions in the civil rights movement and on the Southern campus. Connie Curry, who had been with the Southern Project since 1959, left NSA in the spring of 1964.⁶⁸ Her successor, Hayes Mizell, took over in time for the 1964 seminar, but the transition was apparently a rocky one.⁶⁹ Will Campbell had stepped down as the seminar's consultant when Curry left, as had her assistant, so there was no staff continuity to smooth the process.⁷⁰

The curriculum of the seminar got a complete overhaul when Mizell came on board. Sessions on the meaning of human relations and on the black Southern

⁶⁸ Curry's departure from NSA was slowed by the Association's difficulty in finding an acceptable replacement. [Greg Gallo to NSB, March 17, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

⁶⁹ Mizell was a former employee of the US Information Agency in Washington DC. [Correspondence between Constance Curry and Judy Deloris Carter. Southern Project Papers, Box 11.]

⁷⁰ Several members of the project's advisory committee, including Ella Baker, a friend and mentor to Curry, resigned at the same time. List of members of Student Advisory Committee. 1964. Southern Project Papers, Box 1; Curry, memorandum to Mizell. 1964. Southern Project Papers, Box 3.

experience were dropped. The seminar was extended by two days, and more than a dozen sessions were presented which had not been previously offered. The new curriculum had a far broader sweep — sessions on topics ranging from Southern literature and drama to rural poverty were added.⁷¹ Much of the new material was offered from a scholarly rather than activist perspective, and a few participants complained about that. A few others criticized the pace of the seminar or expressed consternation with the project's all-white staff, but in general the reactions to the seminar were positive.

Those responses must, however, have given Mizell pause. Most stressed the social aspects of the seminar, and several revealed a level of political development far behind what one might have expected from campus activists at the high-water mark of the civil rights movement.⁷² Discussions of intermarriage brought some of the whites up short — one woman noted in her evaluation that “personal contact (dating) Negroes still gives me a ‘funny’ feeling,” asking whether such qualms were “really called prejudice?” Another wrote that “I was really shocked to hear these kids say they would marry for love regardless of race. To be perfectly honest, I didn't believe them.”⁷³

The seminar closed with a speech by Julian Bond entitled “Whither Direct Action,” followed by a presentation on black militancy.⁷⁴ This juxtaposition of black resource people coming to terms with the decline of the nonviolent movement speaking

⁷¹ “Report on the 7th Southern Student Human Relations Seminar, University of Minnesota July 27-August 15, 1964.” Southern Project Papers, Box 16. The 1963 seminar is by far the Project's most sparsely documented.

⁷² For the first time since the seminars began, none of the applicants were interviewed prior to selection, apparently with detrimental results — in his official report on the seminar to the Field Foundation, Mizell complained about the quality of the participants, and called such interviews “imperative” for the future. [“Report on the 7th Southern Student Human Relations Seminar, University of Minnesota July 27-August 15, 1964.” Southern Project Papers, Box 16.]

⁷³ 1964 seminar participants' evaluations. Southern Project Papers, Box 16.

⁷⁴ “Report on the 7th Southern Student Human Relations Seminar, University of Minnesota July 27-August 15, 1964.” Southern Project Papers, Box 16.

to white students who weren't sure whether it was prejudiced to oppose interracial dating suggests something of the bind which the Southern Project found itself in 1964. The struggle had come far enough that many activists were questioning the civil rights paradigm, while it had left enough others behind that a broad-based discussion, even among students of good will, would have to start at square one. And patience with such hand-holding was coming to an end.

The 1965 seminar was the largest ever, the longest ever, and the first to not be held in the same city as the NSA Congress.⁷⁵ Joseph Hendricks, the seminar's consultant, had argued after the 1964 seminar that "the time has come to anchor the Seminar in [the] more inclusive problems of the South, rather than in racial problems *per se*."⁷⁶ His approach held sway in 1965, as every session on racial issues excepting one on race and religion was abandoned. In their place were presented multi-day discussions of the South's history, literature, music, and economy, and issue-based talks on civil liberties, poverty, and the student left.⁷⁷ The seminar closed, as the previous year's had, with a wistful-sounding Julian Bond speech, this one asking "Where is the Movement Going?"⁷⁸

For all the attempts to de-emphasize race in the seminar's curriculum, the 1965 proceedings made the extent of the participants' racial divide obvious — after the seminar, one of the participants wrote ruefully that the most instructive part of his experience "was the realization that has come to me for the first time of the depth of the

⁷⁵Report on the 8th Southern Seminar, Southern Project Papers. The seminar was the first at which all the staff, consultants, and speakers were men. (Eleanor Roosevelt had been the sole female presenter in 1958.)

⁷⁶ Report on the 7th Southern Seminar, Southern Project Papers.

⁷⁷ By 1965 there was a clear tension between the project's vision of the seminars and the foundation's — even as Hendricks was arguing for a move from an activist and racial focus to an academic and cultural one, he was presenting the 1965 seminar to Field as "an educational venture which addresses itself largely to the movement for human rights in the South." [Report on the 8th Southern Seminar, Southern Project Papers.]

⁷⁸ Report on the 8th Southern Seminar, Southern Project Papers.

estrangement between black and white in America.”⁷⁹ A raft of seminar evaluations noted the lack of communication between whites and blacks there, and a transcript of the seminar’s final session depicts a gathering in disarray.⁸⁰

That session began as a general critique of the seminar but descended quickly into recriminations about whether group’s African American women had self-segregated – and whether it was a problem if they had. Also debated was whether other participants had stayed out too late partying, whether some students had been treated as “evil” because of their views, and whether it was even appropriate to criticize participants’ behavior. The conversation ground to a halt shortly after someone declared that nothing would ever get done “if we have to spend all our time explaining basic principles,” at which point Hendricks segued into a prepared speech and the group was dismissed.⁸¹

No one knew it at the time, but that was the end of the last Southern Student Human Relations Seminar. Mizell left the directorship sometime around the end of the year, and the project itself went into dormancy.⁸² The project was eventually revived, and it persisted in one form or another until 1968, but its original rationale no longer made any sense – as NSA president Philip Sherburne wrote to the Executive Director of the Field Foundation in late 1965, “the day of interracial gatherings over tea and crumpets (or an RC and a Moon Pie)” was over.⁸³

⁷⁹ Ray McClain, “8th SSHRS Evaluation.” Southern Project Papers, Box 18.

⁸⁰ This transcript is the only written record of any seminar discussion that has been preserved.

⁸¹ “Evaluation Session,” Southern Project Papers, Box 18.

⁸² As late as December 1965, Mizell’s assistant was informing student government leaders of the project’s plans for the new year. Nothing in the archives indicates when or why Mizell quit, although it is possible that the project just ran out of money. [Richard Stevens, letter to Thomas Webster, December 14, 1965. Southern Project Papers, Box 1.]

⁸³ Philip Sherburne, letter to Leslie Dunbar, December 1, 1965. Southern Project Papers, Box 2. If that day was not over, he continued, “we should at least speed it on its way.”

The 1964 Congress and the Dawn of a New Era

If there was one crucial turning point in American student activism in the second half of the twentieth century, it was the opening of SNCC's Freedom Summer project in June of 1964. That summer set in motion events that would reverberate across the campus and the nation for the rest of the decade. But although the 1960 and 1961 Congresses had partaken of the tumult of their historical moment, the 1964 Congress at the University of Minnesota was a curiously placid affair. Its conservative contingent was more vocal than the activists. The delegates declared their support for various causes but showed little interest in initiating action on any front. And the central debate of the Congress centered around the hoary question of the "students as students" clause in NSA's constitution.

The 1964 delegates did rouse themselves to address one major domestic policy issue — votes for 18-year-olds. In retrospect, the issue of voting age reform seems like an obvious one for NSA to have taken on — the 21-year voting age disenfranchised much of the Association's membership, after all, and indeed the denial of the vote stood as an extension of *in loco parentis* beyond the walls of the university.⁸⁴ But the question of the youth vote had long been a divisive one within the Association — NSA had gone on record in 1953 *against* reducing the age, citing "the superficial acquaintance with government and politics" that 18-year-olds possessed.⁸⁵ That resolution was repealed in 1957, but noting the deep divisions within the Association, that year's Congress chose not

⁸⁴ The United States Student Assembly had endorsed votes for 18-year-olds at its first convention in 1943. [Gerry Kramer, *Students for Democratic Action: A History*, 1955, ADA Papers, Series 8 Number 68, 3.]

⁸⁵ Minutes of the 1953 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 3*. This resolution prevailed over a pro-youth-vote alternative by a vote of 146-114-10.

to pass a new statement, leaving NSA without a position on the issue.⁸⁶ In 1961 the Liberal Study Group distributed a discussion paper urging NSA to support voting age reform, and a resolution to that effect was introduced at the following year's Congress. But it was not until 1964 that NSA finally endorsed voting age reduction.⁸⁷

By pressing forward with the struggle for the right to vote, NSA's membership asserted their right to full citizenship — not as apprentices or youths practicing for the future, but as adults with the same prerogatives as their elders.⁸⁸ In the world of politics, as in the world of the campus, NSA's membership was abandoning pleas for a consultative voice and demanding an equal seat at the policymaking table.

SDS was less of a force at the 1964 Congress than it had been at any time since its founding. The group's leadership had grown progressively more frustrated with NSA each year since 1961, and as SDS's own reach had extended, it came to see NSA as less and less relevant. Ill feelings were exacerbated on both sides by anxiety over the two organizations' relative status. NSA, pre-eminence among the nation's students, found its status threatened by SDS.⁸⁹ The leaders of the newer organization, in turn, felt that their achievements entitled them to greater respect than NSA was willing to extend.

Perhaps the most important factor in the growing estrangement between SDS and NSA was articulated by Paul Potter that summer. In the late 1950s and early 1960s there had been a wave of organizing within activist student government parties, but by 1964 these parties seemed to many to have reached the end of their useful lives. In some

⁸⁶ *The American Student: Profile and Promise* [1957, Don Hoffman files]; 1957 National Student Congress minutes, plenary 10, page 13 [NSA Papers, Box 5].

⁸⁷ Paul De Brul, *The Student and the Voting Age* [nd], NSA Papers, Box 9; *Liberal Bulletin*, August 27, 1962. Wisconsin Historical Society Library; NSA Codification, 1964-65, page 59-60, NSA Papers, Box 10.

⁸⁸ NSA Codification, 1965-66, NSA Papers, Box 11.

⁸⁹ For a particularly ungenerous NSA assessment of other forces in campus activism, see the February 14, 1965 letter from Philip Werdell, NSA Director of Programming, to Lewis Schmidt of *Look* magazine. [NSA Papers, Box 55*.]

cases they had failed to win control of student government. In others they had, in winning, found their ability to effect change on campus constrained — by the weakness of student government as it existed, by new administration restrictions implemented in response to their victory, or by the recalcitrance or lack of interest of their fellow students. Many found that the struggle to gain and maintain power was simply more trouble than it was worth.⁹⁰

As the nation's campuses became more politicized fewer and fewer of the nation's young activists gravitated toward student government organizing, and many progressive campus political parties changed their emphasis. At colleges like Oberlin and Michigan, Paul Potter noted in a private letter,

parties formed by SDS people for the explicit purpose of controlling the student government have crumbled or dramatically reoriented themselves. The impetus for that change came not from older SDS people, who have both nostalgic and political concerns with NSA, but from younger, rank and file participants in these groups who no longer find student government or NSA an effective medium.⁹¹

NSA was, Potter knew, at its core a student government organization. "Student government," he had written in 1962, "provides the representative base from which the Association's policy must develop."⁹² If activists were losing interest in student government, and NSA was not developing programs to make student governments more

⁹⁰ *Campus Political Parties: Selected Readings*, [1963], NSA Papers, Box 9.

⁹¹ Paul Potter to Frank Millspaugh, July 10, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 49*.

⁹² Paul Potter, NAVP report to the 1962 Congress. [NSA Papers, Box 6*.] In that report, Potter had also said that "the Association's role as ... the national union of students of this country commits us to primary response, service and development of" student government. For more on the project of making student governments more activist, see Dennis Yeager's comments in the minutes of the 1962 pre-NSC NEC meeting [NSA Papers, Box 14] and Dan Johnston's assessment of student governments as inherently "structured so as to be action groups." [Report to the 1961 Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 8.]

activist, it was inevitable that the Association would come to be seen as irrelevant to a new generation of student leaders.⁹³

Events at the 1964 Congress reflected the weakness of the left, the energy of the right, and the growing conservatism of the NSA establishment — the most consuming debates of the gathering centered around the Columbia Resolution, yet another effort to limit the scope of NSA action under the “students as students” clause of its constitution.⁹⁴ In this proposal, put forward by the Columbia University delegation with YAF’s informal backing, NSA would only take positions in the domestic arena on issues that had “a direct causal bearing on students in their educational milieu, that is, by virtue of their being enrolled in colleges and universities.”⁹⁵ The resolution eventually failed, but only after a plenary debate that lasted nearly ten hours.⁹⁶

The most visible opponent of the Columbia Resolution on the plenary floor was activist Ed Schwartz of Oberlin.⁹⁷ Schwartz, a gadfly then attending his second Congress,

⁹³ YAF, on the other hand, was in 1964 still keenly interested in NSA — its vice chair, Tom Huston, claimed to have logged 50,000 miles in the previous year on campus visits speaking about the Association. [“Stop NSA” handout [1964], SDS Papers.]

⁹⁴ The Columbia resolution was in part a response to the establishment that spring of the Associated Student Governments of the United States of America (ASGUSA), an avowedly non-political competitor to NSA. [Tom DeVries, “Controversy: The Columbia Resolution,” *Congress News*, August 18, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10.] In the mid-1960s, ASGUSA had a membership that was substantial, but much smaller than NSA’s — its 1965 annual conference drew representatives from 63 campuses. [Austin C. Wehrwein, “Student Meeting Opens at Purdue,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1965.]

⁹⁵ Draft resolution, “Towards a More Effective and Responsive USNSA,” [1965], NSA Papers, Box 10. NSA’s international activities were explicitly exempted from restriction under the Columbia resolution. According to a *Congress News* article, this was because “it is recognized that the ‘student as student’ view of the Association is difficult to apply to many foreign situations.” [“Spirit Vs. Necessity,” *Congress Conservative*, August 26, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10. Tom DeVries, “The Columbia Resolution,” *Congress News*, August 18, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10.]

⁹⁶ “Forecast: Vietnam to Dominate Congress” *Congress News*, August 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

⁹⁷ “Spirit Vs. Necessity,” *Congress Conservative*, August 26, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10.

summed up his take on the Association's new direction in a ten-verse satirical "Anthem for the New NSA," published in the *Congress News*, that began as follows...

From Columbia's ivy-covered walls,
To our regions in the West,
We will tell our country when it calls,
That our quietude is best.

For a student leads a sheltered life,
In his own provincial land,
And he faces all the world's strife,
With his head stuck in the sand.

...and concluded with this:

Yes there is no reason for a fuss,
They should leave us all alone,
Let no outside organ silence us,
We can do it on our own.⁹⁸

At the end of the Congress Schwartz declared himself as a candidate for president in opposition to establishment candidate Stephen Robbins. After delivering his formal campaign speech, however, he withdrew from the race, and Robbins was elected without opposition.⁹⁹ (Paul Booth of SDS, one of the few SDSers still willing to show up at a Congress, ran and withdrew in the IAVP race that year, and Phil Sherburne, who would as president begin the process of disengagement from the CIA, was elected NAVP.)

Schwartz was a peripheral figure at the 1964 Congress, and his subsequent arc in NSA demonstrates the rapidity of the change that was about to engulf the American campus and the Association itself. He returned to Oberlin in the fall of 1964, where he was a leader in that year's campus protests. At the 1965 Congress he served as the chair

⁹⁸ Ed Schwartz, *Congress News*, August 21, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 2. The anthem was, Schwartz noted, "to be sung to the tune of 'The Halls of Montezuma.'"

⁹⁹ *USNSA Reporter*, September 1964, NSA Papers, Box 152.

of the Liberal Caucus.¹⁰⁰ In 1966 he would be elected NAVP of the Association, and in 1967 he would be chosen by the delegates as NSA's first post-CIA president.

The Berkeley Free Speech Movement

On September 14, 1964 the dean of students of the University of California at Berkeley, feeling political pressure from local conservatives, announced new restrictions on student activity on university property. Tabling by student groups would now be strictly regulated, and leafleting, speech-making, and the sale of publications relating to off-campus organizations would be banned.¹⁰¹ A broad-based student coalition called the United Front (UF) quickly rose up against the ban. They held their first protest on September 21, and the next day the campus student government, the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC) voted 11-5 to ask the Regents of the university to overturn the policy.¹⁰²

When the administration refused to lift the ban, members of the UF began tabling in defiance of the policy.¹⁰³ Their protest rapidly gained momentum — when five students (representing SNCC, the Young Socialist Alliance, and the campus political party SLATE) were cited for violating the tabling policy, hundreds joined them in a march to the dean's office. Three students who helped to organize the protest were added to the original list of five violators, and before the day's end it was announced that the

¹⁰⁰ Howard Moffett, "Radical-Moderate Split," *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁰¹ Viorst, *Fire in the Streets*, 285.

¹⁰² Viorst, *Fire in the Streets*, 287, Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 126.

¹⁰³ Goines, *Free Speech Movement* 132-3.

eight had been suspended from the university.¹⁰⁴ The march had by then turned into a sit-in, and the UF had been given a new name — the Free Speech Movement (FSM).

More tables were set up in the heart of the campus the next day, and the administration escalated their response. They approached one of the tablers, a recent Berkeley graduate, and when he refused to identify himself they informed him that he was under arrest.¹⁰⁵ As the campus police dragged him to their car, the students in the plaza — thousands strong by now — sat down. They blocked the car for more than 30 hours, until Mario Savio, a protest leader and one of the eight suspended students, announced that a team of negotiators had won a number of concessions from the university. Berkeley president Clark Kerr had agreed to submit the suspensions to a faculty committee for review, and to convene a separate committee of faculty, students, and administrators to assess the regulations that had sparked the protests. Furthermore, the university would not press charges against the man who had been arrested.¹⁰⁶

The protestors saw the announcement as a qualified victory, and the next two months were devoted to further negotiations, demonstrations, and strategy sessions. Those months brought no resolution to the underlying disputes, however, and on December 2, a thousand protesters occupied Sproul Hall, an administration building, as FSM leader Mario Savio declared that “There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part; you can't even tacitly take part, and you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels, upon the levers, upon all the apparatus and you've got to make it stop.” At 3:45 the following morning, hundreds of police entered the building on the orders of the

¹⁰⁴ Freeman, *At Berkeley in the '60s*, 150.

¹⁰⁵ Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 161-63. The arrestee, Jack Weinberg, suspected that he was singled out because he was “the one nonstudent ringleader” of the FSM.

¹⁰⁶ Viorst, *Fire in the Streets*, 291-2.

California governor, Edmund Brown. It took them twelve hours to clear the building, and by the time they were done they had arrested more than seven hundred people.

The arrests electrified the campus, and polarized public opinion. Students announced a strike, and many professors cancelled classes. The faculty senate passed a resolution in support of the FSM, and SLATE won a sweeping victory in student government elections. The trustees fired the Berkeley chancellor, and appointed a replacement who quickly announced a series of reforms to university policy that gave a near-total victory to the protestors. Across the nation, students, faculty, and administrators took notice.

NSA's national office was caught off-guard by the Berkeley crisis, and had no direct, ongoing link to the FSM.¹⁰⁷ In previous years, the West Coast PVP would have been able to serve as a liaison to the protestors, but in the fall of 1964 there was no West Coast traveling officer, and the position of PVP was itself on the verge of being dissolved.¹⁰⁸ Only one traveling officer had been elected in 1964, a North Carolinian

¹⁰⁷ It appears that the Association's Berkeley office, established a few years earlier, closed in the summer of 1964. NSA's 1963-64 letterhead made reference to the office, as did a July 1964 NSA fact sheet, but it did not appear on the Association's 1964-65 stationery. ["Updated Fact Sheet," July 15, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10.]

¹⁰⁸ The position of PVP, renamed student government vice president in 1963, was generally held in low regard by the other national officers, particularly those closest to the NSA establishment. Attempts to add additional PVPs in 1961-62 and 1962-63 failed — the national office refused to fund an expansion, and external funding could not be found. [Minutes of the December 1961 meeting of the NAB, NSA Papers, Box 14; Minutes of 1962 pre-Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14; Minutes of the 1962 Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14; Student Assembly of the University of Texas resolution [Spring 1962], NSA Papers, Box 161; Paul Potter, "Officer Describes Year's Activity," *National Student News*, May 1962, NSA Papers, Box 7; President's report, minutes of the 1962 Congress NEC meeting, NSA Papers, Box 14.] In 1964 a majority of national officers — over the objections of the incumbent SGVPs — urged the elimination of the office. They convinced the NSB, but the CSC rejected the proposal by a vote of 21-2-5. [Dean M. Gotteherer, "SGVP: To Be or Not to Be," *Congress News*, August 22, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 2; "CSC Downs NSB Move," *Congress News*, August 19, 1964, NSA Papers, Box 2.]

whose wife was six months pregnant when he took office. He spent the year on the campuses nearest his home, and his position was eliminated at the 1965 Congress.¹⁰⁹

Understaffed as it may have been in the field, however, NSA did have a mandate to act in support of the Berkeley students. The 1964 Congress endorsed a statement that academic freedom required “the establishment of an open forum in which the members of the academic community exercise the right to hear and examine all ideas.” Several elements of the Berkeley regulations that sparked the protests had been specifically addressed in the resolution, which concluded with a mandate that the NAVP

cooperate with students, student governments, student newspapers and faculty of any educational institution seeking to remove administrative or legislative barriers to the free expression of ideas in an open forum.¹¹⁰

The tactics of the protesters were clearly within the bounds of NSA policy as well, since the Congress had in a 1961 civil rights resolution declared its support for “the right of students to protest injustice through dignified non-violent action” including “mass civil disobedience.” But many in NSA’s national leadership remained ambivalent about Berkeley. Although the cause that had provoked the confrontation was one that NSA had long championed, the tactics of the protestors had gone beyond those seen in previous disputes over campus regulations.¹¹¹ The premise of NSA’s student-rights agenda had for much of its existence been the “maturity” of the student, the idea that students should be

¹⁰⁹ *USNSA Reporter*, October 1964, NSA Papers, Box 152; Sherry Keene, “Uphoff Defends IC; Lawler Describes Innovations,” *Congress News*, August 26, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11; Rita Dershowitz, “The Big Question: Who Is Running?” *Congress News*, August 27, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11; Mike Lawler, SGVP report to the 1965 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11; CSC Votes to Abolish SGVP,” *Congress News*, August 28, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. It is unclear why only one SGVP was elected in 1964.

¹¹⁰ “Open Forum Policy,” NSA 1964-65 *Codification of Policy*, NSA Papers, Box 10.

¹¹¹ For an analysis of the disputes in the national office over Berkeley in 1964-65, see David L. Aiken, “Conflict Ahead on Berkeley Issue,” *Congress News*, August 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. Aiken claims that there was a split in the office over how to respond to the crisis, and that “one or two officers” succeeded in blocking action.

given broader latitude because they could be counted upon to exercise it soberly. Surrounding a police car to prevent an arrest and occupying a building in defiance of governor were not the kind of tactics that NSA's mid-1960s leaders were eager to embrace.

Compounding some officers' unease, the Berkeley student government was for the most part at odds with the protestors — ASUC president Charles Powell, a 1964 Congress attendee, had publicly criticized the FSM's tactics.¹¹² For the Association to step forward would have meant pre-empting, and likely alienating, the student government at one of its largest member campuses.¹¹³

Given the totality of the circumstances, to embrace the Berkeley protesters would have been a bold act, and this NSA was not bold. So the Association's statement on the crisis, issued in November, noted NSA's opposition to the policies that had provoked the protest, declared its support for "the students at Berkeley who responsibly seek recognition of all of their freedoms to advocate, persuade, solicit, recruit, and plan activities for student political and social organizations on campus," and expressed "deep regret and grave concern" for the lack of due process afforded the eight suspended students. But it did not explicitly endorse the protests, much less offer assistance to the FSM itself, and it closed with the following carefully chosen words:

It is the policy of USNSA, and hopefully of Berkeley, that student grievances be settled peacefully and judiciously by representative students, faculty and administrators. We hope that all parties to this dispute recognize the need for sincere and honest discussion with mutual respect and that in attempting to resolve this dispute, the aim of all parties be to improve the students' educational environment.

¹¹² Goines, *Free Speech Movement*, 130-1, 174.

¹¹³ The Association apparently sent representatives to Berkeley more than once, primarily to urge the ASUC to work more closely with the FSM. [David L. Aiken, "Conflict Ahead on Berkeley Issue," *Congress News*, August 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

Where NSA equivocated, SDS acted. Initially, SDS's national leadership was no more engaged with the early Berkeley protests than NSA. They sent no representative to the campus as the crisis unfolded, and the Berkeley SDS chapter was in its own way as cool to the Free Speech Movement as the ASUC. But eventually SDS did what NSA did not — it adopted the FSM's cause as its own. As NSA had during student-led civil rights organizing in the South four years earlier, SDS kept its members informed about events as they occurred, rallied students around the country to the support of the protestors, and sponsored a campus tour by protest leaders. As a result SDS, which was by then already turning its attention away from the campus, became identified with the students of Berkeley in a way that NSA, which had been working for nearly two decades on precisely the questions raised by the FSM, was not. The FSM put forward NSA's core principles in a struggle that would transform American higher education forever, but the Association's national leadership, suspicious of direct action and insulated from their campus base, failed to grasp the opportunity that was placed in front of them.

The delegates of the 1965 National Student Congress would not be so timid.

The 1965 Congress: Activists Resurgent

In the twelve months between NSA's 1964 and 1965 Congresses, students had risen up at Berkeley, causing activists around the nation to rethink their sense of the limits of the possible. Lyndon Johnson had won a landslide election against YAF hero Barry Goldwater, and then dramatically escalated US involvement in Vietnam, sparking a national campus teach-in and the first major antiwar march of the 1960s. And in the summer of 1965, just weeks before the Congress began, the high-water mark of the legislative reform phase of the civil rights movement was reached as Johnson signed the

Voting Rights Act into law. The nation had been transformed in those twelve months, and soon the Association would be as well.

There was a new sophistication evident among the delegates to the 1965 Congress, and not just at the ideological poles. For years the establishment had contended with an increasingly radical Liberal Caucus on the left and with YAF supporters on the right, but now there was a new proliferation of factional groupings. A “Radical Middle” caucus, comprised of students who identified with none of the traditional power centers, emerged, along with caucuses of students from campus types long outnumbered on the plenary floor — small colleges and commuter schools.¹¹⁴

More than two hundred students attended the first Liberal Caucus meeting that year, and the caucus’s growing delegate strength was matched by a growing impatience with the NSA establishment.¹¹⁵ Ed Schwartz, elected the caucus’s chair in his third year of participation, accused NSA of having “spent another year rendering itself irrelevant to the country, to the student community, and to its own ideals.” Lambasting the national leadership as a “strange blend of the pompous and the lackluster,” he said NSA lacked even the meager “dynamism [of] the NAACP.”¹¹⁶

On the plenary floor, the delegates largely refrained from direct attacks on the Association’s 1964-65 leadership, but their Berkeley resolution, passed by a 274-19 vote

¹¹⁴ One hundred campuses attended the first meeting of the small college caucus. [“Small School Bloc Forms,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹¹⁵ Howard Moffett, “Radical-Moderate Split,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. H. Neil Berkson, “Congress Reacts,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. One meeting of the Radical Middle Caucus that year drew only eight attendees, as the other members concluded that they would exercise more influence by participating in a concurrent Liberal Caucus resolution-writing session. [Doug Matthews, “8 Man Middle,” *Congress News*, August 26, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹¹⁶ Doug Matthews, “Schwartz Hits NSA,” *Congress News*, August 28, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11; Howard Moffett, “Liberals Ask: Elect US Delegates to ISC,” *Congress News*, August 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. Another of those who spoke up against the NSA establishment within the Liberal Caucus that year was Curtis Gans, the 1959-60 NSA NAVP whose moderating role at the 1961 Congress was discussed in chapter five.

of after three hours' debate, was an unmistakable embrace of the protests.¹¹⁷ The Berkeley administration, they announced, had unilaterally imposed manifestly unjust regulations on the students, and had closed off all institutional channels of redress. In such circumstances, civil disobedience was “a legitimate and responsible course of action,” one that was entirely consistent with the Association's principles.¹¹⁸

And the Berkeley resolution was not a mere declaration of sentiment. It directed NSA's officers and staff to initiate a fundraising campaign for the protestors' mounting legal expenses, to be undertaken in coordination with the FSM and opened with a “symbolic” one hundred dollar contribution from NSA itself. Should similar protests arise on other member campuses in the coming year, the national office was instructed to offer the students involved “all possible support” and to keep NSA's members — and any other interested American student body — informed of developments.¹¹⁹

The delegates were more aggressive in pressing for university reform than ever before that year, adopting a raft of resolutions and mandates including NSA's strongest stands to date on student government autonomy and sex education, and its first-ever demand that curfew hours for female students be set by women students themselves.¹²⁰ A new Basic Policy Directive on tuition policy declared for the first time that “the opportunity for higher education must be established as an absolute and inalienable right of every citizen.”¹²¹

¹¹⁷ On the plenary debate, see the North Park College delegation's report on the Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹¹⁸ NSA Codification, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. The resolution conceded that “some students may have acted irresponsibly” in blocking the police car in the plaza, but argued that that “regrettable” incident did not diminish the rectitude of the protests as a whole.

¹¹⁹ NSA Codification, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹²⁰ Women's Student Government, University of Pennsylvania, report on the 1965 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹²¹ One casualty of the changing campus climate was the Association's annual Deans and Advisors Conference (DAC), which had been held in conjunction with the Congress since 1956. [Stan Glass to Robert Strozier, March 30, 1956, NSA Papers, Box 4.] Modeled on

The Association's international wing was also the focus of considerable critical attention at the Congress. After the US intervention in the Dominican Republic in the spring, NSA had sent telegrams to Latin American national unions of students, condemning the Johnson administration's use of force. That statement was kept secret from American students — neither the NSB nor NSA's member campuses were informed that any statement had been made.¹²² The content of the Dominican Republic statement was not notably offensive to the Congress delegates, but the secrecy under which it had been promulgated was. The delegates' anger spurred various demands for reform, most forcefully in connection with NSA's participation in the anti-Soviet ISC.

As discussed in earlier chapters, the early 1950s had seen the creation of two competing international student organizations — the International Union of Students, funded by the Soviet Union, and the International Student Conference, funded by the United States.¹²³ Neither the IUS of the ISC drew its support, direction, or leadership primarily from the students of its member nations — the ISC was more formally democratic than the IUS, but it was no less dependent on clandestine funding from its superpower patron, and it was staffed by a bureaucracy composed of “students” who had long since left the campus.¹²⁴

the SBPC, the DAC was intended to serve as an introduction to NSA for student affairs personnel. [Reginald Green to Gene Preston, May 26, 1958, NSA Papers, Box 6.]

¹²² Howard Moffett, “Liberals Ask: Elect US Delegates to ISC,” *Congress News*, August 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹²³ Until 1964, the term ISC was properly used to refer only to the West's student conferences, since the Coordinating Secretariat (COSEC), which managed international student affairs between ISCs, was nominally distinct. But COSEC functioned as an operational arm of the ISC, and I have used the term “ISC” to refer to both in this text.

¹²⁴ See Norman Uphoff, “The Viability of Student Internationals,” in Altbach and Uphoff, *The Student Internationals*, 142-153, for an analysis of the ISC's dependence on the CIA and attenuated relationship to the campus, written from the perspective of a witting NSA IAVP.

The ISC conferences of the early and middle 1950s had generally been sedate affairs, but they became increasingly contentious as decolonization pushed political questions to the fore.¹²⁵ At 1959's meeting several national unions of students had pressed for closer relations with the IUS, and had threatened to split from the ISC when the idea was rejected. In 1962 twenty-three national unions of students had walked out of the Conference after NSA blocked the seating of a Puerto Rican separatist student group. Stung by the rebellions, the ISC leadership went to great lengths to ensure that the 1964 conference would take place under conditions congenial to the US and its allies — they held it in remote New Zealand, and withheld travel grants from the national unions of students that had walked out in 1962.¹²⁶

NSA's activists had criticized the Association's involvement in the ISC before — at the 1964 Congress, Paul Potter had called both the ISC and the IUS destructive forces in international affairs, and urged NSA to extricate itself from the “student cold war” in which it was engaged.¹²⁷ But in 1965 the critics of what some students now referred to as the “junior State Department” in Philadelphia went further than they ever had before, and found a more receptive audience.¹²⁸

ISC delegations had always been selected by the president and IAVP, and had rarely included even a single student.¹²⁹ At a meeting of the Liberal Caucus in 1965, caucus leader Howie Abrams introduced a proposal mandating that the president and

¹²⁵ The IUS was going through its own troubles at this time, as Soviet dominance of the organization was challenged by the representatives of the Chinese NUS.

¹²⁶ For an overview of this period in the ISC's history, see Altbach and Uphoff, *The Student Internationals* (Metuchen, NJ, Scarecrow Press 1973), 73-77.

¹²⁷ Theodore Hoffman, “The Student Cold War,” *Congress News*, August 19, 1964. [NSA Papers, Box 2.]

¹²⁸ For use of the phrase “Junior State Department,” see the 1965 Congress reports of the UNC and University of Hawaii delegations. [Both in NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹²⁹ The 1962 ISC delegation, for instance, was comprised of NSA's president, IAVP, and immediate past IAVP and a present and former assistant to the IAVP. [Ed Garvey to NIC, April 19, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 16.] When a member of the NIC — a body which had the authority to approve the delegation — asked that a student be included, Garvey told him that it was impossible. [Garvey to Hank Patterson, April 27, 1962, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

IAVP personally represent NSA at the ISC, and that two additional members of each delegation be elected by the Congress.¹³⁰ In a bid to further weaken the power of the international alumni network, it also barred any individual from representing NSA at more than two ISCs.¹³¹ The Liberal Caucus endorsed Abrams' proposal unanimously, and it was taken up by the CSC in a two-hour debate in which Abrams charged that NSA had been "dishonest and manipulative" in its international actions. Though NSA president Stephen Robbins spoke in opposition to the proposal, it passed by a vote of 14-13.¹³²

When the amendment came to the plenary floor, delegates from the right and the left spoke in favor of it. Phil Sherburne, the popular NAVP and the presumptive presidential candidate of the establishment, was the most respected speaker in opposition, arguing that though he shared others' concerns about "intellectual dishonesty and political manipulation at the ISC," the proposal was not the path to true reform.¹³³ It was also argued that it was impractical to elect representatives to a meeting held on an 18-month cycle, particularly since the exact time and location of an ISC might not be known by the time of the Congress that preceded it. After an hourlong debate, the proposal was defeated by a vote of 141-189. Later the delegates passed a constitutional amendment requiring that all "official representatives" of NSA — to the ISC or any other

¹³⁰ "Steering Committee Votes: Elect ISC Delegates," *Congress News*, August 27, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. This is the version of Abrams' proposal that was brought to the CSC — an earlier version appears to have been more radical in its demands.

¹³¹ Repeat participation in the ISC was common. Eight of the 24 individuals who represented NSA at any of the seven ISCs held between 1952 and 1959 participated in three or more, and at the ninth ISC, held in Switzerland in 1960, just two of NSA's seven attendees were first-timers. (One, 1953-54 NSA president James Edwards, was by then attending his *sixth* ISC.) [Michael Schwartz and Alexander Korn, "NSA Almanac," 1964, NSA Papers; Howard Moffett, "Liberals Ask: Elect US Delegates to ISC," *Congress News*, August 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹³² "Steering Committee Votes: Elect ISC Delegates," *Congress News*, August 27, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹³³ In a reprise of a defense that had been frequently deployed in the 1950s, sitting IAVP Norm Uphoff suggested that the insularity of the international staff was due to the NSA membership's lack of interest in international affairs.

body — be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of the NSB.¹³⁴ It was a hard-won victory for NSA's establishment, and it would be one of their last.

Vietnam was a major topic of debate at the Congress, perhaps even more so after Vice President Hubert Humphrey addressed the attendees on the subject.¹³⁵ Opinion in the Liberal Caucus was firmly in favor of a US military withdrawal from the conflict — of 21 candidates for the Congress Steering Committee who appeared at a meeting of the caucus to solicit support, 19 favored withdrawal — but the caucus, conscious that theirs was a minority view, chose not to advance such a position on the plenary floor.¹³⁶

After extended plenary debate, the delegates passed a resolution that criticized the war in language more moderate than even the Liberal Caucus' compromise position. A call for a bombing halt was narrowly rejected, and an attempt to strike a clause that called the American presence in Vietnam “necessary until guarantees” of “self-determination” for the Vietnamese people were in place was defeated by a vote of 119-185.¹³⁷

The most prominent activists at the Congress declined to run for national office at its close. The 1964 protest candidate Ed Schwartz, who had received a standing ovation from the plenary during the Berkeley debate, was pressed to make a real run, but

¹³⁴ Rita Dershowitz, “ISC Election Defeated,” *Congress News*, September 1, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. IAVP Chuck Goldmark presented a list of 14 possible ISC representatives to the NSB in May 1966, none of whom had attended an ISC in the past. [Chuck Goldmark. IAVP report to the spring 1966 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.] The actual delegation sent included one individual who had not been on the original list — Thomas Olson, a member of the Association's delegation to the 1964 ISC. Of the five representatives to the 1966 ISC, three — including Olson — were described by Goldmark as NSA overseas representatives. [Chuck Goldmark, IAVP report to the 1966 Congress, in *NSA Annual Report for 1965-66*, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹³⁵ Humphrey's speech drew pickets from the university's student body, who were not invited to attend, and a mixed reaction from the delegates themselves. [Shelly Keene, “Humphrey Hits Critics,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. Paul Danish, “200 Picket Humphrey,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹³⁶ H. Neil Berkson, “Congress Reacts,” August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11; Doug Matthews, “Vietnam Withdrawal Amendment Defeated,” *Congress News*, August 27, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹³⁷ North Park College report on the 1965 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11.

declined.¹³⁸ Gene Groves, a Liberal Caucus leader and a member of the outgoing NSB, was also courted to run for president, but he declined as well — he had received a Rhodes scholarship.¹³⁹ Howie Abrams allowed himself to be nominated for NAVP, but withdrew after giving a speech in which he declared NSA to be hobbled by administrative procedure and irrelevant to the struggles of the movement.¹⁴⁰

In the end, the establishment's candidates won each of the three national officer elections. Sherburne was elected president without opposition after all of his potential opponents declined or withdrew. Carl Stoiber beat Mal Kovacs, an International Commission staffer who supported ISC delegate election and a stronger stand against the Vietnam War, for IAVP in a 169-97 vote, and NSB chair Jim Johnson defeated Mike Enwall for NAVP by a one-vote margin.¹⁴¹ In Sherburne's victory, however, NSA's witting elite had set in motion their own fall from power.

The Sherburne Era: NSA in Transition

Phil Sherburne took office as president at a time of unusual prosperity and stability for NSA. CIA financing had made it possible to relocate the national office to spacious new quarters in Washington DC, a move that was completed just after the 1965

¹³⁸ Article from a 1965 issue of the *Congress News*, reprinted in the North Park College report on the Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹³⁹ Rita Dershowitz, "The Big Question: Who Is Running?" *Congress News*, August 27, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁴⁰ Pat Devine, "NSA: Bureaucratic and Irrelevant," *Liberal Bulletin*, September 1, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁴¹ North Park College Report on the 1965 National Student Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11. Rita Dershowitz, "The Big Question: Who Is Running?" *Congress News*, August 27, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. Kovacs had served as an assistant to the IAVP in the summer of 1964 and as the administrative assistant to the International Commission during the summer of 1965. [Norman Uphoff to David Baad, July 2, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 66.] Both Enwall and Kovacs were hired to NSA staff positions in the fall. [Staff reports to spring 1966 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.]

Congress.¹⁴² At least as important, as a result of advice proffered during the co-op crisis, the Association had finally incorporated as a not-for-profit.¹⁴³ In the wake of the Berkeley demonstrations, foundations were looking for “responsible” student activist projects to support, and NSA was seeing unprecedented success funding its domestic operations. By Eugene Groves’ later calculations, non-CIA revenue, which had amounted to barely \$100,000 in 1963-64, would grow past \$350,000 the next year and \$380,000 the year after, standing at more than half a million dollars in 1966-67.¹⁴⁴ NSA had since 1963 been growing more financially entangled with the CIA, but it had at the same time been moving toward a new self-sufficiency.

In the months after he assumed the presidency, Sherburne began to disengage the Association from the CIA. “Since I have been with NSA,” he wrote to former PVP Tim Zagat in June 1966, “I have been attempting to change the orientation of our international program, and we have been successful. However, this has meant looking for funds from sources other than FYSA.”¹⁴⁵

Sherburne had been informed of the CIA relationship in the spring of 1965, while he was serving as NAVP. He later said that as he learned more about the relationship, he became ever more uncomfortable with the influence — direct and indirect — that the Agency exerted over the Association. Although he was the establishment’s anointed candidate for president, he had run, he said later, with the intention of ending the CIA

¹⁴² The building bought by the CIA was not zoned for office use, but a timely ruling that the Association’s national offices could be considered a “school” for zoning purposes allowed the transaction to be completed. [H. Warren Stewart to Leonard Bechick, July 14, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 64.]

¹⁴³ The process of incorporation was formally launched with a mandate from the 1964 Congress, and NSA incorporated on April 30, 1965. [“Steering Committee Approves Incorporation,” *Congress News*, August 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11. NSA Certificate of Incorporation, April 30, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹⁴⁴ Eugene Groves, *President’s Report to the Twentieth National Student Congress*, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12. Groves’ figures should, for the reasons laid out in chapter four, be approached skeptically, but his assumptions seem to have been consistent from year to year, and they do give a sense of broad trends.

¹⁴⁵ Phil Sherburne to Tim Zagat, June 21, 1966, NSA papers, Box 22.

relationship. As president he continued to accept Agency funding in an attempt to keep NSA afloat while he pursued other funding sources, and in the interim, he sought to expand the Association's control over its programs.

At the November 1965 NSB meeting, Sherburne had had good financial news to report. The Association was in the black for the first time in memory, having erased its prior deficits with \$24,000 in grants from the Sidney and Esther Rabb Foundation, the Catherwood Foundation, and the San Jacinto Fund. The move from Philadelphia to Washington had gone smoothly, and its costs had been underwritten by a \$4,300 grant from the FYSA. The new offices were being provided rent-free by the Independence Foundation, and they had been fully furnished at no cost to NSA through a \$15,000 grant from Paul Hellmuth, the Independence Foundation's chairman.¹⁴⁶ As Sherburne knew but the NSB did not, each of these benefactors was a conduit for CIA funding.

By the time of the next NSB meeting in March, Sherburne's news was less rosy. There was now a \$40,000 hole in the budget, stemming primarily from "a reduction in the amount of income which is now expected." The FYSA administrative grant, which had amounted to \$135,000 the previous year, had been "eliminat[ed]." As well, the Independence Foundation had withdrawn its support for the International Student Research Seminar, and NSA had learned that grants for cultural and sports programs would not be renewed.¹⁴⁷

In an interview conducted after the CIA relationship became public, Sherburne explained what had changed in the interim. He had, he said, informed the CIA in early 1966 that he would not be requesting any Agency money for the following year, and that he wanted none of the staff for 1966-67, other than the incoming president and IAVP, to be made "witting." In retaliation, the CIA had cut \$70,000 from its promised support for

¹⁴⁶ Sherburne, president's report to the NSB, November 25, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁴⁷ Staff reports to the spring 1966 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

NSA's 1965-66 activities.¹⁴⁸ Seeking a soft landing, NSA continued to apply to FYSA, Independence, and the other foundations for support, but after the winter of 1965-66 those foundations increasingly denied NSA's requests.¹⁴⁹ Compounding the Association's difficulties, NSA had in years past grown accustomed to a lax application process, and some of the projects that the CIA then denied support to had actually been launched, at the Agency's behest and with the promise of Agency backing, months earlier.

The CIA ultimately made payments amounting to about \$375,000 to NSA in 1965-66, a reduction of twenty-five percent from the previous year's grants. Much of that money, however, went to the many outside projects conducted under NSA's aegis, or to other entities for whom NSA served as a conduit of CIA funds. Some \$36,000 of the total went to ISC dues, for instance, along with \$17,000 to a program of Angolan scholarships, \$9,000 for a Polish exchange program, and \$4,000 for a "Seminar on Cooperative Management in Israel."¹⁵⁰

A handout from the 1966 Congress claimed that as NAVP Sherburne had "built the National Commission from one to eight full-time staff members," and the 1967 *Ramparts* article on NSA said that the Association's domestic apparatus "grew from a single full-time staff member to 11" during his term.¹⁵¹ These claims underrepresented the strength of NSA's domestic wing before Sherburne took office as NAVP, but the

¹⁴⁸ Ken Metzler, "Campaign Against Covert Action Division No. 5," *Old Oregon*, May-June 1967.

¹⁴⁹ Under Sherburne's successor, Gene Groves, NSA applied for a number of CIA grants. In the interview I describe above, Sherburne said this decision was made because of the precariousness of the situation into which the Association had been placed by the withdrawal of promised funds in the spring of 1966. [Metzler, "Campaign Against Covert Action Division No. 5."]

¹⁵⁰ Herbert Heaton & Co., NSA Report on Audit for 1965-66, NSA Papers, Box 64.

¹⁵¹ "Staff of the 19th National Student Congress," [1966], NSA Papers, Box 12; Stern, "A Short Account of International Student Politics."

1964-65 officers clearly did augment the domestic operations of the Association.¹⁵² Their decision to leave the second SGVP position vacant made it possible to create two new staff positions, as noted earlier, and several other new positions were created that year.¹⁵³

Despite this new stability, the combined effects of Berkeley, the 1965 Congress, and the growing campus opposition to the war in Vietnam inspired an unusual amount of soul-searching in NSA's 1965-66 leadership. Three separate staffers drafted lengthy reports on the status and prospects of NSA during the year, and although each approached the problem from a different perspective, all arrived at the same fundamental conclusion — that the Association would grow only if it strengthened its ties to the American campus and embraced a more aggressive direct action agenda.¹⁵⁴

Such a shift in focus was already nascent in NSA — it had been a priority of the Liberal Caucus at the 1965 Congress.¹⁵⁵ On both a domestic and international level, new projects were somewhat more likely to have a direct action orientation than in the past — the Association sponsored a “Freedom Christmas” voter registration project in the South at the end of 1965, for instance, and developed a program of assistance to American anti-apartheid protesters.¹⁵⁶ But the most significant transformations of 1965-66 came in NSA's relationship to its members.

¹⁵² In 1963-64 the Association employed a Community Issues Desk Director, a SGIS Director, and the director of the NSA Southern Project. If one includes the public relations director and the three domestic vice presidents, the Association had a domestic staff of seven in 1963-64. [1964 Congress Directory, NSA Papers].

¹⁵³ Some of the new positions were created, and even filled, before the 1964 Congress. [Vance Opperman, *NSA Coordinator's Guide for 1964-65*, August 1964, NSA Papers, Box 10.]

¹⁵⁴ RJL [Roland Liebert] memo to JAJ and PS “Re: Membership Question,” March 29, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 56*. Philip Werdell, “The Werdell Report,” December 1965, NSA Papers, Box 157*. Michael Wood memo to Phil Sherburne, “Re: Development of a Future for NSA,” December 1965, NSA Papers, Box 157*.

¹⁵⁵ Howard Moffett, “Radical-Moderate Split,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁵⁶ Gil Kulick and Steve Arons' reports to spring 1966 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

The idea of utilizing NSA's expanded staff to assist the campuses and regions had been widely discussed before and during the 1965 Congress, and those discussions had led to several concrete changes in policy. A day was set aside at the end of the Congress at which each delegation would meet with two or three of NSA's national leaders — the officers, staff, and incoming NSB — to make plans for national office assistance to the campus in the coming year.¹⁵⁷ A constitutional amendment was also passed mandating that the members of the NSB conduct campus visits in their areas.¹⁵⁸

During the year, one member of the national staff was tasked with assisting in the planning of each regional conference, with the assistance culminating in a week-long regional visit.¹⁵⁹ Two new staff positions were added with campus-based portfolios — a Campus Liaison and a Director of Special Campus Affairs.¹⁶⁰ A push was made to systematize campus mailings, plans were put in place to expand the SGIS, and the idea of a field staff was revived yet again.¹⁶¹ After losing three close affiliation referendum battles in the fall, NSA won all seven referenda that were held in the spring.¹⁶²

It is difficult to speak with precision about the ebb and flow of NSA membership, since the definition of a “member” was somewhat elastic — under NSA's recordkeeping policies, a campus might remain on the books as a member for several years after it stopped paying dues. It does appear, however, that all this work had a salutary effect.

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Robbins, president's report to the 1965 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁵⁸ University of North Carolina report on the 1965 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁵⁹ President's report to the November 1965 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁶⁰ Luci Takesue, Campus Liaison's report to the November 1965 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16. Marcia Conary, Director of Special Campus Affairs' report to the November 1965 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16. The Director of Special Campus Affairs had responsibility for issues relating to junior colleges, small colleges, and commuter schools.

¹⁶¹ Phil Sherburne, president's report to the November 1965 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16. Gil Kulick, report to the spring 1966 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

¹⁶² Phil Sherburne, president's report to the November 1965 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16. Phil Sherburne, president's report to the 1965 Congress, *NSA Annual Report 1965-66*, NSA Papers, Box 11.

The 1966 codification showed a total membership of 300 schools, a modest uptick from 1965, and the first annual advance since at least 1962.¹⁶³

The 1966 Congress: Campus Radicalism Goes Mainstream

As noted above, NSA membership appears to have risen in 1965-66. To assess the Association's relationship to its base, however, Congress attendance is a better metric than membership. The schools that attended the Congress had the chance to see NSA first-hand. If they came back, it was a strong and clear statement of their commitment to the organization, and if they failed to return it was a substantial, and immediate, rebuke. Similarly, the presence of new schools was an indicator of the Association's reputation on campus and its success with outreach. By that measure NSA's health improved substantially in 1965-66 — attendance at the 1965 Congress had been among the lowest in NSA history, but in 1966 it rose above 250 schools, standing with the activist Congresses of 1960 and 1961 as the largest of the CIA era.¹⁶⁴

In the wake of Berkeley and the Vietnam escalation, student activism acquired a cultural resonance that it had not previously possessed. As protest became more pervasive — and as it became a mass-media phenomenon — the task of political organizers changed. At the very moment when campus activists had given up on organizing student governments, they discovered that student governments were

¹⁶³ NSA Codification of Policy, 1966-67, NSA Papers, Box 11. One staff report to the 1966 Congress put the number of members at 285, and said that figure reflected a loss of 12 schools since 1965. The codification figures, however, were generally from a few months later, so it is possible that this discrepancy reflects a loss of schools in the fall of 1965 and a net gain in the fall of 1966. [Luci Takesue, report of the Campus Liaison to the 1966 Congress, in *NSA Annual Report for 1965-66*, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹⁶⁴ According to a preliminary CSC report, the 1965 Congress had drawn just 179 campuses, fewer than any since 1954. Since the advent of the CIA relationship, only the 1961 and 1962 Congresses had drawn more than 250 schools.

beginning to organize themselves. After Berkeley, an activist self-presentation was increasingly an electoral advantage for a student government candidate, whether that candidate was backed by an organized campaign or not. Across the country, activists were swept into office almost inadvertently by student bodies whose attitudes toward political organizing were undergoing a dramatic and rapid transformation.

In the summer of 1966 the new president of the Stanford student government, David Harris, was one such activist. A leader in campus protests, he had been approached by a leader of the small activist faction in the campus student legislature, and asked to run as a protest candidate for student government president. He would lose, he was told, but in running he would have a platform from which to publicize an activist agenda.¹⁶⁵

In a field of seven candidates that year, Harris stood out. Fraternities had long dominated the Stanford student government, and while Harris strolled the campus in jeans and what the campus newspaper called a “beatnik-style” haircut, the others campaigned in suits and ties. He ran on a platform that he described later as

elimination of the Board of Trustees, student control of student regulations, equal policies for men and women, the option to take classes on a pass-or-fail basis, legalization of marijuana, and the end of all university co-operation with the conduct of the War in Vietnam,

and he was a sensation. He led the field in the first round of voting, and a week later beat a fraternity candidate in the runoff, an election that saw the highest turnout in Stanford history.¹⁶⁶ At the NSA Congress that summer he emerged as one of the strongest radical voices in the Association, and soon he would be a movement celebrity — co-founder of the draft-resistance group The Resistance, subject of an *Esquire* feature on “The New

¹⁶⁵ Harris, *Dreams Die Hard*, 133-34.

¹⁶⁶ Harris, *Dreams Die Hard*, 134-35.

Student President,” and husband of folksinger Joan Baez, whom he met while both were jailed for their participation in a draft protest.

In a 1965 article in the *Congress News*, Hendrik Hertzberg had described that Congress as “in some indefinable way hipper, more aware that life does not begin and end with resolutions and caucuses, than the one that preceded it.”¹⁶⁷ For all the upheavals of the previous year, though, the 1965 Congress had been a meeting whose most significant speech had been given by Hubert Humphrey, one which had closed with a mass singing of “We Shall Overcome” and the national anthem. The 1965 Congress was certainly hipper than 1964’s, but “hipper” is not the same as “hip.”

The 1966 Congress, at the University of Illinois, would necessitate less equivocation. That year Allen Ginsberg appeared on a panel on drug policy reform, and stayed to give a poetry reading afterwards.¹⁶⁸ (“Language, language ... you pour it forth like napalm,” he intoned, in an apparent reference to the plenary.) One delegate put forward a resolution advocating the legalization of homosexuality, and another introduced a proposal to remove the word “God” from the NSA constitution.¹⁶⁹ Longtime Conservative Caucus stalwart Danny Boggs put forward a libertarian argument for the

¹⁶⁷ Hendrik Hertzberg, “Student Jazz All-Stars Triumph,” *Congress News*, August 25, 1965. Hertzberg was then a new graduate of Harvard, where he had served as managing editor of the *Crimson*. In his subsequent career as a journalist, he twice edited the *New Republic*, and is now a senior editor at the *New Yorker*.

¹⁶⁸ Phil Semas, “Allen Ginsberg: Spokesman for Pot,” *Congress News*, August 25, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁶⁹ Robin Butler, “Congress to Decide Fate of God,” *Congress News*, August 24, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11. Peggy Cronin, “Support Seen for Homosexuals,” *Congress News*, August 26, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11. The resolution on homosexuality treated sexual orientation as a medical issue — its author, a University of Utah student, sought government research into the “impacts and causes” of homosexuality, and hoped to find a “cure” for “those who ... want to be cured.”

regulation of LSD on the same basis as alcohol, and the plenary itself endorsed the repeal of the nation's marijuana possession laws.¹⁷⁰

The center of gravity of the Congress was shifting rapidly. In 1966 each of the political caucuses at the Congress repositioned itself to the left — the Conservative Caucus renamed itself the Moderate Caucus, the Radical Middle Caucus renamed itself the Progressive Caucus, and the Liberal Caucus faced a schism between its liberals and its radicals.¹⁷¹

The Liberal Caucus had been formed as an oppositional force, but it now stood at the Association's heart. In 1966 the caucus didn't merely debate the merits of pending legislation, it drafted and voted on resolutions of its own, and possessed the delegate strength to bring its proposals to the floor outside of the Congress's formal legislative process. On Vietnam and the draft its majority position was by now essentially that of the Congress as a whole. This convergence of identity between the caucus and the larger delegate pool left the Congress's most radical delegates with little incentive to continue to subsume their identity into that of the caucus — as the caucus mainstream gained power in the national office and influence with other delegates, it fell to the radical faction to take up the oppositional role that the caucus itself had previously played.¹⁷²

The radicals proposed their own Vietnam resolution in 1966, one that described the war as an attempt to advance “the American empire ... in a calculated barbaric

¹⁷⁰ Andrew Cagan, “Grofman Sleeps While LSD Loses,” *Congress News*, August 29, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11. Resolution, “Drugs on Campus — Marijuana and Psychedelic Drugs,” NSA Codification of Policy 1966-67, NSA Papers, Box 11. Boggs was appointed to the federal judiciary by Ronald Reagan, serving on the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals beginning in 1986, and as chief judge of that panel beginning in 2003.

¹⁷¹ “New Name,” *Congress Conservative*, August 23, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11; letter to the editor from the Progressive Caucus Steering Committee, *Congress News*, August 25, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁷² The liberal-radical split arose in response to procedural disputes as well as policy disagreements — many self-described radicals felt during the Congress that the caucus leadership was insufficiently respectful of the need for open and unmediated debate. [*Congress News*, August 28, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

fashion.”¹⁷³ The caucus balked — both at the analysis and at the way in which it was expressed — but the plenary majority went much farther in their own resolution than they had at any previous Congress. They declared, by a vote of 181-83 with only ten abstentions, that the United States had ignored the “legitimate aspirations for social revolution” of the Vietnamese people, and that the escalation of the conflict had alienated the Vietnamese, made the establishment of democracy there “virtually impossible,” and brought the world closer to nuclear war. They called for an immediate halt to American bombing and other offensive operations, and for the opening of multilateral negotiations.

On the draft as well as on Vietnam, attitudes were evolving. There was broad opposition among the delegates to the draft as it stood but disagreement about whether to call for immediate abolition or a gradual phase-out, whether to concede the government’s authority to institute a draft under *any* circumstances, and whether to propose the expansion of conscientious objector status and alternative service as interim reforms while the draft still existed.¹⁷⁴

The question of tactics divided the liberals from the radicals as much as that of goals, and on the question of tactics an NSA alumnus — 1950-51 president Allard Lowenstein — was a formidable voice at the Congress. Lowenstein argued that opposition to the war should present itself moderately and reasonably. “This country is not as sick as some people think it is,” he said, in a debate with David Harris. “There is a tremendous reservoir of American conscience which can be tapped if we approach it in

¹⁷³ The radical proposal, which had been put forward by Stanford student body president David Harris, failed in the Liberal Caucus by a vote of 88-58. [Phil Semas, “Debate Ends at 4:30; War Continues,” *Congress News*, August 26, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.] For Harris’ account of the Congress, see *Dreams Die Hard*, 150-155.

¹⁷⁴ “Draft Divides Liberals,” *Congress News*, August 28, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11; “Liberals Water Radical Draft Bill in Plenary,” *Congress News*, September 1, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11; “The Draft,” resolution, NSA Codification of Policy 1966-67, NSA Papers, Box 11.

the right way.”¹⁷⁵ As an example of such a tactic he proposed sending an open letter to Lyndon Johnson from the nation’s student body presidents on the subject of the war. The suggestion was greeted with enthusiasm, \$83 was raised from Liberal Caucus members to pay for an outreach mailing, and Lowenstein set to work on the text.¹⁷⁶

Gene Groves was Phil Sherburne’s chosen successor as NSA president, and he had a long history in NSA. He had been the chair of the Liberal Caucus in 1964, and a member of the NSB the following year.¹⁷⁷ But he had spent the 1965-66 academic year at Oxford on a Rhodes scholarship, and so he had no immediate ties to any American university. To run for office he would need credentials from a member campus.

Groves had arranged with the student government at the University of Chicago, his alma mater, to be seated as an alternate in their delegation. But that placement had been challenged by longtime NSA conservative Danny Boggs — at the time a University of Chicago law student — and overturned by a campus judiciary committee.¹⁷⁸ A few weeks before the Congress Groves approached Roosevelt College, which proved to have fewer compunctions. He applied for admission to their graduate school, and their student government credentialed him while that application was still pending.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Phil Semas, “Harris: Reject Present Forms, Lowenstein: Work With Those Forms,” *Congress News*, August 30, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁷⁶ Harris, *Dreams Die Hard*, 154; Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 251.

¹⁷⁷ For Groves as 1964 Liberal Caucus chair, see Howard Moffett, “Radicals, Moderates Split,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁷⁸ Boggs had represented Harvard at earlier Congresses, and served as the chair of both the Conservative Caucus and the CSC committee on credentials in 1965. [North Park College report on the 1965 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 11. Dave Lillesand to Danny Boggs, August 30, 1965, NSA Papers, Box 11.] The Chicago committee ruled that the student government had violated its own constitution in granting Groves’ credentials.

¹⁷⁹ Margaret Cronin, “Groves’ Credentials Challenged,” *Congress News*, August 23, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.

Such credentials had in past years been provided to establishment candidates with little fuss, but by 1966 NSA's membership was growing more restive.¹⁸⁰ Groves' Roosevelt credentials were challenged, and the issue became one of the consuming debates of the Congress. Ultimately the CSC supported Groves by a vote of 16-7 and the plenary upheld his credentials in a 278-95 vote, but after doing so they closed the loophole that he had used to secure his eligibility for office.¹⁸¹ They passed a constitutional amendment that restricted campus delegate and alternate seats to individuals who had been "registered and in attendance" at the school in question within the past two and a half years. A student government could, in other words, extend credentials to a recent alum if it chose, but not to a supplicant with no connection to that campus, or to one who, like Groves, merely pledged to enroll in the future.¹⁸² In the Groves battle, as in the ISC election dispute the previous year, the establishment prevailed, but the dispute left them diminished. This is how reform came to NSA — not through the overthrow of the establishment, but through insurgencies forcing insiders to make concessions, and through the leadership clique weakening from within as a result.

At the end of the Congress, Groves faced Danny Boggs in the presidential race. Boggs, running as an anti-establishment candidate at least as much as a candidate of the right, won one-third of the total vote. Significantly, Groves had won more support in the

¹⁸⁰ According to Groves, Dennis Shaul had made use of such credentials when he ran for president in 1962, as had both IAVP candidates in 1965. [Margaret Cronin, "Groves' Credentials Challenged," *Congress News*, August 23, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹⁸¹ Margaret Cronin, "Groves' Credentials Challenged," *Congress News*, August 23, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11; Allan Mann, "Attempt to Block Groves Bogs Down at Plenary." *Congress News*, August 24, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.

¹⁸² The new constitutional provision opened one other path to campus credentials — a non-student could be seated if he or she had been elected to the delegation by a campus-wide student vote. The change did not affect eligibility for sitting national officers, members of the CSC and NSB, and regional NSA officers, all of whom were under the constitution "members" of the Congress and thus eligible to run for office. [NSA Constitution, NSA 1966 Codification, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

credentials battle than he did in the presidential race — a significant number of delegates appear to have voted to put him on the ballot, and then voted against him.

The other two officer elections presented subtler contrasts than the presidential race. Both IAVP candidates had substantial International Commission backgrounds, and both NAVP candidates were outspoken liberal-left leaders. In each case, the plenary voted for the more experienced candidate — Rick Stearns of Stanford was elected IAVP, and Ed Schwartz was chosen for NAVP.¹⁸³

Citizenship and Power in the CIA-Era NSA

To participate in the NSA of the 1960s was a heady experience. The Association's inner circles were populated by some of the nation's brightest, sharpest, most committed young people. NSA folk were, as former staffer Michael Wood put it in 1967, "actively involved in many of the insurgent campus and political movements of the day," and yet simultaneously "able to move freely through the highest echelons of established power." The country's youth, so long and so often marginalized, were at last finding their voices, and NSA provided a way for those voices to be heard. The powerful "didn't always sympathize with our goals," Wood wrote, but they gave them a hearing, and were sometimes moved to act. "We felt," he said, "like full citizens."¹⁸⁴

This sense of citizenship was in part a reflection of the power of the youth and other social movements of the time, and of the Association's leaders prominence in the student world. It was not because of NSA's subterranean contacts with the CIA that

¹⁸³ For reports on the backgrounds of the vice presidential candidates (Stearns and Robert Kuttner for IAVP, Schwartz and Jean Hofer for NAVP), see the *Congress News*, September 1, 1966. [NSA Papers, Box 11.]

¹⁸⁴ Michael Wood, "An Epilogue...", *Ramparts*, March 1967.

Connie Curry or Tim Jenkins were meeting with Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy in the early 1960s. As opposition to the Vietnam War grew more potent on the nation's campuses, NSA's position at the moderate end of the student anti-war spectrum enhanced its prominence, as we shall see.

But of course the feeling of potency that came with participation in NSA — what Wood with knowing irony called the “unusual sense of personal liberation” one felt within the Association — was not simply a reflection of its representativity, or the cogency of its arguments. There was a mystique to participation in NSA, a mystique described acidly but with real respect for its power to enthrall in a Young Republican report on the 1962 National Student Congress:

Often the delegate feels that he is being initiated into a secret society of those appointed to save mankind — a society led by the apparently omniscient people he has just met, who seem to know everything that is happening and why.¹⁸⁵

To be accepted into the NSA circle was to feel oneself connected to great political and social forces, but it was not to experience the world as newly democratic. It was, rather, to be given a chance to witness the operations of elite power on a great or small scale, and perhaps the opportunity to make one's case to those who wielded that power. For some, that exposure bred a desire to insinuate oneself into those power structures or learn how to influence them. Some were disillusioned, and turned away from the political system entirely. And for still others, the experience was a radicalizing one.

One of the most jarring exposures NSA's members had to the workings of power in the 1960s came on the last day of January, 1967, just weeks before the most closely guarded secret of the Association's secret society was revealed to the world. As noted

¹⁸⁵ Young Republican College Service Committee, Issue Paper on NSA, August 1962, NSA Papers, Box 9*.

above, Allard Lowenstein had proposed at the 1966 Congress that a group of student government presidents present an open letter on Vietnam to the Johnson administration. He had worked on the letter with a small group of student leaders from the Northeast throughout the fall, drafting and redrafting, circulating to potential signers. On December 30 the letter appeared in the New York Times. It was, as Lowenstein had said it must be, a moderate and reasonable letter:

In short, Mr. President, a great many of our contemporaries, raised in the democratic tradition of thinking for themselves, are finding a growing conflict between their own observations on the one hand, and statements by Administration leaders about the war on the other. These are people as devoted to the Constitution, and to the democratic process, and to law and order as were their fathers and brothers who served willingly in two World Wars and in Korea.

It was printed in full in the *Times*, along with a list of a hundred signatories.¹⁸⁶

On January 31 Secretary of State Dean Rusk met with 38 of the signers, whose ranks had by then grown to two hundred.¹⁸⁷ At the head of a conference table in the White House, backed by eight plainclothes agents, Rusk briefed the students on the progress of the war. His attitude was dismissive and combative, and the meeting reached its nadir when the student government president of Michigan State, a moderate, asked what would happen if the administration pursued its policy of gradual escalation, “up to and including nuclear war, and the other side doesn’t capitulate?” Rusk paused, and took a long drag from his cigarette. “Well,” he said, “somebody’s going to get hurt.”

As Greg Craig, the president of Harvard’s undergraduate student government remembers it, “we just looked at each other around the table and said, ‘my God, the Secretary of State of the United States is crazy.’”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ NSA pamphlet on the student leaders’ letter, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

¹⁸⁷ NSA pamphlet on the student leaders’ letter, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

¹⁸⁸ Tom Wells, *The War Within: America’s Battle Over Vietnam*, 118-19.

The Buildup to Disclosure

The CIA's funding of the Association continued in 1966-67, on a much smaller scale than before. But as noted above, NSA's landing was softer than it would have been if not for a post-Berkeley transformation in the national funding landscape. Ever since its founding, NSA had been scrambling for foundation and government support for domestic projects. After Berkeley, funders were eager to underwrite campus-based research and programming, and the Association had a track record and a political profile that made it a particularly appealing candidate for such funds.¹⁸⁹

Strikingly, despite the decline in CIA support, the US government remained the Association's largest single funder. In 1966-67 NSA received a \$200,000 grant from the federal Office of Equal Opportunity for its Tuition Assistance Center, more than \$50,000 from the State Department for an ongoing program of Algerian student scholarships, and nearly \$50,000 more from the National Institute of Mental Health for projects on student stress and drug use. Such grants made up more than half of the Association's budget for the year.¹⁹⁰

On January 17, 1967, Harry Lunn of the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs mailed NSA a \$15,000 check against a pending grant to the Association's "Technical Assistance and Overseas Representation Fund."¹⁹¹ FYSA and other CIA fronts had already sent NSA more than \$23,000 since the 1966 Congress, and at least \$33,000

¹⁸⁹ In this period NSA would derive the bulk of its funding from foundation- or government-sponsored projects, and those grants would in turn support NSA's other activities. That support would be provided both through administrative fees and through the discreet diversion of project staff resources to other Association priorities.

¹⁹⁰ Ernst and Ernst, NSA Audited Financial Statements, 1966-67, NSA Papers, Box 64.

¹⁹¹ Harry Lunn to Richard Stearns, January 17, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 61*.

more was pledged for the year.¹⁹² All told, the Association was on track to receive more than \$71,000 for 1966-67 — a not-inconsequential sum, though far smaller than those NSA had taken for granted just a few years before.¹⁹³ As it turned out, however, the January 17 check — which was deposited in one of the Association’s accounts a few days later — would be the CIA’s last cash contribution to NSA. Within weeks the relationship would no longer be a clandestine one.

Sometime in early January, NSA alum Al Lowenstein, on a visit to NSA’s new offices, mentioned to the Association’s leadership that *Ramparts* magazine was preparing a story on NSA and the CIA — a story, it transpired, that was based on inside information provided by former NSA staffer Michael Wood.¹⁹⁴

Wood had been NSA’s primary fundraiser in 1965-66, and it was in that capacity that then-president Phil Sherburne had revealed the relationship to him in the spring of 1966.¹⁹⁵ Sometime after Wood left the Association in the fall he wrote up what he knew and suspected about NSA’s ties to the Agency in a 50-page memorandum — a memo that he subsequently provided to *Ramparts*.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² At least one NSA application for CIA funding was turned down that fall, and there is correspondence on file for an additional grant application of more than \$5,200 whose disposition is unknown.

¹⁹³ Gene Groves reported to the 1967 Congress that NSA received \$38,562.15 from the CIA in 1966-67, which as he noted amounted to about 6% of NSA’s total budget. He did not declare what the percentage would have been if the arrangements that were in place before the disclosure had been carried through until the end of the fiscal year, or consider the value of the office space that the CIA was providing to NSA. [Gene Groves, President’s report to the 1967 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 12.] It should also be noted, in comparing 1966-67 receipts with previous years, that NSA was by 1966 apparently no longer serving as a conduit for CIA donations to other student groups.

¹⁹⁴ Gene Groves, President’s report to the 1967 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 12. In his memoirs David Harris asserted that Lowenstein learned of the impending *Ramparts* story from NSA insiders the previous November. [Harris, *Dreams Die Hard*, 160.]

¹⁹⁵ Stern, “A Short Account of International Student Politics.”

¹⁹⁶ Gene Groves, President’s report to the 1967 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 12. At the 1966 Congress, a *Ramparts* editor had given a speech in which he cited a CIA-funded project at Michigan State University as an indication of the university’s “sellout” to government and business. [*Congress News*, August 24, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 11.]

On January 30, Groves assembled the staff and told them that an article was in the works at *Ramparts*. At that meeting, and in subsequent conversations, he and other officers told the staff that they were unsure if the allegations were true, but that they were working to find out.¹⁹⁷ Groves traveled to Europe in early February to meet with the ISC and to retrieve an American student who was studying in Warsaw under the auspices of an NSA exchange program — it was believed to be prudent to get him out of Poland before the story broke.¹⁹⁸ In Groves' absence, the staff was briefed more fully by a staffer who had met with *Ramparts*, and Ed Schwartz admitted that the story was largely accurate.¹⁹⁹ Discussions began on the form that a public acknowledgment would take — an early draft of the statement, prepared by Schwartz, said that “the broad outlines of the story” were “highly credible.”²⁰⁰

On February 12 Groves returned from Europe, and on February 13 *Ramparts* moved to protect their scoop. They placed full-page ads in the following day's *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, declaring that their March issue would “document how the CIA has infiltrated and subverted the world of American student leaders, over the past fifteen years.” The agency had, they said, “used students to spy ... used students to pressure international student organizations into taking Cold War positions; and ... interfered, in a most shocking manner, in the internal workings of the nation's largest and oldest student organization.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Larry Rubin, diary of NSA staff meetings, January-February 1967, distributed by the US Student Press Association, NSA Papers. For a critical response to many of Rubin's claims (though none of those referenced here), see [Ed Schwartz] to “Mr. Anderson,” March 10, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 62*.

¹⁹⁸ Gene Groves, President's report to the 1967 Congress, NSA Papers, Box 12.

¹⁹⁹ Larry Rubin, diary of NSA staff meetings, January-February 1967, distributed by the US Student Press Association, NSA Papers.

²⁰⁰ Larry Rubin, diary of NSA staff meetings, January-February 1967, distributed by the US Student Press Association, NSA Papers.

²⁰¹ *Ramparts* advertisement, *New York Times*, February 14, 1967.

Within hours Groves received a call from the *New York Times* seeking comment. Working with IAVP Rick Stearns, he drafted a statement, which he then provided to Bob Kiley, a former NSA president and an NSA liaison to the CIA. Kiley provided assurances that the CIA would acknowledge the relationship, and Groves took the story public.

On the afternoon of February 13, 1967, despite the various discussions and leaks of the previous weeks, NSA's secret was still held closely enough many members of the NSB were in the dark. By the morning of February 14 the world would know.

After the CIA Revelations

The February 14 edition of the *Times* carried not only the *Ramparts* ad, but also a news article that drew heavily on an interview with Gene Groves. In it, Groves admitted the existence of the CIA relationship, but expressed little criticism of the Agency or his predecessors.²⁰² The relationship had, he said, been initiated because “the officers of the association felt that the existence of heavily financed and totally controlled Soviet front organizations ... made it imperative that democratic and progressive organizations ... offer an alternative.” CIA funding had been accepted because “it was impossible” to secure such funding from other sources, and the Association never “serve[d] any intelligence function” or provided any “information of a sensitive nature” to the CIA or any other government entity. No Agency funds, as far as he was aware, had been used to support the Association's domestic activities, and NSA had, to the best of his knowledge, received no CIA funds since deciding to break off its relationship with the CIA.²⁰³

²⁰² Neil Sheehan, “A Student Group Concedes it Took Funds from CIA,” *New York Times*, February 14, 1967.

²⁰³ Neil Sheehan, “A Student Group Concedes it Took Funds from CIA,” *New York Times*, February 14, 1967.

Each of these statements would be strongly disputed in the days and weeks to come, and many would be contradicted by Groves himself.

Advance copies of the *Ramparts* piece were released to the media the following day. Reading that article now, one finds that although it revealed explosive truths about NSA, it included a number of significant errors, establishing a flawed template for future writing about the Association.

The *Ramparts* story overstated the importance of international issues to the Association's founders. It exaggerated the coerciveness of the Agency's relations with NSA's top officers. It claimed that NSA's early-1960s engagement with SNCC cost the Association support on the campus, getting that crucial story exactly backwards. And it understated the steps Phil Sherburne had taken to end the CIA relationship in 1965 and 1966. Each of these inaccuracies would prove durable in popular and scholarly perceptions of NSA.²⁰⁴

At the same time, however, subsequent developments have confirmed many of *Ramparts'* most controversial allegations. The CIA did provide considerable financial support to NSA's domestic operations, particularly in the 1960s.²⁰⁵ NSA leaders did share information on foreign students with the Agency.²⁰⁶ And as we have seen, the influence of International Commission alumni over NSA policy debates and elections was remarked on by many within NSA years before those individuals' ties to the CIA were made known.

²⁰⁴ A smaller, but similarly resilient, error was the article's contention that students who were aware of the CIA relationship were referred to as "witty" rather than "witting."

²⁰⁵ The extent of the Agency's financial contributions to the Association, documented in this dissertation, was a matter of public record in 1967. Individuals involved in the relationship continued to deny the existence of such contributions long thereafter, however. [See, for instance, Cord Meyer, *Facing Reality: From World Federalism to the CIA*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 104.]

²⁰⁶ Meyer, *Facing Reality*, 102.

By the time the article appeared, the NSB was meeting to craft its own response to the disclosures.²⁰⁷ Concerned about apparent leaks to the media, and fearful of the possibility of government bugging, the NSB met in an atmosphere of high tension, exchanging dark jokes and decamping repeatedly to new locations.²⁰⁸ Its statement on the relationship, released on February 17, declared that “covert actions of the CIA” had placed “honorable” NSA officials in an impossible situation — they could “expose the relationship and thereby harm themselves and hundreds of others” or “remain quiet and thereby be dishonest to new generations of students.” It praised the “courage” of the officers who had, in the last two years, taken the “third course” of “gradual quiet disengagement.” The statement announced that the NSB had ordered “the complete and permanent severance of all ties with the CIA” and the immediate suspension of the credentials of all of the Association’s overseas representatives, and that it intended to “co-operate fully with a full public investigation” of the CIA relationship.²⁰⁹

On the question of whether the CIA had coerced NSA officials into perpetuating the relationship, the NSB’s February 17 statement said that individuals who were to be made witting were first induced to sign security oaths, and told that “violation of the oath could result in jail sentences of up to twenty years.”²¹⁰ At a news conference that day NSB chair Sam Brown said that those who had been convinced to sign such oaths had been

²⁰⁷ Eugene Groves to Douglass Cater, Jr, March 13, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 55*; Philip Werdell, “Underbelly of a Supersecret,” *Moderator*, April 1967. Reprinted in *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967, author’s collection.

²⁰⁸ Philip Werdell, “Underbelly of a Supersecret,” *Moderator*, April 1967. Reprinted in *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967, author’s collection.

²⁰⁹ “Statement of the National Supervisory Board,” February 17, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 62*.

²¹⁰ “Statement of the National Supervisory Board,” February 17, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 62*.

“duped,” and called such deceptions “disgusting and horrible.”²¹¹ NSA insider Phil Werdell further claimed that the Association frequently overspent its budgets at the end of the year, running up deficits whose retirements the new officers were required to negotiate with the Agency.²¹²

In a subsequent interview with the *Times*, however, one former NSA president called charges of coercion “preposterous,” and another said that his “free will was never impinged upon.”²¹³ On February 25, a statement drafted by Dennis Shaul, NSA’s 1962-63 president, was released.²¹⁴ The statement declared that the Association had maintained its “complete independence and integrity” during the years of CIA funding, and that it was “arrant nonsense” to charge that any president was “‘trapped’ or ‘duped’” into accepting the relationship. It averred that CIA financing had “helped make it possible for the American student movement to make important contributions toward the development of democratic student organizations,” and expressed “pride in the free and independent accomplishments of NSA during those years” — accomplishments that stood “in the best traditions of American voluntary service.”²¹⁵ The statement was signed by twelve of NSA’s former presidents — all but one of the presidents from William

²¹¹ Ben A. Franklin, “Students Accuse CIA of ‘Trapping’ Some Into Spying,” *New York Times*, February 18, 1967.

²¹² Philip Werdell, “Underbelly of a Supersecret,” *Moderator*, April 1967. Reprinted in *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967, author’s collection. Similarly, Gene Groves asserted that “administrative expenses might not be paid if the NSA officers and staff did not contain their activities within certain limits. [Eugene Groves, “NSA and the CIA: On People and Power (Second Thoughts After the Storm),” *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967, author’s collection.]

²¹³ Steven V. Roberts, “Former Student Leaders Deny They Were Trapped by CIA,” *New York Times*, February 19, 1967. Neither ex-president agreed to be identified in the article.

²¹⁴ Philip Werdell, “Introduction,” *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967. Author’s collection.

²¹⁵ In an appearance on *Meet the Press* the next day, Shaul characterized the acceptance of covert aid as one of the quotidian burdens of the NSA president, saying that “in any private organization ... however like a town meeting the legislative body may be, the executive in the end must accept the responsibility for fundraising.” *Meet the Press* transcript, February 26, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 62*.

Dentzer, who had overseen the initiation of the CIA relationship, to Greg Gallo, Phil Sherburne's immediate predecessor.²¹⁶

Few outsiders placed much stock in such claims of "independence and integrity." A *Times* editorial declared it "absurd" to suggest that the CIA had "merely assumed the role of a benevolent patron of youth,"²¹⁷ while the *New Republic* assured its readers that the Agency "got a great deal for its money."²¹⁸

The Association's critics on the left went much further. In a letter to the *New Republic* journalists James Ridgeway and Andrew Kopkind charged that NSA had been "nothing more than elaborate 'front' ... a CIA instrument first, and a dispenser of student services thereafter," whose "constituency was in the CIA headquarters in Langley, Va." Todd Gitlin and Bob Ross of SDS, writing in the *Village Voice*, declared that "only Americans could be so naïve as to think that anything set up to fight the cold war could be independent in anything but name."²¹⁹ Looking forward, Ridgeway and Kopkind said "the only decent course" was for NSA "to be disbanded at once," while Gitlin and Ross said that American students could never have "their own national organization ... through NSA" or "in any format resembling NSA."

The question of what was to become of NSA was an obvious one, and in the early going many assumed that the Association's prospects were bleak.²²⁰ In their original February statement the NSB had somewhat lamely protested that they had "no intention of dissolving," but a few weeks later the *New Republic* said that NSA had been reduced to

²¹⁶ The only pre-Sherburne president of the CIA era whose name did not appear on the statement was Dick Murphy.

²¹⁷ "Infiltrating the Campus," editorial, *New York Times*, February 16, 1967.

²¹⁸ Editorial, *The New Republic*. Reprinted in *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967, author's collection.

²¹⁹ Todd Gitlin and Bob Ross, "The CIA at College: Into Twilight and Back," *The Village Voice*, 1967. Reprinted in *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967, author's collection.

²²⁰ Indeed, some scholars have erroneously reported that NSA folded after the revelations. See William J. Daugherty, *Executive Secrets: Covert Action and the Presidency* (Lexington, University of Kentucky, 2004), 125.

“little [more than] a shell” by the revelations.”²²¹ As it turned out, however, there was little cause for concern. NSA had managed, as described earlier in this chapter, a relatively smooth transition away from dependence on CIA funding, and none of the Association’s other funders withdrew their support in the face of the disclosures. A mass exodus of membership would have posed a credibility problem for NSA, but no such exodus materialized. NAVP Ed Schwartz and IAVP Rick Stearns spent much of the spring on the road, visiting member campuses to answer questions face-to-face, and the membership, rising since the Sherburne presidency of 1965-66, continued to grow.²²²

A major headache throughout this period was the question of how to close out the CIA books. There was strong support within the NSB for returning all unexpended 1966-67 CIA funds, and pressure from agency fronts for repayment of overexpenditures from earlier years — in May the Association received dunning letters from the San Jacinto Fund and the Independence Foundation for funds owed from 1965-66.²²³ But the question of how to handle the final few grants was a minor one next to that of what to do about the Association’s offices. In 1965, the Independence Foundation had contracted to provide NSA a fifteen-year rent-free lease on two adjoining buildings in Washington DC. The CIA reportedly paid \$110,000 for the buildings, and by 1967 they were worth considerably more, with an outstanding mortgage principal of \$65,000. The Association had a reasonable claim to continued use of the buildings under their 1965 lease agreement, but if the Agency defaulted on the mortgage, and sent the property into foreclosure, the Association might well face eviction.

²²¹ “Statement of the National Supervisory Board,” February 17, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 62*; Editorial, *The New Republic*. Reprinted in *The CIA and the Kiddies*, NSA 1967, author’s collection.

²²² Minutes of the April 14, 1967 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 16.

²²³ F.G. O’Connor, Secretary-Treasurer, The San Jacinto Fund, to Edward E. Wallace, NSA Comptroller, May 23, 1967. Paul F. Hellmuth, Trustee, The Independence Foundation, to Edward E. Wallace, NSA Comptroller, May 8, 1967. Both in NSA Papers, Box 162.

In the summer of 1967 the Association and the Agency began to negotiate in earnest. NSA, represented in the talks by attorney Joseph Rauh, informed the CIA that in the event of such a foreclosure, the Association was prepared to take the Agency to court — an act would bring further unwanted publicity to the CIA’s domestic operations, and raise the possibility of additional disclosures of previously secret information.

On August 11 the Association and the Agency signed an agreement that resolved not just the question of the building but all outstanding financial disputes between them. Title to the buildings would be transferred to NSA, which would assume responsibility for the outstanding mortgage they carried. And all other “relationships, arrangements, agreements, and transactions” between the Agency, “its agents and instrumentalities,” and the Association would be immediately “canceled, terminated, and annulled.”

Conclusion

In the late 1950s NSA’s leadership had perceived the rise of a new American student movement before such a development was visible to most other observers, and had moved to position the Association at the forefront of that organizing. In the early 1960s they had been engaged with the work of the activists, and had provided significant infrastructural support.

After 1962 the Association’s establishment abdicated that role, but pressure to re-engage built from below thereafter. Because the establishment had to put forward a presidential candidate who could command the support of the membership each year, and because that membership was each year growing more assertive, it was likely inevitable that a president would eventually emerge who would, as Philip Sherburne did, repudiate the CIA relationship.

Change within NSA after 1962 was evolutionary, not revolutionary. It proceeded through an adversarial dialogue, and on the crucial question — the selection of national leadership — the establishment won almost every battle. Each year the membership ratified the establishment's choice for NSA president, and often he faced no opposition. But as the establishment accommodated itself to the membership, those accommodations cumulatively rendered the CIA relationship unsustainable.

By the mid-1960s, as student activism grew ever more prevalent on the American campus and a new breed of leaders began to take control of student government, grass-roots interest in the Association started to rise. Participation began to rebound in 1965-66, and it would, as we will see, continue to grow in the wake of the *Ramparts* story — between 1965 and 1968 membership grew from 288 schools to 367, the most rapid period of growth in NSA history.

During this time student activists, in the course of winning victories in governance struggles on their own campuses, were coming to a more sophisticated understanding of bureaucracies and how to influence them. Indeed, local activists were beginning to develop their *own* bureaucracies — though the vanguard of activists had in many cases abandoned student government in the frustrating years before Berkeley, student governments, in the course of winning real control over their own finances and over institutions like student judiciaries, were becoming unprecedentedly robust laboratories of democratic self-governance. Such student governments would in the 1970s increasingly band together to establish state- and system-wide student associations — mini-NSAs, essentially — which would in some instances take on the regional coordinating roles that the Association had so often failed to foster internally.

The disclosure of the CIA relationship would present such varied activists with powerful arguments against the Association's traditional cautiousness, and the repudiation of the CIA-era establishment would create the space for new formal and

informal power centers to arise within NSA. As SDS and SNCC were turning their backs on the campus, NSA would grope toward a new engagement with it.

Chapter Seven

Independence: 1967-1972

Introduction

In the years after 1967 the pace of change on the American campus quickened, and the fissures in American society grew into chasms. In May 1970, in the aftermath of the Kent State and Jackson State killings and the massive protests that followed, President Richard Nixon appointed a commission to study campus unrest. That commission presented its report in September of that year, and it opened with a letter “To the American People” that would have been unimaginable just a few years earlier:

The crisis on American campuses has no parallel in the history of the nation ... the level of violence has been steadily rising. Students have been killed and injured; civil authorities have been killed and injured; bystanders have been killed and injured. ... If this trend continues, if this crisis of understanding endures, the very survival of the nation will be threatened. A nation driven to use the weapons of war upon its youth, is a nation on the edge of chaos. A nation that has lost the allegiance of part of its youth, is a nation that has lost part of its future. A nation whose young have become intolerant of diversity, intolerant of the rest of its citizenry, and intolerant of all traditional values simply because they are traditional, has no generation worthy or capable of assuming leadership in the years to come.¹

NSA president Charles Palmer was one of the first witnesses to testify before the commission on campus unrest, and NSA was deeply involved in the protests of the time

¹ *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest* (New York: Arno Press, 1970), 1-5.

— it had been the first major organization to call for a national student strike in response to the US invasion of Cambodia, and it did much to publicize the actions that followed.

At the same time, NSA was working to reinvent itself for the post-CIA era. By the time the CIA relationship was exposed in early 1967, NSA was bringing in considerable revenue from grants for domestic projects. As America's campuses were convulsed by protest in the years that followed, foundations and government agencies looking to understand — and in some cases to facilitate or redirect — these developments turned to NSA even more intently. These grants enabled the Association to take on a wide variety of new endeavors, some worthier than others, and underwrote an increasingly ambitious domestic program. After the disclosures NSA took steps to create a national center of campus organizing work, particularly in the area of educational reform and student empowerment.

The Association was an intellectually vigorous — and contentious — organization in the late 1960s. It developed and popularized the concept of “student power” as an unifying principle for campus struggles, it took up SDS's abandoned slogan “A Free University in a Free Society,” and its membership engaged in fierce debates over racism, sexism, and the Vietnam War. But a loss of income and a lack of fiscal control left NSA with a greatly reduced operating budget and considerable debt. The Association's operations were scaled back, and efforts to secure new revenue streams through direct campus funding and services programs stumbled badly.

NSA was unable to craft a viable funding model for itself in this period, and that financial failure overshadowed its organizational achievements. NSA had by the early 1970s determined what it wanted to be, but it had not yet figured out how to get there.

The 1967 Congress

To many outside NSA, the 1967 Congress — the first since the CIA revelations — seemed sure to be a site of high drama. This would be the membership's first opportunity to confront the officers who had kept the secret for much of the past year, and the first opportunity to make a decisive break from the past. Media, activists, and gawkers of all kinds swarmed to the University of Maryland to get a front-row seat.

But the drama many had expected didn't materialize. Few defenders of the CIA relationship were present in College Park, and certainly none who were interested in defending it publicly. There were disagreements over how the 1966-67 officers had handled the situation, and those objections would influence voting in the 1967-68 presidential race, but where the CIA relationship was the explicit subject of debate — as in a resolution approving the financial settlement with the Agency and one withdrawing the Association from the ISC — consensus was achieved swiftly and amicably.²

The tone of the gathering was not particularly new, either. If the Congress was a bit more radical than the previous year's, it was primarily because the nation's campuses were a bit more radical. The campus activists, not the witting NSA establishment, had set the tone of the 1966 Congress, and they would do so again in 1967.

Students for a Democratic Society, which had not worked substantially with the Association in years, announced in July that it would mount a campaign at the Congress to press NSA to disband. Most observers anticipated that the SDS counter-convention would offer a clash of the two groups, but that drama too was far less intense than had been anticipated.

² Allan Mann, "Restructuring Plan Rejected," *USNSA Congress News*, August 25, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12; "CIA-NSA Occupancy Agreement Approved," *USNSA Congress News*, August 19, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

The SDS counter-conference had been conceived of as an adversarial enterprise, but it quickly evolved into something more symbiotic. NSA made sure to extend courtesies and assistance to the SDSers present — their registration fees were waived, and they were granted the use of facilities unimpeded. “They’ve been pretty human about it,” one Maryland SDSer said. “Gene Groves is killing us with kindness.”³ Delegates moved freely between NSA and SDS events, and SDS published a regular Congress newsletter. The content of the SDS critique was perhaps more oppositional than it had been when it had provided leadership to the Liberal Study Group and the Liberal Caucus in the early 1960s, but in form its involvement closely resembled its participation in those meetings.

The SDSers were not the only group looking to take advantage of the pulpit the Congress provided. Allard Lowenstein, NSA’s 1950-51 president, had for some months been working to build an anti-war insurgency in the Democratic party against Lyndon Johnson’s re-election, and he and a group of his supporters, several of whom had worked with him on the previous winter’s student body presidents’ letter to Johnson on Vietnam, were present at the Congress to kick off the campaign.

As in the past, much of the attraction of the Congress for its participants lay in the simple fact that it brought together such a large and diverse collection of students for such sustained, intense — and largely unstructured — interaction. As one participant put

³ Steven V. Roberts, “Radicals and Liberals Split at Maryland Student Talks,” *New York Times*, August 14, 1967; Bill Shamblin, “SDS: To Disrupt and Dissolve,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 14, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12. A few days before the end of the Congress the university rescinded SDS’s room-reservation privileges, apparently without consulting NSA. [“What Is This Shit???” *Liberal Bulletin*, August 24, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12; “Fascist Administration Locks SDS Out!!” *Spark*, August 23, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.]

it, “the Congress is primarily an educational experience, a meeting of student leaders from across the nation, a communications of ideas and values.”⁴

This educational function was perhaps most significant, in the late 1960s, for students from the nation’s more conservative campuses. In 1967 a Duke student named Tupp Blackwell described the “incredible liberty” living in co-ed dorms with no curfew at the Congress gave her — “a fantastic light-on-your-toes disbelief that you really had complete freedom of movement.” In language that called to mind early Southern Seminar participants’ descriptions of the transformative power of that event, she called her experience of the Congress one of “joy, discussion, and a natural style of relationship.”⁵ By 1967 student activism was becoming ubiquitous on the American campus, but great differences remained in the environments at different schools, and participation in the Congress was often an eye-opening experience.

At a Congress event that year, Blackwell heard a California delegate tell an incredulous crowd that at some Southern schools female students still had curfews, male and female students were barred from visiting each other’s dorm rooms, and, “most unbelievable of all, a woman was actually prohibited from being in a man’s apartment off-campus unless another couple was present.” Listening to the “astonishment and laughter” with which these revelations were greeted, Blackwell said, her own

image of Duke as a progressive school, of an awakening and activating student body, was shattered. We are ahead of most, but not all, the South in our ideas and proposals. We are by no means ahead of the rest of the country in terms of rules, student participation in decision making, or activism.⁶

⁴ [No author — apparently a participant’s report], “XXth National Student Congress, USNSA,” [1967], NSA Papers.

⁵ Tupp Blackwell, Duke University student observer, report on the Twentieth National Student Congress, [1967], NSA Papers. At the Congress, male and female participants were housed on alternate floors of the university’s dormitories. At Duke in 1967, according to Blackwell’s Congress report, the women’s and men’s dorms were located two miles from each other.

⁶ Tupp Blackwell, Duke University student observer, report on the Twentieth National Student Congress, [1967], NSA Papers.

In making the case for NSA's significance that year, NAVP Ed Schwartz said that he had often seen students "who know nothing about educational reform before NSA go back to their campuses and start revolutions," though "they often don't say they got it from us."⁷ It was in the shattering of such students' sense of the limits of the possible, as much as in the inculcation of an NSA agenda for activism, that such small revolutions were made in the latter half of the 1960s.

Early in the Congress the Radical Caucus voted to boycott the process of drafting, debating, and voting on resolutions, and moved that NSA abandon such statements entirely.⁸ Their motion was defeated in a 302-124 vote, but it set a tone for the Congress.⁹ Mere statements of principle would less in evidence on the plenary floor that year than they had been in the past. The major stands taken by the Congress — on black power, Vietnam, the draft, and student power, each of which I will discuss below — were all accompanied by mandates for action.¹⁰

It had been six years since NSA had been riven by the SNCC affiliation resolution at the 1961 Congress, and since then race had never figured prominently at the annual meeting. But by 1967 civil rights had been replaced by black power, and the question of NSA's posture with regard to that new organizing was not one around which there was anything close to a membership consensus.

⁷ Larry May, "From Whence Cometh the Bread, Boys??" *USNSA Congress News*, [August 16, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

⁸ David Brandman and Larry May, "Anti-legislate Delegates Lose Legislation," *USNSA Congress News*, [August 16, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

⁹ David Brandman and Larry May, "Anti-legislate Delegates Lose Legislation," *USNSA Congress News*, [August 16, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12. About a hundred Congress participants staged a plenary walkout after the vote.

¹⁰ The Michigan region, which had like the Radical Caucus voted to boycott the resolution sessions, recognized this shift when it suspended its self-imposed restriction to debate and vote on the draft resolution. [Larry May, "Michigan End Silence to Support Draft Bill," *USNSA Congress News*, [August 21, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.]

Discussion of the black power resolution, the most divisive of the Congress, began on the evening of August 20. In its original form, the resolution, which endorsed the black power movement, defined black power as “the unification of all black peoples in America for their liberation by any means necessary,” but after considerable debate, the last four words of that phrase were struck in a 182-175 vote.¹¹

Striking “by any means necessary” was one of a series of amendments put forward that evening, each of which had the effect of weakening the resolution’s original language: a clause that encouraged Congress delegations to include black members “insofar as possible” had been struck earlier, and soon it would be proposed that a five-member NSA commission on black issues be changed from an all-black body to one with a white minority.¹² This last change was the final straw for many black delegates, and a group of about fifty Congress participants walked out of the plenary while it was being debated, causing the body to lose quorum for the night.¹³

Debate on the black power resolution resumed the next morning, and the plenary had apparently been chastened. “By any means necessary” was restored in a 177-142 vote, and the resolution’s full statement of principles was approved 214-123.¹⁴ A mandate created a “Black Commission” with an all-black membership, and NSA to holding a conference on the role of white people in the black power movement.¹⁵

¹¹ Steven V. Roberts, “Students Approve a Militant Stand for Black Power,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1967.

¹² Roz Davis, Allan Mann, and Pam Sellers, “Floor Fight Over Black Power Results in Walkout...” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 21, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

¹³ There were apparently two walkouts — the group left, returned, and then left again. Steven V. Roberts, “Students Approve a Militant Stand for Black Power,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1967; Roz Davis, Allan Mann, and Pam Sellers, “Floor Fight Over Black Power Results in Walkout...” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 21, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

¹⁴ Allan Mann, “Black Power Resolution Approved After Hot Debate,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 22, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

¹⁵ Allan Mann, “Black Power Resolution Approved After Hot Debate,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 22, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

The Black Power resolution attracted considerable attention beyond NSA.¹⁶ Opponents of the “by any means necessary” clause had suggested that it amounted to an endorsement of violence, and outside critics would take up that charge after the Congress.¹⁷ A *New York Times* editorial called the resolution “morally ... inexcusable” because it was “insincere” — the delegates who passed it, the *Times* suggested, could not really “believe that American Negroes have the right to seek something called ‘liberation’ by murder, arson and other terror tactics” as “the phrase ‘by any means necessary’ clearly implies.”¹⁸

NSA’s new president Ed Schwartz succinctly refuted such charges. The Black Power resolution had, he noted in a letter to the editor, made no reference to “murder, arson, and other terror tactics,” as its authors had deliberately left the concept vague, leaving it “to the reader of the resolution to determine what means will be necessary to achieve social progress in this country.” To suggest that “by any means necessary” implies violence he wrote, was to concede that such tactics “have become ‘necessary means’ to social progress.” Though the *Times* might be willing to make such a concession, he said, NSA was not.¹⁹

Three resolutions on the Vietnam war were brought to the plenary floor in 1967,

¹⁶ It even drew the notice of Walter Cronkite on the CBS Evening News. [Allan Mann, “Black Power Resolution Approved After Hot Debate,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 22, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.]

¹⁷ The below contends that the phrase “was interpreted by all” at the Congress as an endorsement of violence. Lanny J. Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority: Lessons and Legacies from the New Politics* (Briarcliff Manor, NY, Stein and Day, 1974), 25.

¹⁸ “Appeasing Negro Extremists,” editorial, *New York Times*, September 4, 1967. The editorial went on to say that “the youth and inexperience” of the delegates rendered them ignorant of what happened when “group after group attempted to make united fronts with Communists” in “the 1920s and 1930s,” and that “the Negro extremists are using the old Stalinist tactics.”

¹⁹ Ed Schwartz, “Students’ Support for Black Power Stand,” letter to the editor, *New York Times*, September 8, 1967. On the plenary floor, Schwartz had urged delegates who “don’t want this resolution to sanction violence” to “go back to your campuses and tell the students to work to create conditions under which people can be both free and decent at the same time.” [Steven V. Roberts, “Students Approve a Militant Stand for Black Power,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1967.]

but all three were ultimately voted down, with NSA instead choosing to amend the stand it had taken the previous year. There was near-universal opposition to the war, but little agreement as to what affirmative position to take — or, as we will see, on how much emphasis to give each question in the coming year.²⁰ The delegates had more success coming to agreement on the question of the draft, passing a resolution that called for abolition of conscription except in the case of a declared war that represented “an immediate threat to national survival.”²¹

An urgent, and vexing, pre-occupation of the 1967 Congress attendees was the enervated condition of student government. Groves had put the problem bluntly early in the meeting — student government was, he said, “a constituency for which I have little respect.”²² In a myriad of ways throughout the Congress students raised the question that had been posed plaintively in an early edition of the *Congress News*: “What does a national organization of student government types have to do with anything?”²³

Structural proposals for strengthening NSA tended to take one of two forms in 1967 — on the one hand there were schemes to make student government more responsive to the students of each campus, and on the other there were those intended to give the Association a new, more committed base of membership. Into the former category fell a series of proposals for enhancing NSA’s accountability to student bodies. It was proposed — not for the first time — that NSA policies be brought to the campus for

²⁰ Steven V. Roberts, “Students Approve a Militant Stand for Black Power,” *New York Times*, August 22, 1967; Ken Vickery, Duke University student observer, report on the Twentieth National Student Congress, [1967], NSA Papers; Allan Mann, “Black Power Resolution Approved After Hot Debate,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 22, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

²¹ Steven V. Roberts, “Students Demand A Greater Voice,” *New York Times*, August 21, 1967; Roz Davis, Allan Mann, and Pam Sellers, *USNSA Congress News*, [August 21, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

²² Larry May, “‘A Year of Trial and Agony’ — NSA,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 15, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

²³ Robert Parker, “Relevancy, Importance at 20th Congress,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 14, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

approval in local referenda and that NSA mandate direct election of some or all campus representatives.²⁴ The latter class of proposals eventually coalesced around the suggestion that NSA abandon student government as its unit of membership entirely, reinventing itself as a federation of local student unions. These unions would be voluntary associations of students at individual campuses, sustained by individual dues payments and existing independent of the campus administration.²⁵

Though it was only occasionally acknowledged at the Congress, these reform tracks represented starkly divergent visions of NSA. The proposals to bring NSA into closer alignment with the views of the mass of students on campus — those which called for more local elections and referenda — articulated a frustration with the disengagement of the “ordinary” student with student politics. Some proponents of such plans argued that by engaging the disengaged the campus as a whole could be transformed — SDS’s Carl Davidson contended, for instance, that in a more representative national student group “we will work, we will organize, we will transform students into radicals.”²⁶ Others acknowledged the likelihood of conservatization, or embraced it — Danny Boggs, long NSA’s most prominent conservative figure, was an ardent supporter of issues referenda.²⁷

Advocates of the student union model, on the other hand, proposed to abandon representativity itself. They would give up, or at least set aside, the endless scrabbling for votes among ignorant and uncommitted students and the endless petty turf wars with

²⁴ Allan Mann, “NSA: A Dream of Light, and Then Darkness,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 26, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

²⁵ Allan Mann, “Restructuring Plan Rejected,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 25, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

²⁶ Steven V. Roberts, “The Voices of the Campus,” *New York Times*, August 20, 1967.

²⁷ Boggs said that NSA was in need of an NSB made up of “cast-iron SOB’s” who were committed to “standing up for the interests of the real constituency. If we can get such people, the association may reach a turning point in its history, and for the first time its constituency and the American student community may become one.” Danny Boggs, “The Constituency and the Students,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 19, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

administrators, and build outward from whatever core of like-minded souls they happened to find.

Taken together, these two alternate visions offered a damning portrait of an American student government that was hobbled on two fronts — constrained by the conservatism and quiescence of the studentry on the one hand and the heavy hand of administration interference on the other. At the same time, however, the opposing critiques recognized implicit strengths as well. Student government’s position as the students’ representative would, if those students could be roused, give it a moral authority that no *ad hoc* student union could claim, while its position within the university bureaucracy gave it a stake in — and a motivation for — institutional reform. Student government that represented an engaged studentry and wielded real campus power would — as NSA’s founders had envisioned two decades earlier — be a transformative force in the university.²⁸

There was reason to be optimistic about the prospects for establishing such student governments. Across the nation, courts had begun to rule in students’ favor in *in loco parentis* cases.²⁹ NSA’s student power resolution at the 1967 Congress mandated that NSA create “an office that would give students advice on their legal rights within the university” and “a fund to support students who are challenging university authority in civil court cases.” The resolution called for student governments to be given complete control of student regulations and discipline, and an equal voice with faculty and administration in admissions, grading policies, hiring, and campus services.³⁰

²⁸ See Ed Schwartz’s presidential report to the 1968 Congress [NSA Papers, Box 162] for a detailed discussion of how such a student government might operate, and how it might be served by a national student organization.

²⁹ Mike Goldman, “Student Regs Workshop Considers Student Power,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 25, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

³⁰ Steven V. Roberts, “Students Demand A Greater Voice,” *New York Times*, August 21, 1967.

The delegates to the Congress heard success stories of such efforts, and learned of ongoing struggles. The president of the Associated Students Inc. of California State College at Los Angeles told how his student government had incorporated back in 1957, and how it administered a student fee, set by referendum, through an elected board of directors, with the student government and the faculty senate holding reciprocal seats on each other's governance bodies.³¹ A student from the University of Michigan told how his student government, which had the responsibility for operating a student disciplinary body, had recently declared its refusal to enforce any regulations that students had not democratically enacted.³²

Ultimately, the delegates to the 1967 Congress rejected the reforms proposed by both the referendum/election proponents and the student union advocates.³³ They would not put NSA at the mercy of direct democracy, and they would not break from the Association's history as a student government organization, either. They would, however, make a renewed effort to resolve the contradictions between their image and the reality of American student government, and they would choose — by the slimmest of margins — their most prominent advocate of student power to lead them in that effort.

The race for the NSA presidency drew two main contenders in 1967 — NAVP Ed Schwartz and NSB chair Sam Brown. Schwartz and Brown ran cordial campaigns, and expressed their criticisms of each other respectfully.³⁴ Their primary disagreement was

³¹ Judi Bronstein, "Pros and Cons of Financial Autonomy," *USNSA Congress News*, August 18, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12. At the same panel Bill Shamblin of the University of Alabama told how his campus' students had passed a special fee for athletics in 1959, and had subsequently been shut out of the process of overseeing its expenditure.

³² Mike Goldman, "Student Regs Workshop Considers Student Power," *USNSA Congress News*, August 25, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

³³ Weak versions some of the reforms were approved by narrow margins, others were rejected outright. For a particularly glum assessment of the 1967 Congress' record on reform, see Allan Mann, "NSA: A Dream of Light, and Then Darkness," *USNSA Congress News*, August 26, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

³⁴ Sam Brown and Ed Schwartz's candidate platforms, *USNSA Congress News*, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

over the Association's mission for the coming year, with Brown, a Lowenstein ally, calling for a new attention to anti-war organizing and Schwartz emphasizing the student power struggle, as he had throughout his tenure in NSA.

Schwartz described himself as a long-time insurgent within the Association, an advocate for engagement with the campus and with regional, campus-type, and issue-based coalitions. He emphasized his assistance to local student organizing as NAVP, and his plans for a new NSA Center for Educational Reform — a student power desk within the Association that would deploy field and office staff in aid of local organizing.³⁵

Brown said he shared Schwartz's commitment to student power, and to student government renewal.³⁶ He believed, however, that organizing against the war was more urgent — there had been a strong call for anti-war organizing from the delegates to the 1966 Congress, and the officers had failed to heed it.³⁷ The “legitimate demand for student power,” he said, “must not be allowed to muffle the equally legitimate demand for student power in social change.”³⁸

Brown edged out Schwartz in the first round of balloting by a 191-189 margin, with self-described protest candidate Ruth Bowman receiving 76 votes. In the run-off Schwartz prevailed by a 230-210 margin.³⁹ Brown was implored to run for a vice

³⁵ Sam Brown, candidate's platform, *USNSA Congress News*, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12; Judi Bronstein, “The Presidential Candidates Speak: Ed Schwartz,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 22, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

³⁶ Judi Bronstein, “The Presidential Candidates Speak: Sam Brown,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 22, 1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

³⁷ Sam Brown, candidate's platform, *USNSA Congress News*, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

³⁸ Sam Brown, candidate's platform, *USNSA Congress News*, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.

³⁹ Steven V. Roberts, “Students Choose Activist As Head,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1967. In her written statements, at least, Ruth Bowman did little to differentiate herself from either Schwartz or Brown — a University of Michigan senior, her candidacy seems to have been predicated on the idea that the plenary deserved to have the option of voting for an outsider. (The above gives Ruth Bowman's name as “Bauman,” in contradiction to consistent spelling on Congress newsletters.)

presidential position after losing the presidency, but he declined.⁴⁰ In a meeting held on the night of the NSA elections he instead chose to head up Lowenstein's anti-war electoral campaign for the coming presidential election — known formally as Alternative Candidate Task Force 1968, but informally as “Dump Johnson.”⁴¹

After the Break: 1967-68

NSA took in revenue totaling more than \$950,000 in 1967-68, but most of that income took the form of grants for particular projects, not all of them central to the Association's mission.⁴² NSA had, as noted earlier, been deluged with proposals from foundations seeking a not-too-radical student activist group to work with, and was still, in Ed Schwartz's words, “learning when not to accept a program even if someone is willing to fund it.”⁴³ Nearly two dozen externally funded projects operated out of NSA in 1967-68, from a Student Course and Teacher Evaluation (SCATE) initiative to a student stress project that mounted a series of regional conferences, conducted local studies of

⁴⁰ Larry May, “Dump Johnson Group Holds Strategy Meeting,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 23, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12.

⁴¹ Steven V. Roberts, “Students Choose Activist As Head,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1967; Larry May, “Dump Johnson Group Holds Strategy Meeting,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 23, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12; Steven V. Roberts, “Students Organize to Defeat Johnson,” *New York Times*, August 26, 1967. In the race for educational affairs vice president Teddy O'Toole defeated Paul Soglin, who had said that his primary focus as EAVP would be on the war in Vietnam, and Steve Parliament, a proponent of student unions. Four candidates were placed in nomination for international and community affairs vice president, but during voting two — Clint Deveaux and Manny Himenez — withdrew in favor of a third, Steve Cohen. Cohen, who was like Deveaux and Brown a Lowenstein protégé, was defeated in a re-vote by Dan McIntosh, who had declared the war in Vietnam to be “the most immediate issue facing NSA.” [Larry May, “Dump Johnson Group Holds Strategy Meeting,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 23, 1967, NSA Papers, Box 12; Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, 26.]

⁴² Ernst & Ernst, “Audited Financial Statements and Other Financial Information: United States National Student Association,” September 30, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 64.

⁴³ Ed Schwartz to Ian Sone, March 21, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 21.

students' psychological needs, and created a model freshman orientation program.⁴⁴ By far the largest grant-funded endeavor that year was the Tutorial Assistance Center (TAC), discussed in detail below, which operated with a staff of 22 and a budget of nearly \$200,000.⁴⁵

TAC dwarfed the NSA national office, which had a staff of about half a dozen to devote to its various non-granted endeavors.⁴⁶ In 1967-68 much of those staffers' energy was devoted to revamping NSA for the long-term — working on obtaining tax-exempt status, on crafting a new structure for student services revenue, and on developing a plan and funding base for Schwartz's proposed Center for Educational Reform.⁴⁷

The staff also worked harder than many of their predecessors had to follow through on Congress mandates. They mounted a student power conference that drew 400 attendees. They added a new campus liaison staffer to strengthen communication between the national office and the membership.⁴⁸ They hired an anti-draft organizer who assisted with various local campaigns and coordinated the writing and circulation of a public pledge to refuse induction by one hundred student government presidents and student newspaper editors — a follow-up to the anti-war letter that had garnered so much attention the previous year. They developed a campus educational campaign on the war for use at less-active campuses, particularly technical schools and junior colleges. And they secured Ford Foundation funding for support of a black student desk.⁴⁹

A centerpiece of the Association's activity during the year was a student legal rights project. The project developed and disseminated student legal rights information during the year, and provided advice to students who were considering taking legal

⁴⁴ Teddy O'Toole, "Report to the Delegates, 1967-68," NSA Papers, Box 12.

⁴⁵ Ernst & Ernst, "Audited Financial Statements and Other Financial Information: United States National Student Association," September 30, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 64.

⁴⁶ Ed Schwartz to Charlie Palmer, June 23, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 21.

⁴⁷ Teddy O'Toole, "Report to the Delegates, 1967-68," NSA Papers, Box 12.

⁴⁸ Teddy O'Toole, "Report to the Delegates, 1967-68," NSA Papers, Box 12.

⁴⁹ Dan McIntosh, ICAVP annual report, [1968], NSA Papers, Box 13.

action in campus disputes. Its staff also intervened directly in a number of matters — they submitted *amicus* briefs in two cases, filed a lawsuit to halt a policy of selectively drafting students who participated in demonstrations, filed an injunction on behalf of student activists expelled from the Tuskegee Institute, and joined a suit against discriminatory hours regulations brought by female students at SUNY Oneonta.⁵⁰ In late 1968 NSA secured a \$30,000 foundation grant to launch a journal, *The College Law Bulletin*, which had by the following spring established a subscription base large enough to pay for itself.⁵¹

Somewhat more ephemeral, but no less significant, was the Association's effort to popularize the concept of "student power." The phrase was an obvious analogue to "Black Power," popularized by SNCC in 1966, and like its predecessor it reflected a shift in ideology and tactics from incrementalism to confrontation. To an extent the term was, Ed Schwartz admitted, merely a radical-sounding rebranding of the Association's early-1960s campus reform agenda, but there was no denying that the change in the campus in the intervening half-decade had given that agenda a huge, and potent, new constituency by the fall of 1967.⁵²

Ed Schwartz had risen within NSA in the early sixties as a leader of the Association's left-liberal faction, and as an advocate for greater NSA engagement with off-campus struggles. By the time of his 1966 election to the National Affairs Vice Presidency he had been off the campus for years. As NAVP, however, he had devoted

⁵⁰ Teddy O'Toole, "Report to the Delegates, 1967-68," NSA Papers, Box 12.

⁵¹ NSA report on programs and finances, partial copy on file, [spring or summer 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁵² For educators' recognition of this new trend in student protest, and their varying attempts to come to grips with it, see Michael I. Sobel, "An Encouraging Sign in the Recent Student Protests," *Journal of Higher Education*, March 1968; D. Bruce Johnstone, "The Student and His Power," *Journal of Higher Education*, March 1969; William W. Van Alstyne, "The Tentative Emergence of Student Power in the United States," *American Journal of Comparative Law*, Summer 1969. The latter of these situates the rise in demands for students' rights in the context of the national shift from private to public higher education, which I will discuss in chapter eight.

much of his energy to educational reform, and during his presidency NSA cemented its identity as an organization of and for the *student* left — engaged with issues beyond the campus, certainly, but above all concerned with transforming the university and the student’s role within it. “Student power in the university,” Schwartz wrote in 1968,

means that students make all their own rules, administer the disciplinary procedures, control the finances for their own organizations, maintain the freedom to invite speakers of their choosing without administrative censorship, support a free student press, and gain sufficient economic resources to build student programs on and off the campus. ...

Student power in the university means that students are free to develop their own academic programs; free to build majors across disciplinary lines; free to develop hard-nosed course and teacher evaluations; able to participate within academic departments in the development of new courses and seminars; able to sit on interdepartmental curricular committees for the planning of new programs and for the enactment [of] policies in grading, exam procedures, and semester schedules. ...

Student power would mean that students would share in decision-making authority over areas basic to university life.⁵³

At the time that Schwartz wrote those words, student power as he envisioned it was a program with few allies. Faculty and administrators opposed it with equal vehemence. Many student radicals considered it a diversion from more fundamental societal goals. If Schwartz didn’t coin the phrase himself — and evidence suggests that he may well have — he was certainly its greatest booster, and the post-CIA attention that the Association drew gave him a platform from which to promulgate the concept on the campus and beyond.⁵⁴ In some ways, the NSA of 1967-68 — activist, engaged with policy questions, broad-ranging, left-liberal — represented the vision of 1946-47 NSO president Jim Smith made flesh for the first time.

⁵³ Ed Schwartz, “Student Power: A Return to the Program,” [Summer 1968?]. NSA Papers 1983, Box 14.

⁵⁴ In the twelve months preceding the start of the 1967 Congress the phrase “student power” appeared in the *New York Times* six times, in the twelve months after, 65, and in the twelve months after that, 92.

Columbia 1968 and the Collapse of SDS

Campus activism had been building steadily since the Berkeley protests of 1964, but in the spring of 1968 the nation's colleges were engulfed in a wave of protest that would challenge students' relationship to the university more profoundly than any previous actions.

This wave of activism began at Columbia, as the campus SDS chapter led organizing efforts around the university's ties to clandestine government research, its restrictive policies on student demonstrations, and its plans to appropriate land in Morningside Park for a gym. That organizing led directly a full-blown student strike in late April. As the strike progressed, however, and campus buildings were occupied by students whose allegiances ranged from Progressive Labor to the Democratic Party, SDS could make little claim to leading the rebellion it had helped to bring into being.⁵⁵ Ultimately, supporters of university reform would emerge as the student power-brokers in the Columbia rebellion, and SDS at Columbia would play little role in the negotiations that brought the Columbia occupation to an end.⁵⁶

NSA staffers would travel to a number of campuses that were embroiled in protest in 1967-78, providing advice and assistance as they were able. With no field organizers and a weak regional apparatus, however, the Association's resources for such work were limited.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Sale, *SDS*, 435-37.

⁵⁶ Sale, *SDS*, 439.

⁵⁷ Ed Schwartz to Chris Harte, January 29, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 21; Teddy O'Toole, "Report to the Delegates, 1967-68," NSA Papers, Box 12.

And shockingly, no other national student organization did even as much as NSA. The student peace organizations of the early sixties, Student SANE and the Student Peace Union, had long since folded. SNCC was by then a shell of its former self — riven by factional infighting, hounded by the government, and devoting only a fraction of the minimal resources it still possessed to campus projects. And SDS, the student organization with the most resources and the highest national profile, largely turned its back on campus organizing in the spring of 1968. As Kirkpatrick Sale put it a few years later, SDS had by then realized

that it was not the *reform* of the university that they really wanted, not the limiting of complicity, not the *restructuring* of the evil complex, but something vaster, more significant, more, well, revolutionary. ... [T]he lessons of Columbia were that “allies must be sought in the black ghettos and in the ranks of labor, not on campus ... that ‘a free university’ will only exist *after* we have won a ‘free society.’” Many of the Columbia strikers made their break with the academy after these days, putting the dream of university reform and student power behind them forever.⁵⁸

When SDS met for their annual convention at the close of the 1967-68 academic year, the group’s national officers for the first time endorsed a slate of candidates to succeed them. At the end of the greatest semester of student protest the nation had ever seen, two of their three chosen candidates ran unopposed — Mike Klonsky, who had not been a student activist in years, and Bernardine Dohrn, who had never been one.⁵⁹ (Klonsky, a longtime SDS organizer ran on a platform of reorienting the group toward working-class community organizing.⁶⁰ At the time of the 1968 SDS convention Dohrn was an attorney for the National Lawyer’s Guild.⁶¹)

⁵⁸ Sale, *SDS*, 440-41, emphases in original.

⁵⁹ Tellingly, Mark Rudd was not regarded as a serious candidate — as one delegate told reporters, “He’s your man, not ours.” [Sale, *SDS*, 470.]

⁶⁰ Sale, *SDS*, 468-9.

⁶¹ The national office’s third candidate, Les Coleman, was defeated by one vote by community organizer Fred Gordon, who would during his term align himself ever more closely with PL.

SDS would descend into factional chaos in the year that followed, and break apart in the summer of 1969, with a few die-hards left to bicker over the organization's rubble. At no moment in this process of implosion would any advocate of student power or of re-engagement with the campus play any significant role in the organization's national leadership. Some SDS chapters would, as in 1967-68, pursue a student activist agenda, and indeed a few would continue to play that role after the national organization self-destructed. But after 1967 SDS as a national group was led by non-students, oriented toward off-campus organizing, and indifferent to efforts to transform the university. By 1968, arguably, and certainly by 1969, NSA was the only left-of-center national student organization remaining in the United States.

The Tutorial Assistance Center
And the Deficiencies of the Grant Funding Model

At the 1967 Congress both Gene Groves and Ed Schwartz had floated the idea of a fifty-cent per student per year levy on NSA's membership. With dues set at that level, they said, merely maintaining NSA's present membership would give it complete financial independence and a budget larger than the most extravagant of the CIA era.⁶²

⁶² Ken Vickery, Duke University student observer, report on the Twentieth National Student Congress, [1967], NSA Papers; Buff McDannel, Allan Mann, and Larry May, "Vice Presidential Structure Changed," *USNSA Congress News*, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12. A proposal for a one-cent per student fee was endorsed by a Congress majority that year, but failed to reach the two-thirds majority required for passage. [Buff McDannel, Allan Mann, and Larry May, "Vice Presidential Structure Changed," *USNSA Congress News*, [1967], NSA Papers, Box 12.] The previous failure of a direct delegate election proposal was said to have contributed to this measure's failure, as some felt it was inappropriate to ask individual students to pay for NSA membership without guaranteeing them the right to elect their representatives.

Ed Schwartz believed that NSA could only go so far without a student funding base. Until it transformed itself into a true “association, based on mutual cooperation and commitment of resources,” it would remain

a national student foundation, in which officers and staff have to spend ... their time browbeating foundations for programs which meet at least part of student demands, and in which a few people supported on independent funds handle every crisis which emerges around the country.

Schwartz’s criticism of “programs which meet at least part of student demands” was a pointed one. In this period, a few of the Association’s grants supported work that NSA would have taken on anyway, freeing up money for other projects. Most, however, involved work that NSA wouldn’t have otherwise pursued, or would have conceptualized very differently. The grandest such program, the Tutorial Assistance Center (TAC), demonstrated the potential of such programs to entangle NSA in endeavors that offered no obvious benefit to its basic mission.

TAC’s roots went back to 1964, when the Congress directed NSA to develop tutorial programs for underprivileged youth. The Association received funding from the New World Foundation for such a program in 1965, and a grant from the federal Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) to mount “a research and demonstration project for the utilization of student resources in the field of community education” in 1966, and TAC was born.⁶³ OEO gave TAC another one-year grant in the spring of 1967, and at about the same time the project received \$50,000 from the Labor Department.⁶⁴ By that fall TAC

⁶³ NSA proposal to Office of Equal Opportunity for Tutorial Assistance Project, January 22, 1966, NSA Papers, Box 112; First quarterly report of the Community Involvement Desk to the New World Foundation, July 2, 1965 [draft], NSA Papers, Box 112; Final Report on the Tuition Assistance Center, June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 111.

⁶⁴ Final Report on the Tuition Assistance Center, June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 111; “Background of the Tutorial Assistance Center’s Grants from the US Department of Labor,” [fall 1968], NSA Papers, Box 111.

had a full-time staff of nearly two dozen people, and was conducting conferences and publishing a professional newsletter alongside its direct tutorial work.

It had never been quite clear what motive, beyond the financial, NSA had for mobilizing college students to tutor underprivileged children and teens, however. While NSA as a whole was strategizing large-scale educational reform and the transformation of the university, its largest and most prominent project was one that existed to help poor youths to accommodate themselves to educational systems as they existed.⁶⁵

By late 1967 TAC staffers were moving toward the idea that “tutorials ought to become ‘vehicles for community organization in the field of education.’”⁶⁶ TAC’s third grant was based on that premise — tutors would be drawn from the communities they served, policies would be established locally by community members, curricula would be made more relevant to students’ lives.⁶⁷ TAC would, in short, be made “an active agent of change, working together with the community groups to develop integrated community-based plans to deal with present problems.”⁶⁸

TAC was granted one year’s funding under this new model, but the program was now an unwieldy hybrid — neither a logical extension of its original concept nor a coherent response to new circumstances. TAC operated seven local projects in 1968-69, and little — beyond the fact of their funding — connected them. Two were extensions of pre-existing community programs, three were traditional tutorials, and the other two were described in a TAC report as “amorphous student ventures into the community.”⁶⁹ Despite promises to draw on community members for staffing most of the program’s

⁶⁵ Rachele Diener, “Are Tutorials a ‘Middle-Class Thing?’” *USNSA Tutorial Assistance Center Bulletin*, October 1967, NSA Papers, Box 152.

⁶⁶ Rachele Diener, “Are Tutorials a ‘Middle-Class Thing?’” *USNSA Tutorial Assistance Center Bulletin*, October 1967, NSA Papers, Box 152.

⁶⁷ Final Report on the Tuition Assistance Center, June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 111.

⁶⁸ Proposal for 1968-69 TAC grant, quoted in the Final Report on the Tuition Assistance Center, June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 111.

⁶⁹ Final Report on the Tuition Assistance Center, June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 111.

volunteers were once again white college students, and they would were now being asked to serve as community organizers, a role that many of them were unprepared for. TAC, like NSA's Southern Project, had been overtaken by events.⁷⁰

The volunteers had, in the words of TAC's final report, "little more to offer the children of a poor community than a personalized invitation to adopt middle-class values." Their greatest skill was "negotiating with school officials," which left the tutorials as mere adjuncts to the public school system.⁷¹ Having abandoned its original purpose and failed to craft a coherent alternative, the project soon received word that its grants from the Labor Department and OEO would not be renewed.⁷²

The Center for Educational Reform

If TAC illustrated the risks of accepting grant funding indiscriminately, the fate of the Center for Educational Reform (CER) demonstrated that even well-conceived projects could be difficult to maintain in a form that served NSA's larger mission. Conceived over a period of two years by Ed Schwartz, who devoted considerable energy during his presidency to securing funding for it, CER was supposed to make Schwartz's student power agenda manifest on the nation's campuses.⁷³ In practice, however, it soon

⁷⁰ The integrationist liberal ethic of the early sixties was in disrepute within NSA by the latter part of the decade — as a summary of the report put it, many tutors had hoped their work would lead to "friendship, both cross-culturally and cross-economically," but such a connection was "often a figment of the tutor's imagination and needs." [Final Report on the Tuition Assistance Center, June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 111.]

⁷¹ Final Report on the Tuition Assistance Center, June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 111.

⁷² "Background of the Tutorial Assistance Center's Grants from the US Department of Labor," [fall 1968], NSA Papers, Box 111; NSA report on programs and finances, partial copy on file, [spring or summer 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁷³ Ed Schwartz to Marshall Robinson, March 6, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 21.

devolved into an independent fiefdom within NSA, following its own imperatives rather than those of the Association's membership or officers.

Near the end of his presidential term, Schwartz secured a three-year \$346,000 grant from the Ford Foundation to underwrite CER as a think-tank and center for organizing around "student-initiated and student-centered" higher education. CER would develop and nurture local and regional activism, commission and publish writing in the field, forge connections among activists and scholars, and coordinate NSA's other educational reform offerings.⁷⁴ Working in areas from the most revolutionary to the most incremental — on everything from free universities to "student initiative[s] in calendar reform" — it would be simultaneously NSA's most ambitious field organizing effort to date and its most dramatic bid for influence in the realm of higher education policy.⁷⁵

CER did not launch until after Schwartz left office, but initially it seemed to follow his intentions in at least loose outline. In its first year the CER ran training programs in California, Alabama, and Massachusetts.⁷⁶ It compiled and distributed informational materials on educational reform.⁷⁷ It held workshops at the 1969 NSA Congress.⁷⁸ It even hired as a consultant "a hip architect with interest in helping the Center provide students with alternative architectural styles for the dorms and living quarters on the campus."⁷⁹ If it was not quite the CER that Schwartz had envisioned — its field staff lacked national reach, its projects were seldom tightly coordinated, and it had

⁷⁴ "You've Heard About the Center For Educational Reform: What Is It?" 1968 NSC, NSA Papers, Box 13.

⁷⁵ "You've Heard About the Center For Educational Reform: What Is It?" 1968 NSC, NSA Papers, Box 13.

⁷⁶ Robert Powell to Michael Rossman, February 11, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 21; NSA report on programs and finances, partial copy on file, [spring or summer 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁷⁷ NSA report on programs and finances, partial copy on file, [spring or summer 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁷⁸ Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

⁷⁹ Robert Powell to Michael Rossman, February 11, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 21.

at best a marginal impact on national policy debates — it seemed to have laid a solid foundation for future work.⁸⁰

After its first year of operation CER hired a new director. Larry Magid was brought on board in November 1969, and by January he had put a new staff in place.⁸¹ With Schwartz by then long gone, and the new officers apparently exercising little oversight, the Magid staff set themselves to the task of crafting a new agenda for the Center. Informational, rather than organizing, efforts would be their focus. They revamped and expanded the Center's publications library, and launched *EdCentric*, a journal of educational reform. They scrapped the field organizing projects, using that money to create the ELF (Education Liberation Front) bus, a schoolbus they outfitted as “a mobile resource center” stocked with “files, bookshelves, audio equipment, a movie projector, and ... complete living and cooking facilities for two to four people.”⁸²

The ELF bus visited more than forty campuses in its first year, and began to fund its own operations through campus donations.⁸³ By the fall of 1970 the CER staff who were not on the road had developed free university course packets on “Women's liberation, foreign policy, racism, and ecology,” and were distributing videos and teacher

⁸⁰ “The Center for Educational Reform,” report, [summer 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14; “The Center for Educational Reform: It's Possible Mode of Operation: A Reason To Exist,” [spring 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14. A spring 1972 report on CER said that “very little of the money spent [in 1968-69] had much to do with educational reform or Center projects,” but the authors do not provide support for this claim and the documentation I have found does not bear out their charge. [Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.]

⁸¹ Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35. There was overlap in CER staff between 1968-69 and the following year — new Program Director Bill Moody had previously run the CER-funded Alabama Student Development Center.

⁸² Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

⁸³ Lawrence Magid to NSB members, October 6, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

education materials as well. ⁸⁴ *EdCentric* was a 24-page monthly by then, with a print run of 5000. ⁸⁵

Worthy as these projects may have been, however, they bore little connection to the Center's original mandate or to NSA's organizational interests. The ELF bus was no substitute for an NSA field staff, and CER publications were increasingly pitched to an audience of reform-oriented academics rather than activist students.

A year into Magid's tenure the chair of the NSB complained that CER had "little relevance to student governments," but in spite of such remonstrations CER continued to drift. ⁸⁶ In the fall of 1970 two ELF staffers used NSA support to found the Source Collective, a group that intended to publish a multivolume "movement *Whole Earth Catalog*." ⁸⁷ In 1972 the Ford grant ran out, and with no new funding forthcoming CER scaled back its operations dramatically. ⁸⁸ By late 1972 little remained but *EdCentric*, and the ties between the magazine and NSA had withered. The magazine's editorial staff relocated to Oregon that year, and in 1973 they formally requested that NSA dissolve the partnership. The split was ratified by the NSA Congress that August, and Schwartz's vision of a student power resource center within NSA was formally interred. ⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Lawrence Magid to NSB members, October 6, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

⁸⁵ Lawrence Magid to NSB Legal and Finance Committee, January 29, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁸⁶ Tom Schneider to NSB, November 19, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁸⁷ Lawrence Magid to NSB Legal and Finance Committee, January 29, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. The above describes the Source staff as "shar[ing] one salary," presumably one of CER's, and says they "are housed in quarters arranged through the association (nough said)," which most likely means that they had been given crash space in the NSA national office.

⁸⁸ Larry Magid to NSB, October 8, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Kathleen Brouder to John Woodley, January 30, 1973, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4. The Source Collective had was by then operating independently — a note in the back of the third Source Catalog, published in 1974, described the group as a "subsistence collective." [*Organizing for Health Care: A Tool For Change* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1974), 248.]

⁸⁹ *EdCentric* staff collective letter to subscribers, "Late November, 1974." NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. According to the above, however, the Association had by the time the letter

Identity Politics in NSA, 1968-69

At the 1967 Congress NSA had engaged the question of what it should do to combat racial injustice in society at large. At its next two Congresses, it would be sharply challenged on questions of racial inclusion and exclusivity in NSA itself.

The initiating event for this challenge at the 1968 Congress, held at Lawrence, Kansas, was an utterly ordinary event — the University of Alabama’s selection of an all-white Congress delegation. Many other predominantly white schools had sent such delegations in the past, and many did so in 1968. But a black student from the University of Alabama was in attendance at the Congress that year, and he asked that he be seated in the place of one of the school’s six whites. No provision of the NSA constitution had been violated by the Alabama delegation, but the CSC voted to give the seat to the black student anyway, and the plenary, after three hours of debate, concurred.

After the vote, however, Charles Palmer, a white Berkeley student, objected to the plenary’s treatment of the Alabama delegation. If the Association was going to single out member student governments for sanctions on the basis of their institutions’ failings, then he demanded that his own delegation be decredentialed because of the University of California’s racism.⁹⁰ Soon enough other delegations followed suit to convince the plenary to re-open the Alabama question. After a vote to amend the CSC report to seat

was written not completed the break. The magazine’s staff had in the intervening 15 months “had to pay many hundreds of dollars in long-distance phone and travel expenses” in its dealings with the Association, which still owed *EdCentric* “approximately \$2,000 of pre-August-1973 money.”

⁹⁰ “Plenary Debates Legalities,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 20, 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13. Palmer would be elected NSA president at the next year’s Congress.

the all-white delegation failed, a proposal to send the issue back to the CSC for reconsideration was adopted 188-167.⁹¹

The CSC debated the issue for nine hours. When they were done, they proposed seating all delegations in their original form, but urged that a procedure for challenging credentials on the basis of racism in their composition be put in place for 1969. The plenary debated for three more hours that night, and eventually the black student was seated in a 218-91 vote.⁹² After the credential fight the Congress created a commission on institutional racism, half of whose members would be drawn from the CSC, with the other half selected by the Association's year-old black issues commission, which had recently been renamed the Third World Commission (TWC).⁹³ The commission on racism would, in the words of its enabling resolution, "have the authority to deny voting rights of delegations not making substantial efforts to deal with the problem."⁹⁴

TWC received a substantial budget in 1968-69 — \$4500 from NSA and another \$7260 from the Ford Foundation, secured with the promise that the Commission would produce a "report on the state of black students in America."⁹⁵ But it suffered from disorganization and mismanagement, flaws whose effects were magnified by the fact that, as one observer put it, some "black students felt it revolutionary to usurp" NSA money while whites lacked the self-confidence to take action against even those black staffers "who were obviously fucking up."⁹⁶

⁹¹ Minutes of Congress Plenary Sessions, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 13*.

⁹² "Amended Credentials Accepted, Blacks Walk Out," *USNSA Congress News*, August 21, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 13. It is unclear whether the black delegate was seated instead of one of the white students from Alabama or in addition to them. [Minutes of Congress Plenary Sessions, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 13*.]

⁹³ NSA, Pre-conference mailing for Conference on Institutional Racism, [fall 1968], NSA Papers, Box 112.

⁹⁴ "Plenary Passes Four Resolutions," *USNSA Congress News*, [August 24, 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13.

⁹⁵ Robert Powell to Sally Oleon (Ford Foundation), June 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 21.

⁹⁶ Gwen Patton, "A Summary Report for the Third World Commission," [1969], NSA Papers, Box 14. The dysfunctionality of relations between the Association's mostly white

The Commission went through three directors that year, and when Gwen Patton was hired as the third of the three, she saw only one way out of the TWC's dysfunction: separation from NSA. The TWC had been a "disaster," she told black student leaders, with "black and white students sharing blame equally."⁹⁷ Students were incapable of working together across racial lines within NSA, given whites' knee-jerk endorsement of "any idea [or] program that is espoused by a black student," and it was time to try a new approach.⁹⁸ At the 1969 Congress NSA would, she said, provide free housing and meeting space to black students who wished to participate in the creation of a new group whose membership would consist of "black student [governments] at black colleges, insurgent groups on black campuses, and Black Student Union groups at the predominantly white [institutions]."⁹⁹ Only after the black group was established on its own might the two consider coming together to create "a truly National Student Association of equals."¹⁰⁰

Before 1967 every NSA Congress had been held in the Midwest. In 1968, however, it had been mounted in Kansas and in 1969 it was held at the University of Texas at El

elected leadership and at least some of its black staff can also be seen in an April 1969 memo to the NSB written by a black staffer whose job performance was under review by that body. The letter was addressed to "Alla the Massas and Misses on the NSB" from "Yo faithful nigger, Karen," and continued for several pages in that vein. [Memo from "Karen" to the officers and NSB, April 16, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 159*.] The fact that Patton, who came on board in the spring of 1969, was the commission's third director that year illuminates the difficulties the TWC faced organizationally as well. [Gwen Patton, "A Summary Report for the Third World Commission," [1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.]

⁹⁷ Gwen Patton to "Brothers and Sisters," May 19, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁹⁸ Gwen Patton, "A Summary Report for the Third World Commission," [1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁹⁹ Gwen Patton to "Brothers and Sisters," May 19, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹⁰⁰ Gwen Patton, "A Summary Report for the Third World Commission," [1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

Paso. About eight hundred students attended, many more than had been anticipated, and housing was tight, with some delegates forced to sleep on mattresses on the floor.¹⁰¹

As the Congress got underway, the Third World Commission met regularly to consider Gwen Patton's proposal for an independent black student organization. (These meetings, like all of the TWC's sessions, were closed to the Congress's white majority, as were some Congress workshops on racial issues.¹⁰²) The TWC's plan for the new black student group was distributed to delegates on August 24 and presented by black activist Muhammed Kenyatta to a plenary session in the university gym that night.¹⁰³ The plan called on NSA to launch the new group, to be called the National Association of Black Students (NABS), with a "reparations" payment equal to one-half of the money it had received for civil rights work since 1961.¹⁰⁴

Constitutional amendments were the first order of official business in the plenary that night, but after Kenyatta's presentation there was a motion to suspend the rules to

¹⁰¹ "Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969; Marc A. Triebwasser, "Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association," [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 14; Paul Cohen, open letter in *USNSA Congress News*, [August 18?, 1969], NSA Papers, Box 13. *USNSA Congress News*, August 19, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 13. For comparison, 1500 activists were said to have attended the SDS conference earlier that summer. [Sale, SDS, 564.]

¹⁰² Paul Tamminen, "'Powerlessness Corrupts:' A report on the US National Student Association National Congress, With Commentary and a Few Suggestions," September 1969. [Prepared for the American Council on Education.] NSA Papers, Box 14. At least one white student was turned away when he attempted to register for the TWC meeting. [Marc A. Triebwasser, "Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association," [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 14.] At one workshop on Latino issues, whites were allowed to attend but told in advance that they would not be permitted to participate in discussion. ["Raza Workshops," *USNSA Congress News*, August 24 [25?], 1969, NSA Papers, Box 13.] There was some tension between the black and Latino contingents, and the two groups would ultimately present separate demands to the plenary. ["New Turmoil Develops in NSA Meet," *El Paso Times*, undated clipping, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.]

¹⁰³ Sunday's Plenary Speakers," *USNSA Congress News*, August 24, 1969. [Apparently a misprint for August 25.] NSA Papers, Box 13; "Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969. At a press conference early in the Congress, Kenyatta had declared that NSA itself should be led by "revolutionary Black and Chicano students in alliance with the anti-racist whites." [Robert Zuck, "Black Economic Development Conference," *USNSA Congress News*, [August 23?, 1969], NSA Papers, Box 13.]

¹⁰⁴ Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.

consider the NABS proposal.¹⁰⁵ Debate on this procedural motion was confused and tense — at one point a group of black students mounted the dais, and there was apparently a brief scuffle.¹⁰⁶ The motion to suspend the rules ultimately failed, after which most of the black and Latino students present walked out of the gym, along with some white supporters and other exhausted participants.¹⁰⁷ Consideration of proposed constitutional amendments then began as scheduled, but within minutes it was obvious that the body no longer had a quorum and the plenary was forced to adjourn.¹⁰⁸

The next day Gwen Patton held an angry news conference.¹⁰⁹ “Racist students control NSA,” she declared, and blacks “can no longer be part of a racist organization.” The days when NSA could “use black problems for their own purposes to gain financial grants from foundations” were over.¹¹⁰ At the same press conference, another speaker said that NABS would attempt to gain access to the Association’s financial records in order to determine how much NSA had taken in for civil rights work in years past.¹¹¹

Early in that evening’s plenary, a group of blacks entered the gym wearing improvised Klan robes and chanting “NSA, KKK!” They marched to the front of the

¹⁰⁵ Marc A. Triebwasser, “Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association,” [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969. Copy on file in NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹⁰⁶ “Vote on Black Manifesto Postponed,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 24, 1969. [Apparently a misprint for August 25.] NSA Papers, Box 13.

¹⁰⁷ “Vote on Black Manifesto Postponed,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 24, 1969. [Apparently a misprint for August 25.] NSA Papers, Box 13. A *Newsweek* article later stated that about fifty people participated in the walkout. [“Breaking the Rules,” *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.]

¹⁰⁸ “National Officer’s Election Postponed,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 26, 1969, NSA Papers.

¹⁰⁹ My conclusion that the press conference was held on August 24 is inferential, but I believe it to be likely.

¹¹⁰ Richard Greenfield, “Blacks Storm NSA Platform; Take Over Meeting By Force,” *El Paso Times*, undated clipping, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

¹¹¹ Richard Greenfield, “Blacks Storm NSA Platform; Take Over Meeting By Force,” *El Paso Times*, undated clipping, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

room, burned a paper cross, and marched out.¹¹² Later a black first-year student from Ohio University approached a microphone, asking to be recognized on a point of privilege. When he was recognized, he asked that the plenary take up the NABS proposal, and was ruled out of order by the chair, NSA president Robert Powell. He rose with the same request several more times, and was ruled out of order each time.¹¹³

After one of these exchanges, a white student approached the microphone and began a joking mock campaign speech, which Powell did not interrupt.¹¹⁴ When NABS supporters realized that this student was not going to be ruled out of order, they erupted in anger. A group of black students rushed the dais. Someone knocked over the podium, and someone else disconnected the sound system. An incensed Kenyatta called Powell's actions racist, and the student that Powell had refused to recognize smashed a placard against a table.¹¹⁵ When a white staffer tried to make a telephone call from the platform, a black student tore the phone from his hands and destroyed it.¹¹⁶

By the time order was restored there was no thought of continuing. The meeting adjourned in disarray for the second night in a row, and it was increasingly unclear how — and indeed whether — the Congress would be able to go forward.¹¹⁷

Congress participants met in intense but informal groups that night.¹¹⁸ NSA was divided on both the goals and the tactics of the protestors, and by now many students

¹¹² "Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969. According to another source, the protesters were a mixed group of blacks and whites. [Richard Greenfield, "Blacks Storm NSA Platform; Take Over Meeting By Force," *El Paso Times*, undated clipping, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.]

¹¹³ "Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.

¹¹⁴ Marc A. Triebwasser, "Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association," [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969. Copy on file in NSA Papers, Box 14, "Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.

¹¹⁵ "Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.

¹¹⁶ Richard Greenfield, "Blacks Storm NSA Platform; Take Over Meeting By Force," *El Paso Times*, undated clipping, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

¹¹⁷ Marc A. Triebwasser, "Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association," [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969. Copy on file in NSA Papers, Box 14.

were ready to abandon the plenaries entirely.¹¹⁹ Some left El Paso, while others “drifted into their own activities, both ‘social’ and educational or political.”¹²⁰ The next day’s scheduled sessions were cancelled to give attendees the chance to continue to confer informally, and it was announced that the NABS proposal would be the first item on the agenda when the plenary reconvened that night.¹²¹

When the Congress reconvened, substantially reduced by attrition, four resolutions were presented — a pledge of \$50,000 of support for NABS, a plan to increase representation of students of color at future Congresses, and expressions of support for boycotts of grapes and Coors beer.¹²² All passed easily, with the delegates who remained engaging in little debate.¹²³ The presidential election was held that night,

¹¹⁸ Marc A. Triebwasser, “Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association,” [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969. Copy on file in NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹¹⁹ “Breaking the Rules,” *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.

¹²⁰ “Breaking the Rules,” *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969; Paul Tamminen, “‘Powerlessness Corrupts:’ A report on the US National Student Association National Congress, With Commentary and a Few Suggestions,” September 1969. [Prepared for the American Council on Education.] NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹²¹ Marc A. Triebwasser, “Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association,” [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969. Copy on file in NSA Papers, Box 14; “National Officer’s Election Postponed,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 26, 1969, NSA Papers.

¹²² Marc A. Triebwasser, “Reflections on the Congress of the National Student Association,” [American Jewish Congress] *Congress Bi-Weekly*, October 13, 1969. Copy on file in NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹²³ “NABS, Chicano Resolutions and New NSB Resolutions Package Pass In Last Night’s Legislative Plenary,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 27, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 13. NSA had neither the funds nor the inclination to give NABS the \$50,000 from its own coffers, so it set out after the Congress to raise the money from its member campuses. New president Charles Palmer tasked Clinton Deveaux — the Association’s only black officer — with spearheading the campaign, but Deveaux was skeptical about the new group and, as he put it, “totally unwilling to ... go the White guilt route” in raising money for NABS. [Charles Palmer memo to Clint Deveaux, September 15, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 158; Deveaux memo to Palmer, September 15, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 158.] By the end of the year, NSA had given NABS only \$16,000. [Charles Palmer to Jesus Rodriguez, president of University of Texas El Paso student government, July 31, 1970, NSA Papers, Box 21.] In August 1970, the Association and NABS agreed that the remainder of the debt would be paid off in monthly installments of \$2500, and at the 1970 Congress the delegates committed NSA to that payment schedule. [David Rein, attorney for NABS, to NSA January 19, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Tom Schneider, NSB chair, et al to Illinois-

and Charles Palmer, a white former Berkeley student body president who had the support of most of the Congress's activist students of color, won easily.¹²⁴ After the plenary, there was a pre-scheduled concert with performances by Eddie Floyd, Isaac Hayes, the Staple Singers, and the Bar Kays, where one observer described the mood as "one of a victory party."¹²⁵

The following night's plenary, the Congress' last, was devoted to the two vice-presidential elections. In the first, Jim Sutton, a white doctoral candidate in higher education at the University of Iowa, was elected executive vice president with a strong majority.¹²⁶ The election for campus affairs vice president would not go as smoothly.

Seven candidates declared for CAVP, but four of them dropped out before voting began.¹²⁷ On the first ballot two candidates, Steve Feinstein and David Goldfarb, led. Goldfarb prevailed in a run-off, but Feinstein supporters challenged the results, claiming that NSA staff had engaged in politicking on the plenary floor. The chair declared their motion out of order, and they appealed his decision. During the ensuing debate Feinstein withdrew from the race, saying, as the *Congress News* paraphrased his remarks, that "he was going back to the streets where he could relate with people, not deal with ego-trippers." The withdrawal of the ostensibly wronged candidate did not deter the

Wisconsin student body presidents, November 16, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.] By January, however, the Association's officers, unable to meet their own payroll, suspended payments, and NABS brought suit against the Association a few days later. [David Ifshin to the members of the NSB, March 19, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.] At the 1971 Congress the delegates affirmed the officers' decision, voting 205-105 against the payment of the remaining \$22,000 owed. ["Blacks & Chicanos Shut Down Plenary," *USNSA Congress News*, August 25, 1971. The vote sparked a walkout of an estimated one hundred students of color and supportive whites.] The lawsuit lingered for a while, but eventually it — and NABS — disappeared.

¹²⁴ "Charles Palmer on the First Ballot," *USNSA Congress News*, August 27, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 13; "Breaking the Rules," *Newsweek*, September 8, 1969.

¹²⁵ "New Turmoil Develops in NSA Meet," *El Paso Times*, undated clipping, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

¹²⁶ Jim Sutton to the Editor of the *Oklahoma Daily*, September 28, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 165.

¹²⁷ The following narrative of the CAVP election is taken from *USNSA Congress News*, August 28, 1969, NSA Papers.

delegates from voting to re-open the election, however, and the vote to re-open prompted Goldfarb, the first ballot's victor, to withdraw *his* candidacy in protest. Powell proposed that the position be left vacant, the delegates endorsed his proposal, and the plenary recessed for dinner.

But when the plenary reconvened three hours later, the delegates reversed themselves yet again and re-opened nominations, for reasons that remain unclear. Four new candidates were nominated, nominations were closed, and the four were questioned by the body, at which point a delegate moved to suspend the rules yet again to allow a *fifth* candidate, Clinton Deveaux, to be placed in nomination.

Deveaux, a black Lowenstein ally at the 1967 Congress, was by then working in Lowenstein's congressional office. As he had been in 1967, Deveaux was in 1969 a liberal opponent of the Congress' black radical faction.¹²⁸ He had been nominated for president at the Monday plenary, where his nomination had met with jeers from NSA's militants. Nonetheless the plenary suspended the rules to allow him to run, and in the Congress' final bizarre shift, he won a first-ballot victory.

With that the Iowa-Nebraska region walked out in protest and the 1969 NSA Congress limped to a close.

National Office Crises, 1969-70

As problematic as NSA's reliance on government and foundation grants was, such grants were until 1969 a source of tremendous stability. Even where the projects they funded were of questionable merit, the contracts often included provision for overhead

¹²⁸ Deveaux had been a vocal opponent of the "by any means necessary" clause of the 1967 Congress black power resolution. [Davis, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, 26.]

fees, payable to NSA, that augmented general fund revenues. Project staffers could also often be enlisted to provide occasional assistance with other Association business.

In 1968-69, however, the Association's grants for several major projects expired, and others were revoked unexpectedly. It appears that several factors combined to produce this result — Nixon's victory rendered NSA unwelcome in many executive branch agencies, and there were strains with other funders over lax bookkeeping or a failure of programs to conform to expectations. Finally, some projects had simply run their course. In the first year after Schwartz's presidency the Association attempted to continue the work he had started, but it increasingly found itself overtaken by events.

A financial crunch was transformed into a financial crisis by the Association's lax budgetary control that year. In several cases, NSA failed to shut down programs whose funding had been cut — either in hopes of finding new grants or in seeming obliviousness to the consequences.¹²⁹ Overruns were endemic throughout the Association that year — NSA spent \$41,000 in its "Telephone and Telegraph" budget line, for instance, and reported another \$64,000 in "miscellaneous" or "unclassified" expenses. All told, the Association spent at least \$275,000 more than it took in.¹³⁰

As part of its attempt to close this gap, NSA made its most concerted effort in years to expand its services revenue. Youth and students were an ever more desirable market in the late sixties, and an ever more sophisticated one — NSA's ties to that cohort struck many as a way to achieve an enviable level of access to them. As an NSA promotional pamphlet put it:

¹²⁹ One report claimed that more than \$160,000 of general operating funds were spent on projects that had been undertaken with the expectation that they would be supported by outside funding.

¹³⁰ "US National Student Association Comparative Statement of Income and Expenses for 10-month Period Ending July 31, 1970 and for 12-month Period Ending September 30, 1969," NSA Papers, Box 14.

It doesn't really matter if the students on your campus are political, swingers, batman fans, apathetic, conservative, avant garde, pro-student government, involved, straight, anti-student government or whatever. NSA services are designed for all kinds of people — as long as they're students.¹³¹

The expansion of services projects had been contemplated even before the financial crisis of 1969. At the 1968 Congress the delegates had approved a contract with a job placement agency.¹³² At around the same time, NSA had launched a “National Student Record Club,” made plans for a national “College Calendar and Handbook,” and entered negotiations for a book club project.¹³³ There was talk as well of resurrecting NSA's first-ever service program, the national student discount card of the 1940s.¹³⁴ But this hodge-podge of service programs required substantial oversight from the Association, and provided only limited, unreliable revenue.¹³⁵

Since the mid-1960s NSA had been a partner in a life insurance plan aimed at college students, contributing its name and reputation and some help with marketing.¹³⁶ NSA took in two dollars for each twenty-dollar policy sold, while the investors claimed any other profits to be made — both from the original policies and from potentially

¹³¹ *The Congress and You*, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 13.

¹³² “Plenary Passes Four Resolutions,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 24, 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13. The contract was signed shortly thereafter. [Robert Powell cover letter to NSA mass mailing to campuses, [fall 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13.] Concerns were raised at the time of the Congress about discrimination and defense contracts at some of the companies ReCon serviced, but the agreement passed by a wide majority on the strength of a promised “minimum of \$20 thousand profit to NSA.” [“ReCon Recommended Despite NSB Rift,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 16?, 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13; “Plenary Passes Four Resolutions,” *USNSA Congress News*, [August 24, 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13.]

¹³³ Mark Lewis, Treasurer, Disc Management Corporation, to Robert Powell, March 26, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 66; *The Congress and You*, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 13; Surrey, Karasik, Gould and Greene memo to Alan Handell, May 27, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 66.

¹³⁴ Robert Powell cover letter to NSA mass mailing to campuses, [fall 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13.

¹³⁵ James M. Graham, *Some Answers to the Questions Raised By the Young Americans for Freedom and Other Right Wing Groups*, [1968-69], NSA Papers. The Association did have some success in turning grant-funded projects into self-sustaining ventures at about this time, however.

¹³⁶ Dan Allison, Director of NSA Services, to student leaders, May 1974, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

lucrative post-collegiate renewals. The life insurance project was a profitable one, and it served as a model when, in early 1969, NSA and several of its business partners agreed upon a plan for the dramatic expansion of service offerings. They would create a new corporation, National Academic Services (NAS), which would license the exclusive rights to market products and services to NSA's constituency under NSA's name. The Association would be paid a guaranteed minimum of \$200,000 a year, and would share in any profits made by the venture.¹³⁷

This arrangement looked to be far more lucrative for NSA than any previous service program had been — even ETI, the Association's CIA-era travel bureau, hadn't produced this kind of revenue. At least as important, the deal promised to provide NSA with regular, predictable funding — money that could be relied upon at budget time and drawn upon when other funds were delayed or failed to meet expectations. Finally, the first year's payment of \$200,000 would go a long way toward extricating the Association from the immediate crisis in which it found itself.¹³⁸

The web of relationships that underlay NAS was a complicated one, and poorly understood within NSA. The life insurance project was operated by a company called Academic Underwriters (AU). In October 1969 representatives of AU would be “instrumental” in arranging a \$200,000 loan to NSA from a company called the Commercial Credit Corporation (CCC), a loan which was secured by the assignment of a portion of NSA's anticipated receipts from the NAS and AU. CCC was itself a part-owner of AU, and several AU figures were central to NAS.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ NSA report on programs and finances, partial copy on file, [spring or summer 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹³⁸ NSA report on programs and finances, partial copy on file, [spring or summer 1969], NSA Papers, Box 14.

¹³⁹ Jim Sutton, Bi-Weekly Report to the NSB, October 24, 1969, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6; Minutes of the October 1-4 1969 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

The Association began to worry that these various entities were operating in their own interest at the expense of NSA's that fall, after a company called Executive Systems approached NSA with an offer to conduct fundraising for the Association.¹⁴⁰ When Executive Services' representatives reviewed the Association's life insurance contracts, they declared that NSA was being taken advantage of — by their calculations, a fair contract would be providing the Association with between \$25,000 and \$50,000 more a year than they were currently receiving.¹⁴¹ NSA's suspicions were compounded the following month when EVP Jim Sutton came into possession of an internal NAS memo that advised NAS representatives to avoid mention of NSA when pitching NAS services on campuses — it had been NSA's understanding that those representatives would be helping to recruit new members to the Association in the course of their canvassing.¹⁴²

The NAS scheme collapsed not long after that. At a January 1970 NSB meeting, Sutton questioned the propriety of the intertwined relationships between AU, NAS, and CCC, and suggested that some of NSA's recent financial difficulties might have been engineered by its partners in the life insurance project in order to strengthen NAS's hand in negotiations with the Association.¹⁴³ Whether because of NSA's cold feet or some other reason — documentation is sparse — NAS folded soon after, having provided the Association with support amounting to just over half its promised first-year payment.¹⁴⁴

This was not the end of NSA's efforts to use profit-making enterprises as a source of revenue. The life insurance program continued to operate, and other small-scale

¹⁴⁰ Minutes of the October 1-4 1969 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35. ES intended to promote NSA among possible donors as “the only alternative to SDS and YAF.”

¹⁴¹ Jim Sutton, Bi-Weekly Report to the NSB, October 24, 1969, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁴² Jim Sutton Report #3 to NSB, November 28, 1969, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6. Sutton described NSA-NAS relations as strained and distant in that report.

¹⁴³ Minutes of the January 30-31 1970 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 165. See Charles Palmer to Steve Corker, President, National Academic Services, March 4, 1970 (NSA Papers, Box 21.) for more evidence of NSA-NAS strain.

¹⁴⁴ Drew Olim, “A Brief Financial History,” memo to NSB October 22, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

ventures — including a new travel project — provided the Association with some revenue in the years that followed. But after the NAS collapse NSA would never again put profit-oriented service projects at the center of its efforts to achieve financial sustainability — in the future it would look elsewhere.

In early 1968 NSA had been organizationally and financially robust, but by early 1970 it was deeply in debt, and going through a staffing crisis as well. Clint Deveaux had resigned as campus affairs vice president barely a month into his term, believing that he had been excluded from decision-making by the other officers and the staff.¹⁴⁵ Executive vice president Jim Sutton, dismayed at the crises he had inherited and disenchanted with the Association, resigned in January.¹⁴⁶ That month president Charles Palmer described the Association — which had seemed to be resurgent on the campuses and in the nation just eighteen months earlier — as “rebuilding, starting with nothing.”¹⁴⁷

But although the NAS project had failed, it had before failing provided NSA with an infusion of cash, and by adopting austerity budgets each of the Association’s next several administrations would reduce its indebtedness further. NSA would be smaller than it had been, and it would for some time divert a significant portion of its income to the retirement of the debts of the late 1960s, but it would remain afloat.

Vietnam

Between 1966 and 1969 NSA had mounted occasional high-profile anti-war organizing efforts, most notably in organizing mass public statements against the war

¹⁴⁵ Charles Palmer to the members of the NSB, October 9, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 21.

¹⁴⁶ Minutes of the January 30-31 1970 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 165.

¹⁴⁷ Minutes of the January 30-31 1970 NSB meeting, NSA Papers, Box 165.

and the draft by student body presidents and campus newspaper editors. Its officers and staff had at times provided assistance to local anti-war campaigns as well. But its primary organizing focus in those years had been on student power issues.

Events of the 1969-70 academic year, however, placed the war at the center of any conception of American student organizing. In October, the huge Vietnam Moratorium demonstrated that it was possible to mount massive simultaneous protests on campuses across the country. (The protests after the verdicts were delivered in the Chicago Eight conspiracy trial in February 1970 reinforced this message.)¹⁴⁸ And then in the spring came the US invasion of Cambodia and the wild escalation of protest that followed. The anti-war movement was better coordinated than ever before, and protestors' sense of their own potential was at a high. As one NSAer put it a couple of years later, "students who had felt helpless and ineffectual ... began to understand the national potential of their movement."¹⁴⁹

President Nixon revealed the US invasion of Cambodia on April 30, 1970, in a televised speech. At a news conference the next day NSA president Charles Palmer, flanked by ten collegiate student body presidents, denounced the invasion and Nixon's "odious disregard of the constitution" and called for his impeachment.¹⁵⁰ The nation's first student strikes in response to the invasion had already been called by the time Palmer spoke, and by Monday walkouts had begun, with NSA's enthusiastic support, at dozens of campuses. Throughout the weekend NSA staff worked with an impromptu

¹⁴⁸ Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

¹⁴⁹ Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

¹⁵⁰ "NSA Calls for Nixon's Impeachment," *NSA Newsletter*, May 5, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24. This event may have precipitated NSA's appearance on President Nixon's "enemies list." ["Lists of White House Enemies," *New York Times*, June 28, 1973.]

national strike center at Brandeis University to coordinate, encourage, and publicize strike activity as best they could.¹⁵¹

Many campuses closed as the protests escalated, particularly those at which significant property damage took place. But Kent State in Ohio stayed open, and that state's governor — facing a deteriorating situation on campus with a closely contested election just a few days away — called out the National Guard. On Monday, a little after noon, Guard troops on the campus fired on a crowd of protesters. The gunfire killed four people, including two students who were walking past the protest on their way to class.

This was not the first time, or even the first time in recent years, that American students had been killed by agents of the government in the course of a campus protest. In early 1968 police had fired on anti-segregation activists at South Carolina State University, killing three. And it would not be the last — nine days after Kent State, two students at Jackson State College in Mississippi were killed in circumstances similar to those of the South Carolina shootings. But unlike in South Carolina and Mississippi, the students killed at Kent State were white. And crucially, the Kent State killings were documented on film — a Kent State photography major took two rolls of photos of that day's protest and its aftermath, and his photographs went out over the AP wire that night. One image — of a young woman kneeling over the body of one of the dead, screaming with arms outstretched — appeared on the front pages of newspapers all over the country the next day.¹⁵²

The Kent State killings unleashed an unprecedented wave of protest, forcing hundreds of campuses to close for the semester. NSA did what it could to assist with and coordinate the actions, playing a particularly significant role in tallying and publicizing protests in reports to the national media. When its membership met for the annual

¹⁵¹ "Strike Sweeps Across US Campuses," *NSA Newsletter*, May 17, 1970.

¹⁵² The photograph ultimately won the Pulitzer Prize.

Congress two months later, they oriented NSA more decisively toward anti-war efforts than it had ever been before.

By a vote of 214-50, the 1970 plenary approved a resolution that endorsed anti-war action in the fall and declared that “if the war is not ended by May 1, 1971, NSA will commit itself to a concerted expansion of massive non-violent action including civil disobedience at the local, regional, and national levels.”¹⁵³ At the end of the Congress the delegates chose as president David Ifshin, who had introduced a narrowly defeated alternative resolution that had — by one report — warned that anti-war forces would “seize Washington DC by force on May 1” if the war had not ended by then.¹⁵⁴

Ifshin’s presidency was consumed by Vietnam, to the near-exclusion of all other concerns. Just weeks after taking office he mounted a hunger strike in front of the White House with a dozen student body presidents in support of Vietnamese student leader Huynh Van Mam.¹⁵⁵ The minutes of the October NSB meeting record that the “main points” of Ifshin’s report there were an update on NSA’s finances and an account of “the role the National Office had played in giving help to the Saigon Students Union.”¹⁵⁶

Ifshin made plans that fall for a three-week Vietnam trip with delegations traveling to the North and the South.¹⁵⁷ In preparation for the trip CER head Larry Magid traveled to Paris to meet with the North Vietnamese delegation to the peace talks.

¹⁵³ Resolution on NSA considered by the Florida Junior Colleges Student Government Association, October 1970. CIA Files, MORI DocID 819079.

¹⁵⁴ Resolution on NSA considered by the Florida Junior Colleges Student Government Association, October 1970. CIA Files, MORI DocID 819079. The quote that appears above is from an anti-Ifshin resolution, and it appears to be a paraphrase rather than a direct transcription of the resolution’s text. The original resolution is not preserved in the Association’s archives. The vice president elected at the Congress was Don Shall. [“Staff Biographies,” [1970-71], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.]

¹⁵⁵ Summary of Prior Contact With Vietnamese,” *NSA Newsletter*, January 12, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24.

¹⁵⁶ Minutes of the October 1970 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹⁵⁷ David Ifshin to NSB, October 21, 1970 [draft], NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

From Paris Magid, who had gotten to know Eldridge Cleaver two years earlier, flew to Algeria where he spent a week with Cleaver and the Black Panthers in exile.¹⁵⁸

In mid-November Tom Schneider, the chair of the NSB, visited NSA's national offices to make the case to Ifshin that "too much ... energy, time, and resources had been directed toward the [Vietnam] Trip and not enough ... to building and servicing a strong membership base."¹⁵⁹ Ifshin promised Schneider that he would put off the trip until at least December 20, but even as the two were meeting a telegram arrived from the North Vietnamese that convinced Ifshin that if he did not leave immediately, it might not be possible for the trip to take place at all.¹⁶⁰ He made plans to assemble a delegation to leave at the end of November.¹⁶¹

The avowed purpose of the Vietnam trip was to draft and approve a model treaty between the national unions of students of the US and Vietnam. The delegation that had planned to visit South Vietnam was denied entry, so they flew to France and met with pro-Northern South Vietnamese students and officials. After trying and failing to enter South Vietnam through Laos, they joined the other delegation in the North.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Larry Magid, "A Visit to Eldridge Cleaver's Home Away from Babylon," *NSA Newsletter*, November 25, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24. While a student at Berkeley, Magid had controversially invited Cleaver to teach a student-initiated course on American society. [Julie A. Reuben, "The Limits of Freedom: Student Activists and Educational Reform at Berkeley in the 1960s," in Robert Cohen and Reginald E. Zelnik, eds, *The Free Speech Movement: Reflections on Berkeley in the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) 485-7.]

¹⁵⁹ Tom Schneider to NSB, November 23, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹⁶⁰ An NSB committee approved the plan on the condition that no NSA money be expended. [Tom Schneider to NSB, November 23, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.]

¹⁶¹ In publicity materials, internal correspondence, and the peace treaty itself, the delegation was described as composed of "student body presidents and college newspaper editors" or simply "student body presidents." In fact, however, the delegation consisted of Ifshin, seven student body presidents, two former student newspaper editors, and five others. (Ifshin was a former student body president himself.) ["Taking the Treaty to the People," *NSA Newsletter*, February 3, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24; Ifshin, Shall, Schneider letter to SBPs, [January 1971], NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; "Joint Treaty of Peace," [1970], NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; "USNSA Peace Delegation" statement, December 22, 1970. CIA files, MORI DocID 819087.]

¹⁶² "People's Peace," *The Fifth Estate*, December 24, 1970.

The Americans returned to the US nearly a month after they left, bearing a multilaterally signed “People’s Peace Treaty” that pledged an “immediate and total withdrawal” of US forces from Vietnam. In return, the Vietnamese would “enter discussions to secure the release of all American prisoners,” as well as “discussion of procedures to guarantee the safety and political freedom” of South Vietnamese collaborators with the US and its supported regimes.¹⁶³

After the delegation’s return some NSB members expressed dismay at the lack of consultation they had been shown in the drafting of the treaty.¹⁶⁴ Earlier, the NSB had been concerned enough about the possibility of dramatic action by the officers that it had unanimously adopted a resolution mandating that “the national officers ... receive majority approval of the Board’s Legal and Finance Committee” before “entering into any programs or treaties of an international nature.”¹⁶⁵ But the national office moved forward with organizing around the document — in mid-March, NSA claimed endorsements for the treaty by three hundred student body presidents and campus newspapers, and off-campus endorsements by prominent figures ranging from Bella Abzug to Rock Hudson.¹⁶⁶ In April eight members of the House of Representatives introduced the treaty as a resolution in that chamber, and in May NSA reported that 63 campuses had held referenda on the treaty, with 61 of them endorsing it.¹⁶⁷ By March, the State Department felt compelled to make a public statement that the treaty essentially recapitulated “the same terms which have been put forward repeatedly over the past few years by the communist negotiators in Paris.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶³ “Joint Treaty of Peace,” [1970], NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹⁶⁴ Wib Gully to NSB, January 21, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹⁶⁵ Minutes of the October 1970 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹⁶⁶ *NSA Newsletter*, March 17, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24.

¹⁶⁷ “Peace Treaty Now In Congress,” *NSA Newsletter*, May 19, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24.

¹⁶⁸ “State Department Blasts Peace Treaty,” *NSA Newsletter*, April 7, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24.

By now, NSA was under investigation by the Central Intelligence Agency's MHCHAOS program, a secret program that spied on the anti-war movement.¹⁶⁹ (A January CIA memo on the trip had concluded that the delegation "did not get to very many places" in North Vietnam, adding that "[REDACTED] evaluation of the trip was that not much happened. [REDACTED] the group is a little unrealistic [REDACTED] to bring peace by having students talk about it.¹⁷⁰) And at least two members of the NSA delegation — Ifshin and former University of New Hampshire student body president Mark Wefers — were investigated by the FBI after the tour.¹⁷¹

Gender, Sexism, and the Tabankin Presidency

In the late sixties, gender took a back seat to race within NSA — at the 1969 Congress, a women's liberation workshop and another on homosexuality were among those cancelled to make time for discussion of the NABS demands, and there is no indication in the files that anyone made a public complaint or attempted to reschedule the sessions.¹⁷² By this time, however, female activists were increasingly organizing as feminists at their own schools — in 1970 women's groups were active on twenty-seven percent of the nation's campuses.¹⁷³ And as with students of color, as women organized identity-based groups on campus, they would soon begin to recreate such structures in

¹⁶⁹ Redacted CIA memo, November 7, 1969. MORI DocID 819046.

¹⁷⁰ Redacted memo, January 4, 1971. MORI DocID 819085.

¹⁷¹ For Wefers, see "Vietnam Delegate Investigated By FBI," *NSA Newsletter*, April 7, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24; For Ifshin see redacted memo, September 24, 1971. MORI DocID 819150. The above is a memo from CIA files with "Mr. Wannall" of the FBI listed as the first recipient. A Freedom of Information Act request turned up more than a dozen CIA cables and memoranda regarding NSA from Ifshin's term of office, at least eight of them flagged "MHCHAOS."

¹⁷² *USNSA Congress News*, August 26, 1969, NSA Papers.

¹⁷³ Arthur Levine and Keith R. Wilson, "Student Activism in the 1970s: Transformation Not Decline," *Higher Education* 8 (1979), 635-636.

the Association — NSA established a women’s center in the fall of 1970, in response to a plenary mandate. Its first year was a rocky one, with the center receiving little respect from the mostly male NSA staff, but at the 1971 Congress, women would force a re-evaluation of the Association’s priorities.

On the first night of plenaries in 1971 the Association staged a concert for the delegates in the campus gym. The performer was Wayne Cochran, a white R&B singer with a gaudy pompadour who styled himself a “white James Brown.” Before the Congress, feminist students who considered Cochran’s act sexist had tried without success to convince NSA to cancel the concert.

Midway through Cochran’s performance, several dozen female Congress participants took to the stage, accompanied by a contingent of male supporters.¹⁷⁴ One woman delegate took the microphone from Cochran and read a prepared statement that, in the words of a *Congress News* article, “called for greater participation in policy making and an end to ... the sexist structure of NSA.” The concert was abandoned after the protestors took the stage, and meetings to discuss the protest and its complaints continued until three o’clock that morning — first in the gym, and later in a women’s dormitory on campus.¹⁷⁵ Two additional open meetings were held the next day, with that night’s musical performers — the New York Rock Ensemble — participating in the second, a consciousness-raising session about sexism in rock music.¹⁷⁶

On the last night of the Congress the delegates, declaring that the Association’s women’s center had received a “general lack of support from the white, male dominated

¹⁷⁴ The *USNSA Congress News* described the male demonstrators as “gay and men’s liberation supporters.” [“Women Halt Cochran Concert,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 21 [1971], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.]

¹⁷⁵ “Women Halt Cochran Concert,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 21 [1971], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

¹⁷⁶ “Rock Ensemble Discusses Sexism in Music With Delegates,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 22, [1971], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1. There does not appear to have been a consciousness-raising session after the concert by the following night’s performer, Odetta.

NSA staff” over the previous year, established a new Women’s Advisory Board for NSA, comprised of one woman delegate from each of NSA’s seven geographic areas, each elected by the female delegates of that area. Earlier, the delegates had established NSA’s first Gay Desk, to be “staffed by Gay people [and] responsible to Gay people in NSA.”¹⁷⁷ That night the delegates elected the Association’s its first female president ever — and its first female officer in more than a decade — Margery Tabankin of the University of Wisconsin. Tabankin was one of a dozen candidates to declare for the office, but Greg Craig, her sole remaining opponent after the first ballot, dropped out during the second round of voting, ceding the race to her.¹⁷⁸

Vietnam would dominate Tabankin’s time in office as it had Ifshin’s. The Association sponsored an international student conference on the war in Washington that fall, and Tabankin attended a similar conference in Paris a few months later.¹⁷⁹ In the spring NSA co-sponsored an anti-war organizing conference with the newly-formed National Student Lobby, and in May Tabankin made an eight-day visit to North Vietnam, which left her entranced with the North Vietnamese — on her return, she described the nation as an example of “what a working people’s struggle could become and the spirit it could create in a country.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ *United States National Student Association Codification of Policy 1971-72*, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1. “Tabankin, Mooney To Head NSA,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 28, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

¹⁷⁸ “Tabankin, Mooney To Head NSA,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 28, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1. William Waugh, “Student Association Elects Woman President,” [newspaper article, apparently clipped from the August 29, 1971 *Fort Collins Coloradoan*], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1. After Tabankin’s election Tom Mooney, a former Temple University student body president, achieved a first-ballot election as vice president.

¹⁷⁹ William A. Sievert, “Worldwide Student Action Mapped at DC Conference,” Campus Press Service [perhaps a reprint from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*], November 6, 1971; Redacted memo, February 1972. MORI DocID 819060.

¹⁸⁰ “Protest: Students,” *The Great Speckled Bird*, May 1, 1972; Frances Lang, “It’s a Women’s War Too,” *Off Our Backs*, September 1972.

By the end of Tabankin's term, however, the draft had been all but abandoned and American involvement in the war was itself nearing an end. In the years that followed, NSA would struggle to find a sustainable new focus for its efforts.

Conclusion

In the mid-1960s NSA had received high levels of funding from the federal government and foundations, and spent freely in the expectation that such support would continue indefinitely. But the time Richard Nixon took office as President in early 1969, virtually all federal grants had been cancelled, and several major foundation grants were expiring as well. Mismanagement further weakened the Association in this period — poor financial oversight led to excessive spending and improper use of funds, further weakening NSA's appeal to grantmakers.

Saddled with a massive debt, the new NSA leadership elected in the summer of 1969 curtailed NSA's free-spending habits. They established an austere budget for the Association, and stuck to it — NSA would end each of the next four years with a surplus, and make great headway toward establishing financial stability. But that stability came at a cost, as each year NSA's mission grew smaller and narrower.

The Association's ability to operate was constrained, but not hobbled, in this period — its operating budget hovered around \$125,000, an amount comparable, in inflation-adjusted terms, to those of the early 1950s. Changes in organizational structure had left NSA with less continuity among its members and its officers than it had relied on in the past, however, and as it left the anti-war organizing of the previous years behind, it often found itself unable to enact a meaningful agenda for action.

Chapter Eight

Toward USSA: 1972-1978

Introduction

By 1972 a student power agenda was being taken up by a wide spectrum of advocates for higher education reform in the United States. Over the course of the 1970s many of the policies that Ed Schwartz had advocated as NSA's NAVP and president — particularly in the areas of student involvement in governance and the expansion of student-run institutions — would become the rule rather than the exception on American campuses. This transformation would be rapid and thoroughgoing, and it would reflect a broad and deep diffusion of student activism throughout the nation.

But Ed Schwartz's efforts to establish NSA as a hub of student power organizing had by then fallen victim to the Association's financial and organizational difficulties. NSA gradually contracted in the early 1970s, and with little margin for error, financial and leadership crises brought it to the brink of collapse at mid-decade. In 1976 and after, however, a new generation of campus leadership rose from the nation's increasingly vibrant state and system-wide student associations (SSAs) to effect a merger of NSA and the similarly straitened National Student Lobby. This merger, out of which NSA re-emerged as the United States Student Association, reinvigorated both organizations.

In the years that followed, USSA, founded in 1978 with a membership base of SSAs and student governments more vigorous, more independent, and more students'

rights-oriented than their predecessors, would reach financial self-sufficiency, a position that NSA had not achieved since the late 1940s. Having abandoned the extravagant budgets and the inflated self-regard of the CIA era, it would re-establish itself as a locus of information, networking, and training for the nation's student governments, SSAs, and other campus activists, and as a student lobby that was deeply engaged with federal education policy and other issues.

Declension and Transformation

There was a widespread sense in the early 1970s that the mass student movement that had seemed so powerful just a few years earlier had run its course. Some in NSA saw things this way as well — “the most basic discernable tenor of student thought in this country,” one of the Association's leaders wrote, “seems to be the tacit acceptance of ‘dropping-out’ as an alternative to intellectual (and physical) confrontation.” A “growing disillusionment with our society at all levels” was, he went on, readily discernable in “this generation of ‘uncommitted’ youth.”¹

Certainly there were many outward signs of such an implosion, beginning with the collapse of SDS and SNCC. After 1970 the reduction of US troops in Vietnam, and the accompanying decline in the number of young men drafted, left the war less of a unifying cause than it had previously been.² In the eyes of the media, Kent State was the

¹ Funding prospectus [Spring 1971?], NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. In their final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin attribute the above prospectus to 1970-71 NSA president David Ifshin. [NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.]

² In 1969, 283,586 American men were drafted, but by 1972 the number had fallen to 49,514. Just 646 were drafted in 1973 before conscription was abolished. The institution of the draft lottery in 1970 also contributed to declining tensions, as young men with auspicious lottery numbers discovered they faced little risk of being drafted.

beginning of the end — and media representations had long been a part of how American student activists made sense of the movements in which they participated.³

But some NSA activists understood what was happening on the campuses as a transformation as much as a declension. The early 1970s were a time of great vitality in local and state student organizing, particularly in the arenas of university governance and legislative lobbying. There had been dramatic victories in the late 1960s, yes, but in the 1970s students were taking steps to consolidate and expand those gains.

In a 1972 report to the Ford Foundation, NSA president Margery Tabankin and Center for Educational Reform staffer Larry Magid surveyed the terrain:

The news magazines are again pointing to the fact that the campuses are ‘quiet.’ ... For the first time in years, it appears as if there won’t be any general overt manifestations of protest such as rebellions and demonstrations ... but as quiet and undramatic as the student movement may be at the moment, there are still more things happening and more people working for change than ever before.

Educational reform is happening. ... Third World Studies programs are becoming as common as home economics departments, whereas a few years ago many of us were arrested and harassed while we struck our universities to demand such programs. Colleges are experimenting with new forms of evaluation and grades, and even the US Office of Education is pouring millions of dollars into educational innovation...

Now when we talk about [the future of] educational reform, we’re usually talking about the needs of the working-class students, the black students, the students in the community college, and the students who may never have had the luxury to break campus rules and to protest the way my colleagues and I did in the middle 1960s.⁴

One important aspect of this context was the changing legal and political climate at America’s public colleges and universities with regard to students’ rights. Over the course of the 1960s, courts had begun to hold that public higher education institutions

³ Many scholars have embraced this view — see, for instance, Todd Gitlin: “the post-Cambodia uprising was the student movement’s last hurrah.” [*The Sixties*, 411.]

⁴ Lawrence Magid and Margery Tabankin, final report to the Ford Foundation on the Center for Educational Reform [draft, 1972], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

had an obligation to respect the civil liberties and due process rights of their students.⁵ Students found, moreover, that they had ways of exerting political pressure on the administrators of public colleges, whether through the governors who appointed trustees and chancellors or the state legislatures who set the institutions' budgets.

Demographic and economic forces also reshaped students' relationships to their institutions in this era. In the early 1970s American higher education, which had expanded dramatically in the 1960s, faced stagnant enrollments and increasingly insistent public demands for institutional accountability. At least as significant, federal legislation created new national student grant programs and provided matching funds for similar state programs, shifting much of the nation's government funding for higher education into students' hands. As a result, America's colleges and universities found themselves scrambling to attract students and the revenue they brought in.

The application of business practices to the management and marketing of higher education was seen as a potential solution. A college that adopted the strategies of the corporate world would, it was hoped, be able to cut costs, allocate resources more efficiently, and woo a greater number of student consumers of a higher education product.⁶ This new paradigm of students as consumers is properly understood as a way of thinking about students rather than as a way of comprehending what students themselves thought. It arose not as a manifestation of student power but of institutional weakness, as a way for administrators to address the challenges they faced in a rapidly changing environment.

As administrators elaborated the model and incorporated it into the functioning of the university, student activists continued to press for recognition as partners in the

⁵ William W. Van Alstyne, "The Tentative Emergence of Student Power in the United States," *American Journal of Comparative Law*, Summer 1969.

⁶ This conception of the student as consumer should be distinguished from that implied in the protection of students under consumer protection laws. For more on that model, see Ellis, "An Historical Overview."

educational process rather than as customers to be marketed to. The dominant metaphor for student activists in the early and mid-seventies, to the extent there was one, was not that of the student as consumer but that of the student as a unionized worker, represented in governance by an independent, freely-chosen bargaining unit.⁷

This model of student involvement drew not on the language of the student as consumer, but on the contemporaneous drive for faculty unionization, which many student activists saw as both a threat to and a blueprint for their own activism. Faculty collective bargaining had the potential to circumvent or marginalize traditional governance structures — structures within which students were finally gaining power. Many professors were skeptical of the university-as-business model — as one observer of the campus scene put it in 1973, “a corporation for profit is always an authoritarian organization” — but faculty increasingly realized that if they were not respected as members of the university community, they could still assert their rights as workers through collective bargaining.⁸ The student union model, more popular among the campus activists and regional leadership of NSA than with its national officers and staff, was in part an attempt to appropriate this line of strategy.

This changing legal and economic climate in public higher education helps to explain a major demographic shift in NSA’s membership in the 1970s — the shift from a base of private institutions to public ones. That shift was evident in the American student population generally, but it was particularly pronounced in NSA. In 1960, just thirty

⁷ The term “student union” was a flexible one, but at its heart it incorporated the idea that students needed a formal, independent power-base within the university, less beholden to the institution than student governments. [“Student Unionization,” 1974-75 Codification, NSA Papers, 1983 accession, box 1.] A 1973 resolution passed by NSA’s National Student Congress went so far as to put NSA forward as the “National Collective Bargaining Agent” for the country’s students. [“Unionization Mandate,” 1973-74 Codification, NSA Papers, 1983 accession, box 2.]

⁸ Ralph M. Besse, “A Comparison of the University with the Corporation,” in James A. Perkins, ed., *The University as an Organization*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973).

percent of NSA members had been public colleges and universities, but by 1978, when NSA's emphasis on lobbying and organizing was at its most pronounced, a full eighty percent of the campuses sending delegates to the summer Congress were public ones.⁹ In the same period, the proportion of four-year college students attending public institutions had risen from about fifty-five percent to about sixty-eight.¹⁰

As students were fighting for a greater role in campus governance in the early 1970s, they were, in a political development that was not entirely unrelated, gaining the vote as well. Support for lowering the voting age was broad-based and bipartisan by the late 1960s — both the Democrats and the Republicans supported the reform in their 1968 platforms, and a March 1969 Gallup poll found the concept winning the endorsement of 64% of Americans.¹¹

It was youth activism against the war and on the campuses, however — and fear of the seemingly endless escalation of that activism — that transformed voting-age reform from an obscure good-government cause into an urgent national priority.¹² The federal law enfranchising 18-to-20 year olds was passed by the House of Representatives and signed into law by President Nixon in June 1970, just weeks after the Kent State shootings.¹³ When the Supreme Court ruled that December that the law's application to state and local elections was unconstitutional, Congress passed a constitutional

⁹ NSA Coordinator's Handbook, [1960], NSA Papers, Box 8; "Profile of Convention Delegates," 1978 NSA-NSL National Student Convention, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

¹⁰ Snyder, *120 Years of American Education*. The proportion of all college students attending publics rose from 60% to 78% in that period, but since few community colleges were NSA members, the figures for four-year schools give a more accurate picture of the change in NSA's potential membership pool.

¹¹ "The 26th Amendment: Pathway to Participation," The Close Up Foundation, 2001.

¹² With its political activity facing IRS scrutiny, NSA did virtually no organizing around the 26th Amendment in the 1960s or 1970s. No other national student or youth group did sustained work in support of the Amendment, and state-level organizing seems to have been sporadic as well. Unlike women and blacks, youth in America would get the vote without a sustained campaign on their own behalf.

¹³ The Senate had passed the bill in March.

amendment to render the decision moot, and by June 30, 1971 the Twenty-Sixth Amendment had been ratified by the necessary 38 states — the fastest ratification of a constitutional amendment in American history.¹⁴

Students had pressed for institutional reform at hundreds of campuses in the late 1960s, and at many colleges and universities the incorporation of students into governance structures had been the result.¹⁵ The extent and scope of such participation was still highly contested in the early 1970s, but the trend toward a greater student role in governance was clear and strong. Students were gaining seats on boards of trustees, university senates, and administrative committees at every level, while student governments were winning new autonomy and new influence — by 1974 students had a formal substantive role in collective bargaining on at least thirty American campuses, and were exerting influence through informal means or consultative processes on at least seventy more.¹⁶ This would be legacy of the 1960s on the American campus, and it would provide the context in which NSA, that decade’s only surviving national student activist organization, would operate in the 1970s.

NSA and Lobbying

In a recruitment letter written that year, the National Student Lobby called itself “the only national student organization with a tax status that allows it to lobby Congress

¹⁴ “The 26th Amendment: Pathway to Participation,” The Close Up Foundation, 2001.

¹⁵ John J. Corson, “The Modernization of the University: The Impact of Function on Governance,” *Journal of Higher Education*, June 1971; Jay C. Shaffer, “Students in the Policy Process,” *Journal of Higher Education*, May 1970.

¹⁶ Philip G. Altbach, “From Revolution to Apathy — American Student Activism in the 1970s,” *Higher Education* 8 (1979); Bill Aussieker, “Student Involvement With Collective Bargaining,” *Journal of Higher Education*, September/October 1975.

on behalf of student interests.”¹⁷ This claim was an accurate one, and it reflected both an ongoing campaign against NSA by the federal government and a profound organizational failure on the part of the Association itself.

NSA had existed on an unincorporated basis until 1965. In April of that year, the Association incorporated in Washington DC, and shortly thereafter it applied for 501c3 status — the tax-exempt classification given to non-profit corporations whose work is primarily non-political.¹⁸ The Association operated under the strictures that governed 501c3 corporations from then on, but it was not until August of 1968 that the Internal Revenue Service formally granted NSA 501c3 status.¹⁹

At that point the road was clear for NSA to bifurcate — to split into a 501c3 foundation to engage in tax-exempt work and a 501c4 corporation to engage in lobbying and other political activities. A proposal for such a split passed easily at the 1968 Congress, but disputes over implementation stalled the process.²⁰ A new corporation — the National Student Association Foundation, or NSAF — was not incorporated until February 1972, and only then did NSA apply for 501c4 status, to take effect if and when NSAF’s 501c3 status was approved.²¹

¹⁷ NSL membership recruitment letter, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 30.

¹⁸ John R. Barber, Chief Rulings Section, Exempt Organizations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, to NSA. Letter is undated, but stamped “August 23, 1968,” NSA Papers 1983, Box 35; Ed Schwartz memo to 1968 Congress delegates, “Re: Proposal for dual corporation.” NSA Papers.

¹⁹ Ed Schwartz memo to 1968 Congress delegates, “Re: Proposal for dual corporation,” NSA Papers; Drew Olim to Leslie Dunbar, Field Foundation, December 10, 1973, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

²⁰ The Congress plan called for NSA to give up its hard-won 501c3 status, reclassify itself as a 501c4, and create a *new* 501c3 which would have to go through the same process of IRS approval that NSA had just endured. [“Dual Corporation Goes Through,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 22, 1968, NSA Papers, Box 13; Herbert Hirsch, Strasser, Spiegelberg, Fried and Frank, to Robert Powell, February 5, 1969, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6; Bob Powell memo to the NSB, February 11, 1969, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.]

²¹ Drew Olim to Leslie Dunbar, Field Foundation, December 10, 1973, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

There would be still more delays. In May of that year, NSA learned that a multi-year IRS investigation into NSA's political activities was nearing an end, and that the investigation's final report would recommend the revocation of NSA's 501c3 status.²² The report would enumerate a long list of alleged violations: anti-war activities dating back to 1965, including NSA's spring 1970 organizing against the invasion of Cambodia, the People's Peace Treaty project, and the officers' various trips to Vietnam; support for political candidates, including the provision of facilities to the organizers of the Dump Johnson campaign; agitation for voting age reform and drug law reform; and financial support for NABS and the CER. The IRS was recommending a retroactive revocation of the Association's exemption, which would render it liable for nearly five years of back taxes, including taxes for several years in which NSA's income had been far higher than it was in 1972.²³ NSA had intended to relinquish its 501c3 status as soon as NSAF was granted the designation, but a retroactive loss would be economically catastrophic, and so it was forced to fight the charges.

It would be another two years before the Association and the IRS were able to negotiate a settlement. In the interim the NSAF application for 501c3 status remained in limbo and the Association couldn't reorganize as a 501c4, leaving NSA unable to engage in lobbying or other political activities. At a time of unprecedented student involvement in the political process NSA was forced to sit on the sidelines as other organizations — the most significant of these being the state student associations, the Public Interest Research Groups, and the National Student Lobby — rushed to fill the void.

²² Memo to "Files" from Donald F. Devine of Surrey, Karasik, and Morse, May 25, 1972, with cover letter to Margery Tabankin, June 20, 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

²³ Memo to "Files" from Donald F. Devine of Surrey, Karasik, and Morse, May 25, 1972, with cover letter to Margery Tabankin, June 20, 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

State Student Associations and PIRGs

There had been statewide (and system-wide) student associations (SSAs) in the United States since the earliest days of NSA, if not before.²⁴ But for decades these organizations were generally unambitious confederations of student governments with modest agendas and no formal governance role.

This began to change in the late 1960s, and by the early 1970s student activists had created a number of new state-based student organizations. Funded by student fees and in many cases independent of university control, these groups represented their constituents in state legislatures, the US Congress, and in negotiations with universities and university systems. Unlike the SSAs of previous eras, these new groups operated with full-time paid staffs, usually out of offices in their state capitals.

In 1973 a National Student Lobby list of state and system student organizations — a list that included both the new SSAs and more traditional groups — counted 45 organizations in 34 states, including a dozen system-based groups and ten organizations that used the word “Lobby” in their names.²⁵ As the 1970s progressed and the SSAs matured, their leadership came to serve as a pool of potential officers and staff for NSA — seasoned political operators with experience organizing students beyond the individual campus.

²⁴ A “state student association” is an association of students whose membership includes, or is open to, student governments or other campus representatives at all of a state’s colleges and universities. A “system-wide student association” is only open to the student governments or representatives of a single university system. (Most states have a single unified public university system, but some — like California and New York — have two or more.) The convention in NSA was to use the initialism “SSA” to refer to both state and system-wide student associations, and I have followed that convention here.

²⁵ “State Student Organizations,” [1973-74], NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. The new activist SSAs were by no means confined to traditional centers of student organizing — self-proclaimed lobbies on the NSL list included organizations in California, Colorado, Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Student Lobbies would be extant at 22% of American campuses in 39 states by 1978. [Levine and Wilson, “Student Activism in the 1970s,” 636.]

One of the first of this new breed of SSAs — and one of the most influential — was SASU, the Student Association of the State University of New York.²⁶ Launched in 1970, at a statewide meeting that drew student leaders from twenty SUNY campuses, SASU opened an office in New York’s capital in 1972 with a full-time staff of three.²⁷ The organization won an impressive series of legislative victories in the years that followed, including the passage of a law that created a student seat on the SUNY Board of Trustees.²⁸ By 1975 SASU was budgeting on the basis of nearly \$100,000 in annual dues revenue — far more than either NSA or NSL.²⁹ From the students of just one university system, SASU was bringing in more dues support than either of the nation’s two largest national student organizations, and soon SASU was a force in both NSA and NSL, helping — along with the University Student Senate, its counterpart in the City University of New York — to restore New York State to the central position in national student government organizing that it had held in the 1940s and 1950s.

Another model for statewide student action in the early 1970s was the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs).³⁰ The first PIRG, in Washington DC, wasn’t a student group at all — it was founded by Ralph Nader as a free-standing progressive research and advocacy organization. But Nader realized that the PIRG agenda was a good fit for the nation’s campuses, seeing in students a potentially rich source of staffing, energy, and — crucially — funding.

²⁶ Levine and Wilson, “Student Activism in the 1970s.”

²⁷ “SASU, Student Assembly: Unified Student Voice,” [SASU] *Update*, October 1973. Author’s collection.

²⁸ The seat, instituted in 1975, was nominally held by the president of Student Assembly, a SUNY-wide student government with few powers that had been created by the Trustees. In practice, however, Student Assembly was controlled by SASU — the two organizations elected identical officers each year until the early 1990s.

²⁹ SASU budget for 1975-76, as revised June 15, 1975. From [William?] Klamon, ed., *Lobbying: A Guide for Students*, NSA [1975], NSA Papers 1983, Box 23.

³⁰ Levine and Wilson, “Student Activism in the 1970s,” 638-639.

In the early 1970s student governments were gaining greater control over campus activity fees, and the PIRGs were the first activist groups to take advantage of this development.³¹ Nader and his associates crafted a PIRG membership model in which the students on a campus would join their state's PIRG by referendum, with their vote committing each student at that school to pay a portion of his or her activity fee — typically \$2 per student per semester — to the organization. The PIRGs would be student-funded, and student volunteers would provide much of their labor. In New York in 1978, three hundred students at NYPIRG's thirteen member campuses received college credit for their work for the organization.³²

But students would not, in most instances, be given control over fundamental policy or strategy decisions. Referendum funding gave the early PIRGs substantial budgets — \$200,000 in Minnesota in its first year, and \$150,000 in Oregon — much of which went to paying salaries of the professional staffers who would have primary responsibility for running the organizations. There would be no PIRG policy-making delegate conferences, and the elected student leadership of each PIRG would have limited authority. The PIRGs did, however, serve as venues for student organizing and leadership training, in the 1970s and after, and the referendum funding mechanism they pioneered would later be adopted with great success by SSAs and by NSA's successor, the United States Student Association.³³

³¹ Justin Martin, *Nader: Crusader, Spoiler, Icon*, pages 126-29. Basic Books, New York, 2003.

³² Levine and Wilson, "Student Activism in the 1970s," 638.

³³ As discussed in chapter seven, Gene Groves and Ed Schwartz had mooted the idea of a twenty-five cent per student per semester dues rate for NSA at the 1967 Congress.

The National Student Lobby

In 1971 a group of students who had been involved in the California Student Lobby created the National Student Lobby, an attempt to apply the SSA model to a national organization by creating a student-funded, student-directed, professionally-staffed student lobbying organization that would both represent its members in Washington and facilitate campus mobilization around local electoral and legislative campaigns.³⁴ The Lobby's platform was to be set by referenda on member campuses, and the first year's referendum ballot asked respondents their opinions on a dozen issues ranging from the federal education budget to the legalization of marijuana.³⁵ In later years, NSL would narrow its agenda to focus on issues such as economic access to higher education and student voting rights.³⁶

The Lobby's structure differed in major ways from that of the Association, beginning with the fact that NSL would neither elect national officers nor hold formal membership conferences. Its operations would be conducted by an executive director and a staff, and the membership would provide input through the referenda mentioned above, as well as regional conferences and an elected Executive Committee.³⁷ Student leaders would be invited to come to Washington to lobby their elected officials and testify

³⁴ NSL membership recruitment letter, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 30.

³⁵ NSL "Referendum 1971-72." NSA Papers 1983, Box 31. The referendum's question demonstrated the difficulty in making national policy for a lobbying organization on the basis of an annual membership vote: "Do you support the Equal Rights Amendment and other moves to end discrimination against minorities and women? (such as in federally-assisted projects and higher education)."

³⁶ Documents from the late 1970s portray NSL's agenda as having always been circumscribed — see, for instance, the claim that "much care was taken to keep the focus of NSL narrow and manageable. Previous experience with national student organizations clearly showed the dangers of trying to spread scarce resources too thin." [NSL Annual Report 1976-77, [spring 1977], NSA Papers 1983, Box 30.] Some chroniclers of NSA and NSL, apparently relying on such analyses, have suggested that the breadth of NSA's agenda was one of the characteristics of the Association that prompted the creation of the NSL, but I have found no evidence that this was the case.

³⁷ NSL membership recruitment letter, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 30.

before Congressional committees, and NSL would provide student governments and student newspapers with research and news on pending legislative matters.³⁸ The Lobby would thus simultaneously advance a national student legislative agenda and give local student leaders tools to conduct organizing around issues of local concern. Initial financing for NSL had been provided by the Associated Students of the University of California and a variety of off-campus sources, but funding for its ongoing operations would, it was hoped, come almost entirely from membership dues.³⁹

By the spring of 1972, NSL claimed more than 140 member campuses and associations in 38 states.⁴⁰ In March of that year 341 students from across the country attended NSL's first Lobby Conference — a day of briefings and lobby training followed by two days of visits with members of Congress and their staffs.⁴¹ The event received positive coverage in the *New York Times* and reached nearly eighty Senators and more than three hundred Representatives.⁴² Three days after the lobbying effort concluded, a House-Senate conference gave NSL its first legislative victory — endorsing a bill that NSL's members had just lobbied for that created a new program of “Basic Grants” to students (later known as Pell Grants) by a margin of one vote.⁴³

³⁸ NSL membership recruitment letter, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 30; NSL “Outline of Operations,” [fall 1971?], NSA Papers 1983, Box 30.

³⁹ NSL membership recruitment letter, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 30; “Information Sheet on the National Student Lobby,” [fall 1971?], NSA Papers 1983, Box 30.

⁴⁰ NSL memo to member student governments, May 8, 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 31.

⁴¹ “NSL Lobby Conference,” *NSL Legislative Report*, April 1, 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 31.

⁴² “Students’ Lobby Besieges Capital,” *New York Times*, March 26, 1972; “NSL Lobby Conference,” *NSL Legislative Report*, April 1, 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 31.

⁴³ “NSL Lobby Conference,” *NSL Legislative Report*, April 1, 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 31.

Treading Water

For three or four years after the end of David Ifshin's 1970-71 term as NSA president, NSA survived as a much-reduced but more or less stable organization. Budgets were tight, but balanced or nearly so, and membership fell, but not too far. The ambitious national agenda of the recent past was abandoned, but as we shall see, real work continued. This was, however, largely as a result of the ad hoc efforts of individual officers, staffers, or volunteers, and there was little continuity or forward momentum.⁴⁴

One bright spot in this period, particularly during the 1973-74 and 1974-75 academic years, was the Association's publications program. In those two years NSA published, under the editorship of Chip Berlet, at least eight issues of the *NSA Magazine* with an average length of about fifty pages. A mix of reprints and original material, the *Magazine* — circulated to student leaders at NSA member schools — combined brief reports on student and campus news with longer articles, often linked by a common theme. In the March-April 1974 issue, for instance, the *Magazine* ran a dozen articles and documents on higher education financing, including a review of tuition issues by NSA's president, a policy statement on tuition from the American Council on Education, and eight pages of analysis of President Nixon's proposed federal higher education budget.⁴⁵ The *Magazine* thus served as both a journal of news and opinion on campus issues and as a resource for student activists.

⁴⁴ The Association held its 1972 Congress at Catholic University in Washington DC. Relations with the university were difficult that year, as there were repeated complaints about delegates' behavior and about property damage. ["National Student Group Plans a 5-Year Drive For Local Units," *New York Times*, August 20, 1972.] The next five Congresses would be held at hotels — in Miami Beach, St. Louis, Washington DC, San Francisco, and Houston — with attendance gradually declining over time.

⁴⁵ A near-complete run of the 1973-75 *NSA Magazine*, including the March-April 1974 issue, can be found in NSA Papers 1983, Box 24.

At the same time as he was editing the *Magazine*, Berlet supervised the revitalization of NSA's catalogue of publications. In his two years as NSA's publications director, the Association published at least ten anthologies of writing on issues of interest to student activists, four of them edited or co-edited by Berlet himself.⁴⁶ These publications enabled NSA to extend its reach dramatically, and — at a time when it had no full-time staffers in the field — to present itself in a tangible way to its member campuses. And because much of the material such publications contained had been created outside of the Association, they were not as time-consuming to produce as internally written position papers or organizing guides would have been.

Another success story of the mid-1970s NSA was the National Gay Student Center (NGSC), created by the 1971 Congress and staffed entirely by volunteers.⁴⁷ Founding NGSC Director Warren Blumenfeld organized lesbian and gay programming for the Congress and launched a national newsletter, *interCHANGE*, which incorporated material ranging from poetry, fiction, and coming-out stories to gay studies bibliographies and campus news.⁴⁸ His successor, Lee Lehman, maintained an active public speaking schedule and succeeded in making the NGSC self-supporting through the sale of *interCHANGE* and an expanding publications list.⁴⁹ She continued as director through the summer of 1977, by which time the Center had grown into a national

⁴⁶ "Resources," *NSA Magazine* March-April 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24. Many of these anthologies can be found in NSA Papers 1983, Box 23.

⁴⁷ Kathy Kelly, "A Personal Note," *Gays On Campus*, NSA 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 23.

⁴⁸ *interCHANGE* Volume 1 Number 1 and Volume 1 Number 2, March-April and May-June 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 24.

⁴⁹ Kathy Kelly, "A Personal Note," *Gays On Campus*, NSA 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 23; J. Lee Lehman to NSB, December 15, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

information hub on campus lesbian and gay issues.⁵⁰ By then, however, NSA's elected leadership and its paid staff had long been laboring under unsustainable pressures, and the organization was beginning to buckle from the strain.

The stresses under which the Association was operating in the first half of the 1970s are vividly illustrated by the 1972-73 daybook of the Association's Director of Program Development, Kathleen Brouder. In her first months on the job a substantial portion of Brouder's correspondence took the form of letters informing students that the NSA programs they had inquired about — fellowships for study abroad, international sports sponsorship, film festivals, employment services, speakers bureaus, research projects — no longer existed.⁵¹ Similarly, in a November 1972 letter to a student government president who'd written asking about NSA activities and the benefits of membership, president Tim Higgins cited only the Association's resolutions of support for various causes, the Student Government Information Service, and its partnerships with discount providers of life insurance, books, and rental cars.⁵² As noted above, individual officers and staff were conducting valuable work in this period, but the Association as a whole had little coherent program.

In January 1973 Higgins took stock of NSA's troubles, and concluded that it faced a threefold crisis. First, the Association's books had fallen out of balance once more, with monthly outlays outpacing receipts by thousands of dollars. Second, NSA's program had grown distant from the priorities of its constituency — while student governments were focused on campus reform, the Association had a lopsided emphasis on national political

⁵⁰ J. Lee Lehman to NSB, December 15, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. By 1978 gay student organizations were active on 11% of American campuses, up from 3% in 1970. [Levine and Wilson, "Student Activism in the 1970s," 638-639.]

⁵¹ Kathleen Brouder daybook file, 1972-73, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

⁵² Tim Higgins to Cornell Christianson, student government president of the College of William and Mary, November 29, 1972, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4. The discount programs for book sales and car rentals seem to have been discontinued soon after — no record of revenue from either project appears in the Association's mid-1970s budgets.

issues, particularly the war in Vietnam. And third, NSA had been put on notice that the IRS intended to revoke its tax exemption. Higgins took steps in the latter half of his term to address these problems, and succeeded in ameliorating some of them. But to bring the budget into balance he reduced the Association's staff by more than half — a necessary measure, perhaps, but not one that held much promise for revitalizing NSA.⁵³

The Single Vice Presidency

One important, and ultimately disastrous, staff reduction had taken place two years before Higgins took office — in 1970, NSA had altered its officer structure. Between 1957 and 1964 NSA had elected five full-time officers each year, and since 1965 there had been three, but after 1970 there would be only two — a president and a vice president. This arrangement was intended to streamline the Association's leadership, but it would prove profoundly destabilizing for the NSA of the 1970s.⁵⁴

There was no provision for formal slates in officer elections in the 1970s, and there is little evidence that presidential and vice presidential candidates ever coordinated their campaigns informally. At least three times between 1970 and 1978 the vice presidency was won by a losing candidate for the presidency, putting rivals for NSA leadership in the position of working together in an ill-defined hierarchy.

⁵³ Tim Higgins, "United States National Student Association Report of the President, 26th National Student Congress," [1973], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

⁵⁴ There appears to have been little debate about the change at the time. The *Congress News* reported that the amendment passed without opposition, and characterized the case in favor of the change as follows: "it was pointed out that the duties delegated to the two vice presidents could easily be performed by one." ["Plenary Passes 5 Motions," *USNSA Congress News* [1970], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

Where in the past NSA's several vice presidents had each been tasked with a specific area of responsibility, and had in many cases run and won election on the basis of their experience or agenda in that area, the new single vice president had little clear responsibility. In NSA's 1970 constitution the office was given just four duties — to “administer the program areas of the Association,” to “assist the President,” to serve as the Association's secretary, and to succeed to the presidency in the case of a vacancy.⁵⁵ The term “program areas” was nowhere defined.⁵⁶

The reduction in the number of officer positions also left students with fewer opportunities to prove themselves in the national office before running for president. In the fifteen years before the establishment of the single vice presidency, five of NSA's vice presidents ran for president and won, but in the next eight years none did — indeed, between the creation of the single vice presidency and the formation of USSA in 1978, no NSA officer served more than a year in office.⁵⁷

It also seems likely that the single vice presidency drained experienced — and ambitious — student leadership away from NSA. When the Association had elected three or five or even seven national officers each year, a student might well return for a second or third or fourth Congress hoping to find an opportunity to run or to pave the way for a later candidacy.⁵⁸ But if such a student wasn't interested in the ill-defined vice presidential role and didn't believe that he or she could win the presidency, he or she

⁵⁵ Gilbert, 1975-76 president's report, NSA Papers 1983.

⁵⁶ NSA Constitution, 1970 Codification, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

⁵⁷ Sitting vice presidents were elected to the NSA presidency in 1958, 1960, 1965, and 1967. A former vice president, Ray Farabee, was elected president in 1957.

⁵⁸ As noted in earlier chapters, even winning candidates for NSA office often did not decide whether to run for office — or which office to run for —until the Congress itself.

might be more likely to drift away from the Association, depriving NSA of experience and continuity that it desperately needed.⁵⁹

Tensions between the president and the vice president were a constant and serious problem after 1970. In a 1976 memo to the NSB Gary Kampel said that the first of NSA's single vice presidents "did nothing because the President and he were political opposites," the second "was given so little ... responsibility that he fulfilled his office largely working from 10 am to 2 pm," the third "never completed his term," the fourth took "extended 'leaves,'" and the fifth was "asked to resign by the Board."⁶⁰ Kampel was the sixth, and at the time he wrote that memo he had recently been informed by the Association's president that she intended to suspend payment of his salary for the remainder of his term.

The Staff Transformed

The turnover and lack of continuity among NSA officers in the 1970s placed increasing responsibility on the shoulders of the hired staff. As the decade progressed that responsibility, and the power that accompanied it, fell more and more to one person — Drew Olim.

Olim attended his first NSA Congress in 1969, as a delegate from Wisconsin. In a letter to his region that he distributed at that Congress, he attacked NSA insiders for "grooving on their personal ego-trips and living the clique-like structure of NSA to the

⁵⁹ This proposition is, of course, difficult to prove. It receives circumstantial support, however, from the fact that the percentage of Congress delegates who were first-time attendees appears to have risen in the 1970s.

⁶⁰ Gary Kampel memo to the NSB, May 5, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

hilt” and “destroy[ing] themselves in their own red tape.” He wanted, he said, “to help restore reason to the NSA,” and in service of that goal he was running for the NSB.⁶¹

Olim didn’t win that election, but he interned with the Association the following summer after graduating from college.⁶² He ran for both president and vice president of NSA at the 1970 Congress, losing both times, and then joined the Association’s staff as an employee — that December he was made the acting director of the Student Government Information Service.⁶³ Though he didn’t stay with SGIS for long, he did remain with NSA — an undated Olim résumé describes him as having served as “Executive Assistant” to NSA’s presidents in the 1971-72, 1972-73, and 1973-74 terms.⁶⁴ In November 1973 Association president Larry Friedman made him the Association’s first-ever executive director, giving him “the major responsibility” for the national office, including oversight of its finances and its interactions with the IRS. The new title, Friedman said, formalized responsibilities that by then “rested with Drew on a *de facto* basis.”⁶⁵

Olim’s rise in NSA reflected his abilities and his ambition, and also the extent to which he succeeded in bringing others around to a staff-centered vision of the Association. Almost immediately on his arrival he had begun to agitate for a more professional, hierarchical system of staff organization than had ever existed outside of the CIA-era International Commission. In a November 1970 memo to NSA’s president, for instance, he called for the establishment of “a system of office management” that

⁶¹ Drew Olim, “Open Letter to the Delegates of the Midwest,” August 22, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 14.

⁶² Drew Olim memo to Guy Cherry and Carl Wagner, November 5, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

⁶³ The below article indicates that there were four candidates for president that year, and that Olim was not one of the two who met in the final runoff. It describes the race for the vice presidency as “very close,” however, and implies that Olim was the second-place finisher. [“Ifshin, Shall to Head NSA,” *USNSA Congress News*, August 19, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1; Drew Olim, Pat Woods, and Dan Olim, “SGIS Progress Report,” January 29, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.]

⁶⁴ Drew Olim Résumé [fall 1973?], NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

⁶⁵ Larry Friedman memo to NSB, November 14, 1973, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

would have at its center the designation of a staff “referee ... to make all decisions” regarding office policy — “an ultimate authority, without appeal to officers.”⁶⁶

Olim was perennially frustrated with the Association’s lack of professionalism, and seldom shy about putting forth his own vision. In early 1971 he made a lengthy report to the NSB on the performance of that year’s officers and staff, NSA’s financial condition and prospects, and the NSB’s role in the Association. The report closed on a note of melodrama that would recur in the years that followed:

And in the event that you find my suggestions untenable, my observations invalid, my capacities unnecessary, you can ignore my plea for change. And I will be forced to leave the Association that means a great deal to me.⁶⁷

At the time he delivered that ultimatum, he had been an NSA employee for about five months.⁶⁸

Olim took on a myriad of responsibilities over the course of his employment, and found opportunities to shape the Association in small and large ways. In the course of compiling the annual codification of the Association’s constitution, bylaws, and policy statements he made what he called “stylistic” alterations to NSA’s official documents and in at least one instance omitted a resolution that he considered frivolous.⁶⁹ But he was by most accounts an effective and competent employee, and opposition to his excesses seem to have been sporadic until early 1975.

At a February NSB meeting that year, a motion was made that “impeachment proceedings ... be initiated” against Kathy Kelly, the Association’s president. Three reasons were given — her “refusal” to assist in carrying out the policies of the Board, her

⁶⁶ Drew Olim memo to David Ifshin, November 16, 1970, NSA Papers 1983, box 35.

⁶⁷ Drew Olim, report to NSB Legal and Finance Committee, [stamped February 2, 1971], NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁶⁸ Drew Olim, “Resume — Job Description,” [1973-74?], NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

⁶⁹ 1971, 1972, 1973, and 1974 NSA Codifications, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

“slandorous statements” about Board members, and “her inability to control her assistant, Mr. Drew Olim.” The motion was seconded, but tabled to the next Board meeting by a vote of 4-3. There is no record that it was taken up again.⁷⁰

At that summer’s Congress, however, a motion was made on the plenary floor to remove Olim from office. No record of that motion was preserved in NSA’s files — the only extant document that speaks directly to it is a transcript of a speech that Olim made moments before the motion was to come to a vote.⁷¹ In it, Olim suggested that the motion was based on “false information” about his finances and his compensation, and then resigned as NSA’s executive director, at which point the plenary chair ruled the motion to remove him out of order. Immediately thereafter, a delegate moved that the Congress “urge Drew Olim to withdraw his resignation and direct the NSB to gather the appropriate facts, and in a manner based on the principles of substantive and procedural due process decide by October 31st, 1975, to retain or terminate the employment of Drew Olim as Executive Director of NSA.”⁷² That motion passed, the removal motion was rendered moot, and Olim returned to work.⁷³

The Association on the Brink

NSA had contracted considerably over the previous few years. By now it was, as one member of the NSB put it, “a national office, not a national organization,” and in

⁷⁰ Minutes of the February 27, 1975 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. There is no additional information about these charges in the minutes, and I have found nothing in NSA’s files that illuminates the controversy.

⁷¹ “Transcript of Proceedings of 28th National Student Congress, Mayflower Hotel, Washington DC, August 28, 1975,” NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

⁷² “Transcript of Proceedings of 28th National Student Congress, Mayflower Hotel, Washington DC, August 28, 1975,” August 13, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

⁷³ A handwritten copy of the motion appears in the NSA archives with an indication that it was approved. [NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.]

1975-76 that office itself was in decline.⁷⁴ Some work continued — NSA held its first lobbying conference that spring, and Clarissa Gilbert gave testimony to half a dozen Congressional committees and sub-committees as president — but the Association, weak, poor, and understaffed, was sinking into paralysis.⁷⁵

In November NSA's immediate past president, Kathy Kelly, sued NSA for salary that she had not been paid while in office.⁷⁶ A judge found that Kelly was owed nearly nine hundred dollars, but NSA appealed his decision.⁷⁷ This crisis reflected both NSA's financial insolvency and its problems with internal bickering — it owed its past and present employees and officers twelve thousand dollars in back pay at the end of Kelly's term of office, and Kelly and Gilbert had, until the pay dispute, been on good terms.⁷⁸

The most draining dispute of Gilbert's term, however, centered around her vice president, Gary Kampel. Kampel and Gilbert clashed a number of times over the course of the year. They fought in September over Kampel's pay, and throughout the fall over Kampel's use of the NSA office as his living quarters. On December 19, Gilbert resolved the latter dispute by informing him that the office would be shut for the holidays starting that afternoon, and that the building would be unheated until the new year. She advised him to "take the day off and find yourself a place to live."⁷⁹

In February, Gilbert and Olim, who were close allies in the office, exchanged a series of increasingly hostile memoranda with Kampel — about Kampel's unfinished projects, about his communications with the Association's attorneys, about his inquiries

⁷⁴ Unsigned "NSB Minority Report," August 18, 1975, NSA Papers, Box 1.

⁷⁵ Mike Bissonette, letter to the membership, May 11, 1976, NSA Papers 1983; "Congressional Testimony," [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 23.

⁷⁶ Memo from Clarissa Gilbert to the members of the NSB, November 24, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁷⁷ NSA ultimately settled the suit some 16 months later, agreeing to pay Kelly all but \$24.54 of the money awarded by the judge. [Tom Tobin to Kathy Kelly, March 25, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.]

⁷⁸ Memo from "National Office" to the NSB, March 22, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Memo from Clarissa Gilbert to the NSB, November 24, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁷⁹ Clarissa Gilbert memo to Gary Kampel, December 19, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

into the operations of the NSA Foundation and his relationship with the Association's staff.⁸⁰ In late April, Gilbert sent the NSB a memo saying that Kampel had failed to complete any of the various projects that he had been assigned or volunteered for as vice president, and that he had "created serious morale problems" in the Association's offices. In light of this, she had informed him that he would not be paid a salary after May 31.⁸¹

At its next meeting the NSB overturned Gilbert's decision, directing her to pay Kampel for the remainder of his term.⁸² Kampel and Gilbert attempted to arrive at an accommodation, but their efforts quickly broke down.⁸³ "The situation is desperate," Gilbert told the NSB. "I have been able to do little else but spend office time dealing with the path of destruction and animosity generated by Gary."⁸⁴ The two continued to squabble until the Board finally removed Kampel from office three weeks later. By then Gilbert's own term of office was nearly over.⁸⁵

Gilbert ran for re-election at the Congress that summer, but she finished a weak third behind two candidates who had pledged to fire her ally Olim if elected.⁸⁶ The

⁸⁰ Gilbert memo to Kampel "Re: Work That Has Been Assigned To You," February 10, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4; Gilbert memo to Kampel "Re: Our Duties and Responsibilities Vis a Vis the Codification," February 10, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4; Gilbert memo to Kampel "Re: The Foundation," February 10, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4; Drew Olim memo to Gary Kampel, February 20, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

⁸¹ Clarissa Gilbert memo to NSB, April 22, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

⁸² Minutes of the May 21-23, 1976 NSB meeting, page 7, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁸³ Gilbert memo to Kampel, May 27, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. Kampel memo to Gilbert, May 28, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Gilbert memo to Kampel, June 2, 1976, "Recruitment." NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Gilbert memo to Kampel, June 2, 1976, "Your Dereliction of Duty." NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Gilbert memo to Kampel, June 2, 1976, "Articles of Impeachment." NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁸⁴ Clarissa Gilbert to Frank Viggiano, June 2, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁸⁵ Clarissa Gilbert, *Report to the Congress*, August 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1. Kampel later claimed elsewhere that he had resigned. [Gary Kampel to "Chairperson, National Supervisory Board," December 31, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.]

⁸⁶ "Special Report: 1976 NSA Congress," *Higher Education Daily*, September 7, 1976. Clipping on file in NSA Papers 1983, Box 1. I have so far found no mention of Tobin in the NSA archives prior to the 1976 Congress.

ultimate winner was Tom Tobin, a doctoral student in his late thirties.⁸⁷ The disruption to NSA occasioned by the defeat of a president running for re-election and the simultaneous dismissal of a powerful executive director would have been difficult in any circumstances. But in this case it was made far more difficult by three extraordinary factors — the NSA constitution’s provision for a monthlong transition period before Tobin took office, steps Gilbert and Olim took to augment Olim’s compensation, and Olim’s insistence on retaining control of the NSA Foundation.

At the start of Gilbert’s term, Olim’s salary had stood at \$8,000 — \$2,000 more than Gilbert’s own.⁸⁸ Just weeks before the Congress, his salary was raised, and before Gilbert left office it was raised again.⁸⁹ A few days before Gilbert’s term as president ended, she and Olim signed an agreement committing NSA to pay Olim a large amount of accrued back salary along with five weeks of accumulated vacation pay and a three-month severance bonus.⁹⁰ More disruptive than the financial arrangements, however, was the fact that Gilbert and Olim both continued to work in the NSA offices even after Tobin took over as president. That bizarre situation was made possible by the continuing ambiguity of the status of the NSA Foundation.

When the foundation was created in February 1972, it was constituted with an “initial Board of Directors” consisting of three people — NSA president Margery Tabankin, vice president Thomas Mooney, and Drew Olim, who was designated the

⁸⁷ “Re-Elect Tom Tobin,” flyer, [1977], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35; “Special Report: 1976 NSA Congress,” *Higher Education Daily*, September 7, 1976. Clipping on file in NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

⁸⁸ Clarissa Gilbert memorandum to Frank Viggiano, “Re: NSB Minutes of September 30 – October 3, 1976.” NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

⁸⁹ “Payroll Information,” July 14, 1976, NSA Papers, Box 8; Clarissa Gilbert memorandum to Frank Viggiano, “Re: NSB Minutes of September 30 – October 3, 1976.” NSA Papers 1983, Box 6. The July raise was backdated to the first of the month.

⁹⁰ “Agreement,” September 24, 1976, NSA Papers, Box 3. This eighteen weeks of compensation was to be paid at his final salary, increasing the value of the raises Olim received in the final months of Gilbert’s term dramatically.

Foundation's executive director.⁹¹ The articles of incorporation of the Foundation directed that a full board would be constituted at a later date.⁹²

The Foundation was granted 501c3 status in February of 1974.⁹³ In September 1975, the IRS reclassified NSA as a 501c4 organization, stripping it of its tax-exempt status.⁹⁴ The Foundation commenced activities on a limited basis that year, taking over responsibility for an NSA program called the Food Action Exchange, but by the end of 1975 it still had not met to create a permanent board of directors.⁹⁵

In an October 1975 agreement between Olim and Gilbert, NSAF contracted to rent the third floor of NSA's offices from the Association.⁹⁶ This agreement was ratified by the Foundation's interim board the following July, although the board still did not meet — its three members acted by unanimous written consent, as they had twice before.⁹⁷ And so when Drew Olim was fired by NSA he was under no obligation to leave NSAF, and there was no one in NSA with the authority to compel him to do so. He occupied a suite of offices within NSA's building, wielded authority over a Foundation

⁹¹ Chronological Summary of USNSA Foundation Board Actions, December 3, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

⁹² NSAF Articles of Incorporation, NSA Codification 1973, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1. In NSA's subsequent negotiations with the IRS, conducted largely by Olim, the Foundation's board was restructured. Originally the board was to have consisted of the NSA vice president, the NSB chair, four NSB members, and five more chosen by those six, but under the new agreement, intended to minimize NSA influence over the Foundation, NSA officers and NSB members were not permitted to hold any of the seats, and only one could be held by "a full-time university student." [Drew Olim memo to George Macdonald, October 29, 1973, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6; NSAF Bylaws, NSA Codification 1973 and 1974, NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.]

⁹³ ED Coleman, Internal Revenue Service, to NSA, February 25, 1974, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6. At the time, NSA expressed its intention to transfer SGIS, the College Law Bulletin, and several other projects to the Foundation.

⁹⁴ Drew Olim memo to NSB, February 24, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

⁹⁵ NSAF Financial Statements, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. *The Food and Population Exchange*, March and April 1975. *The Food Action Exchange*, October 1975 through March 1976. *Sustenance: The Newsletter of the Action Center*, February 1977. All in NSA Papers 1983, Box 24. I

⁹⁶ Clarissa Gilbert to Drew Olim, December 10, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

⁹⁷ Chronological Summary of USNSA Foundation Board Actions, December 3, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8. The lease agreement was one of several agreed to in the July 1976 written consent process.

that bore NSA's name, and continued to conduct Foundation business, even bringing in Gilbert to assist him.⁹⁸ This situation would persist through the spring, while relations between Olim, Gilbert, and the new NSA leadership deteriorated.

In late December, a potential new NSA employee approached Tom Tobin. Richard Kinane, who had been the executive director of Pennsylvania's Commonwealth Association of Students until a few months before, had been in contact with NSA leadership about staff issues, and he had sat in on a just-finished NSB meeting.⁹⁹ He was impressed by the Association's "political and social ideals," and deeply concerned about its "catastrophic financial position." He told Tobin that he was interested in serving as NSA's managing director, and Tobin hired him on the spot.¹⁰⁰ He discussed the decision with no-one before making it, and left on a trip immediately thereafter.¹⁰¹

Relations between Tobin and NSA's vice president, Ed Kennedy, had been strained since the fall, and the Kinane hiring deepened their difficulties.¹⁰² Tobin asked Kinane to take on much of the responsibility for the Association's upcoming Legislative Conference, one of Kennedy's few areas of explicit constitutional authority.¹⁰³ Kennedy resented what he saw as Tobin's efforts to undermine and marginalize him, and in an early February memo he renounced any further role in the conference, then just three weeks away.¹⁰⁴ After Kennedy sent that memo, conditions in the office got much worse — in the course of a mid-February argument, Kennedy apparently assaulted Kinane. In a

⁹⁸ Clarissa Gilbert memo to Tom Tobin, December 17, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

⁹⁹ Minutes of "informal" NSB meeting, December 16-19, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. The board had failed to reach quorum, and it had accomplished little.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Kinane memo to NSB, January 6, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

¹⁰¹ Reed Lee memo to Tom Tobin, December 21, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6; Richard Kinane memo to NSB, January 6, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

¹⁰² Tom Tobin memo to Ed Kennedy, September 15, 1976.

¹⁰³ Reed Lee memo to Tom Tobin, December 21, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁰⁴ Ed Kennedy memo to "The dynamic duo," February 2, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

letter he wrote to Kennedy that night Kinane said “I admit to you that I now fear bodily harm from you,” but there was apparently no institutional response to the incident.¹⁰⁵

NSA was in financial collapse, and had little ongoing activity underway. Its foundation and a suite of its offices were being occupied by a disgruntled former employee and an ousted ex-president, and its managing director lived in physical fear of its vice president. But the worst was yet to come — April 1977 may well have been the worst month that NSA ever experienced as an organization.

On Thursday, April 7, the Association’s lawyers quit, saying Tobin’s doubts about their loyalty and integrity had made it impossible for them to continue to represent NSA.¹⁰⁶ Tobin spent the weekend that followed convincing Diana Gilpatrick, NSA’s Congress Coordinator, not to follow suit.¹⁰⁷ On April 14 former SGIS director Frank Till, then working for NSA part-time as a consultant, circulated a lengthy memo in which he described the crisis facing NSA in excruciating detail.¹⁰⁸ On April 21, NSA’s office manager quit, as did another staffer, Michael McNeilley.¹⁰⁹ In a memo to the remaining staff, McNeilley described himself as a rat leaving a sinking ship:

I’m not even angry anymore. I’m just sorry and sad. Sorry for the ship, ill-run for however long, ill-run now, running out of rats, no steam, no rudder. If the rudder is fixed, who will operate it. I think too many hands on it at once are one reason it broke. Or the wrong hands. Or no hands. It doesn’t matter now. It’s too late. Maybe not for the ship, or some of the rats, or some crew of new rats. But it’s too late for me. I’m sad as hell, and I’m not going to take it anymore.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Richard Kinane note to Ed Kennedy, February 17, 1977, 1 AM, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6; Minutes of the February 24-28 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹⁰⁶ Marguerite Owen to Tom Tobin, April 7, 1977, NSA Papers, Box 3.

¹⁰⁷ Tom Tobin memo to Diana Gilpatrick, April 10, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

¹⁰⁸ Frank Till memo to “NSA,” April 14, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Read De Mouy memo to “The Officers, Staff, and National Supervisory Board of NSA,” April 21, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹¹⁰ Michael [McNeilley] memo to “Tom, staff, etc.,” April 21, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

Gilpatrick sent out a memo that same day saying that she was quitting too.¹¹¹

Gilpatrick was convinced to withdraw her resignation, then fired by Kennedy, then asked to stay on.¹¹² Kinane agreed to stay on too, then resigned again on May 24, effective July 8.¹¹³ On May 27, he reported that Kennedy had assaulted him again, writing in a memo to “the files” that he now felt “significant fear for my own well-being and health” going forward.¹¹⁴

Gilpatrick apparently quit for good in mid-June, and Kinane followed shortly thereafter. Both provided reports to the NSB on the circumstances that had led them to leave the Association, with Kinane going into particular detail on the subject of Kennedy’s violence and his other failings in office.¹¹⁵ But although the Board met in April, in late June, and again in July, they took no formal action on any personnel issues at any of those meetings.¹¹⁶

As all this was going on, the Association was also struggling with the consequences of the deterioration of its relationship with Drew Olim. Relations between Tobin and Olim had been courteous, if cool, through the fall, and Tobin had made regular payments toward retiring the back pay the Association owed Olim.¹¹⁷ He never

¹¹¹ Diana Gilpatrick memo to Tom Tobin, April 21, 1977, “Why Michael quit — Diana’s perception.” NSA Papers 1983, Box 2; Diana Gilpatrick memo to Tom Tobin, April 21, 1977, “My position.” NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

¹¹² Diana Gilpatrick, report to NSB, meeting of April 29-30, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2. Diana Gilpatrick memo to “Tom Tobin, Ed Kennedy, Frank Viggiano, NSB,” June 17, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹¹³ Richard Kinane memo to Tom Tobin, May 4, 1977, 2:50 PM, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹¹⁴ Richard Kinane memo to “The files,” May 27, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹¹⁵ Diana Gilpatrick memo to “Tom Tobin, Ed Kennedy, Frank Viggiano, NSB,” June 17, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Richard Kinane memo to NSB, June 21, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of the June 24-25 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Minutes of the July 10 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹¹⁷ Outline of president’s report, January 1977 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3; Drew Olim to Tom Tobin, January 25, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8; Tom Tobin memo to Drew Olim, February 16, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

agreed to pay Olim the full amount that Gilbert had promised him, however, and in February he informed Olim that he would not. He had investigated the situation and concluded that the Association had owed Olim \$3468.03 when he took office — a thousand dollars less than the figure to which Gilbert had agreed. The payments that had already been made had, he said, retired all but \$224.25 of the debt.¹¹⁸

Olim was incensed. In a lengthy reply he described Tobin's memo as an "example of the hypocrisy of your administration" and of its practice of paying "lip service to humanitarian ideals while operating in the most heinous and tragic ways." There had been, he said, "no courtesy, no decency, no common sense, no civility" in Tobin's actions.¹¹⁹

The Foundation board finally met on March 29. Tobin moved to "start the process of removal" of Olim, but Tabankin put through a substitute motion for a four-week review of Olim's role.¹²⁰ The board once again failed to select new members as required by the Foundation's bylaws.¹²¹

Two days later, Olim gave NSA notice that the Foundation would be terminating its rental agreement with the Association at the end of April.¹²² The next day Tobin directed NSA's lawyers — who represented the Foundation as well — to begin preparations for a lawsuit against the Foundation.¹²³ On May 12 Olim and Gilbert began moving the Foundation out of the NSA building, taking files and equipment with them. Soon Tobin, believing that some of the material in question belonged to NSA, put what

¹¹⁸ Tom Tobin memo to Drew Olim, February 16, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹¹⁹ Drew Olim to Tom Tobin, February 18, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹²⁰ Handwritten minutes of March 29, 1977 meeting of NSAF Board of Directors, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹²¹ It appears that Tobin and Viggiano served as voting members of the board at the March 29 meeting, alongside Tabankin, Mooney, and Olim. This hybrid board — not the original three, but not yet the permanent board — would seem to have been an extemporaneous accommodation not provided for in the bylaws. [Handwritten minutes of March 29, 1977 meeting of NSAF Board of Directors, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.]

¹²² Drew Olim to Tom Tobin, February 18, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹²³ Tom Tobin to Michael Nussbaum, April 2, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

remained under lock and key and informed Olim that he would no longer be permitted to enter the building unescorted.¹²⁴

Olim sued NSA that October, claiming that he was owed \$1275.51 in compensation and seeking interest and damages. The following March NSA filed a counterclaim, charging that Olim had improperly removed files and other property from NSA offices, misrepresented his employment contract, engaged in a “scheme to defraud USNSA” through his severance agreement with Gilbert, disbursed NSA funds to a friend on the Association’s staff without authorization, improperly manipulated the NSA Foundation to his own benefit, refused to pay debts owed by the Foundation to NSA, and violated his fiduciary duties to NSA in the establishment of the National Student Travel Bureau. They claimed damages totaling more than \$1.2 million.¹²⁵

The two suits would drag on inconclusively for years before settling. The Association never regained control of the NSA Foundation, and as far as I have been able to determine, Olim never again brought it out of dormancy himself.¹²⁶

Frank Viggiano

This was the situation in which NSA found itself as it approached the 1977 Congress. But even as the national office was disintegrating, a few students on the

¹²⁴ Tom Tobin memo to NSB members, May 13, 1977, NSA Papers 1983; Tom Tobin memo to Drew Olim, May 12, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹²⁵ Summons, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Civil Division, Case Number CA10033-77, October 11, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8; Answer and Counterclaim, Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Civil Division, Case Number CA10033-77, March 1, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 8.

¹²⁶ The NSA archives do not reveal the final disposition of the two suits. The latest reference I have found is a 1980 memo to the USSA Board of Directors saying that a settlement had been reached, but that Olim had so far failed to comply with “certain provisions of the agreement.” [Frank Viggiano to USSA Board of Directors, “August Update,” August 30, 1980, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.]

campuses were laying the groundwork for the Association's most ambitious transformation since the CIA disengagement a decade earlier. There were two interlinked sources for this effort — a growing partnership with NSL and the rise of Frank Viggiano in NSA.

From his first Congress in 1975, Frank Viggiano had pursued a leadership role in the Association with a doggedness and a strategic vision not seen in NSA since the CIA relationship's collapse, and seldom seen even while the CIA relationship was ongoing. When he was elected NSA president in 1977, it was as the best-prepared officer to win election since Ed Schwartz rose from the national affairs vice presidency to the presidency a decade earlier.

At the 1975 Congress Viggiano, the incoming student body president at LaSalle College in Pennsylvania, distributed a letter to the students of the Mid-Atlantic Area. It was a letter not unlike the one Drew Olim had circulated to his own region at the Congress six years earlier, and it had the same purpose — to drum up support for its author's NSB candidacy. Students new to the Association could “see that there is a problem with the USNSA,” Viggiano wrote. There was too little communication taking place among NSA's member schools, and a lack of local organizing within NSA as a whole. As a result, “many feel alienated” after attending Congress, and don't remain involved with the Association thereafter. He pledged, if elected, to organize the Mid-Atlantic Area “at the ‘Grass Roots’ level.”¹²⁷

Unlike Olim, Viggiano won his seat on the NSB. He held an Area Conference at LaSalle that October, inviting students from member and non-member schools to attend and charging no conference fee — despite, he said, “being pressured from the NSA main

¹²⁷ Frank Viggiano open letter to “All Students of the Middle-Atlantic Area,” [1975 Congress], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

office” to do so.¹²⁸ Near the end of the school year he and another board member sent out a mailing to student governments throughout the Northeast, providing a rundown on NSA’s recent activities and encouraging attendance at the upcoming Congress.¹²⁹

Viggiano was re-elected to the NSB in 1976, and his fellow board members chose him as their chair. He moved quickly to make himself useful to the national office, and to gain a perch from which to learn more about it. Immediately after the Congress, he wrote to outgoing president Clarissa Gilbert to stress the importance of getting the fall’s dues mailing out quickly — and to offer to visit DC to prepare the mailing himself.¹³⁰ About a week later, he wrote to incoming president Tom Tobin, offering to come to DC in advance of an upcoming board meeting to lend the new officers a hand.¹³¹ Over the course of the year that followed, Viggiano would take an active role in the affairs of the Association.¹³² He involved himself in the negotiations over the NSA Foundation, for instance, and served as a go-between in the dispute between Tobin and Olim. But it was in relations with the National Student Lobby that he took the most initiative.

The Lobby had never established the funding base that it had initially envisioned. Though it had initially hoped to support itself entirely through dues, few campuses proved willing to provide large-scale funding, and annual dues revenue never rose above \$25,000.¹³³ In 1974-75 the Lobby failed to pay some \$10,000 in taxes “along with many

¹²⁸ Frank Viggiano memo to “All Interested Students in the Middle Atlantic Area and other Areas of the United States,” [fall 1975], NSA Papers 1983, Box 1.

¹²⁹ Frank Viggiano and Paul Smith, NSA Mid-Atlantic Area Newsletter, June 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹³⁰ Frank Viggiano to Clarissa Gilbert, September 14, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹³¹ Frank Viggiano memo to Tom Tobin, September 24, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹³² In this he distinguished himself from most previous NSB and NEC chairs, who had had little ongoing involvement with the work of the national office.

¹³³ NSL membership recruitment letter, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 30; NSL “Annual Report, April 1, 1977 — March 31, 1978.” NSA Papers 1983, Box 30*. The above source puts the claim even more conservatively, saying that “membership revenue, the bulk of NSL’s income, has never exceeded \$20-25,000.”

other large debts,” and only avoided bankruptcy through a drastic reduction of staff.¹³⁴ A canvassing operation that had for a time provided some revenue was by then defunct.¹³⁵

Both NSA and NSL were struggling by 1975, and at NSL’s April conference that year its membership directed leadership to pursue the possibility of a merger.¹³⁶ The delegates to the NSA Congress that summer passed a similar resolution, noting that the two groups were “duplicative in many respects,” that neither was then “adequately serving the needs of students,” and that both were “floundering financially.”¹³⁷

But these early attempts to bridge the gap between NSA and NSL were marred by clumsiness and poor planning. The first joint meeting of the two boards, held at the 1975 NSA Congress, was billed as a party but held around a meeting table in a conference room. Adding beer and marijuana to the mix created, as one observer put it, “an atmosphere conducive neither to partying nor to open discussion.”¹³⁸ The 1975-76 NSA officers entered office wary of a too-close relationship with NSL, and a series of setbacks for the Lobby did little to encourage them to re-appraise the situation.¹³⁹ When NSL lost both its executive director and its attorney that October many in the Association came to believe that the Lobby’s collapse was imminent — and many in the Lobby came to believe, in turn, that NSA was eager to see such a collapse take place.¹⁴⁰

Even efforts at mutual assistance led to recriminations. NSA offered NSL office space in their building that fall, an offer that the Lobby, concerned with preserving its

¹³⁴NSL “Annual Report, April 1, 1977 — March 31, 1978.” NSA Papers 1983, Box 30*.

¹³⁵ Frank Jackalone, “NSL-NSA Progress Report.” Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹³⁶ Frank Jackalone, “NSL-NSA Progress Report.” Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹³⁷ NSA-NSL Consolidation resolution, 1975 Congress, NSA Papers 1983, Box 5.

¹³⁸ Frank Jackalone, “NSL-NSA Progress Report.” Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹³⁹ On Gilbert, see Frank Jackalone, “NSL-NSA Progress Report.” Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6. On Kampel, see Gary Kampel to Diana Holland, October 20, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

¹⁴⁰ Frank Jackalone, “NSL-NSA Progress Report.” Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

autonomy, declined. NSL leadership asked that the Association keep the office offer confidential, but Gilbert was soon overheard, they said, “boasting” about it in public.¹⁴¹ NSA later published an article in its newsletter about NSL’s loss of its executive director, and scheduled its inaugural spring 1976 lobbying conference to take place a month before NSL’s, which had already been announced.¹⁴²

In January 1976, however, Frank Viggiano, just a few months into his first term on the NSB, and Rachel Richman, an NSL board member from Viggiano’s home state of Pennsylvania, sent an open letter to the boards of the Association and the Lobby. They reminded the boards that the membership of the two groups had expressed their support for a merger, and claimed that progress toward that goal had been blocked again and again by “a few rumors and big egos.” They called for NSA and NSL to move forward on a merger plan starting immediately, and laid out a series of steps that could be taken to bring the process to a conclusion within three or four years.¹⁴³

SSAs Come to the Fore

At the end of their letter, Viggiano and Richman suggested that the division between NSA and NSL was driving campuses to abandon both national groups in favor of state student associations like the Pennsylvania Student Lobby.¹⁴⁴ But though this claim had some truth to it, some SSAs were important agitators for merger as well. The

¹⁴¹ Frank Jackalone, “NSL-NSA Progress Report.” Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁴² Frank Jackalone, “NSL-NSA Progress Report.” Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁴³ Open letter from Frank Viggiano and Rachel Richman to NSA and NSL boards of directors, [presented to NSA board January 9, 1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁴⁴ Open letter from Frank Viggiano and Rachel Richman to NSA and NSL boards of directors, [presented to NSA board January 9, 1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

April 1975 NSL merger resolution had been championed by SASU, one of the oldest and strongest lobby-oriented SSAs, and in December of that year SASU unanimously adopted a pro-merger resolution which it distributed to SSAs nationwide.¹⁴⁵ Over the next two and a half years SSAs like SASU would play an increasingly active role in merger negotiations and in national student politics more generally.

NSA's regional and area boundaries had always been to a degree arbitrary. Students from Idaho and Oregon, or Virginia and Florida, might share some concerns, but they worked within distinct and often dissimilar legislative, judicial, and administrative contexts, and they had no reason beyond NSA to think of themselves as members of the "Great Northwest" or "Great Southeast" regions.¹⁴⁶ And as a rule NSA was not reason enough.

The SSAs, in contrast, were founded on practical commonalities. In a time of heightened engagement with state politics, they brought together students from a single state to work the system. Many of the most successful restricted their membership to students from a single university system. The students in an SSA could and did share information and strategies for confronting a single governor, a single legislature, and a single chancellor and board of trustees.

And because the SSAs had an existence entirely independent of NSA and NSL, they paradoxically offered the possibility of a solution to NSA's chronic dilemma of whether and how to construct a field staff. Their officers and employees were not directly responsible to the Association, of course, but to the extent that an SSA's agenda coincided with that of NSA — either fortuitously or because of the influence of one upon

¹⁴⁵ Frank Jackalone, "NSL-NSA Progress Report." Handwritten memo to Danny Schottenfels, [1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6; SASU resolution, "Support for a Single, Unified National Student Organization," December 7, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3.

¹⁴⁶ These regional designations are taken from the 1976-77 NSA Bylaws as recorded in the 1976 Codification, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

the other — the SSA might come to see itself as a regional NSA analogue, even affiliate. Thus the SSA staff, chosen and funded by student leaders within its own constituency, might look to the national level for guidance and training, and the Association might provide the more successful and ambitious of the SSA leaders with a larger stage on which to perform. Ideally, the SSAs could provide the long-missing bridge between student government and organizers on the campus level and NSA's national apparatus.

There was discussion within NSA of the possibility of creating an SSA membership category as early as the 1968 Congress, and before the end of the sixties a few students were conceptualizing statewide student organizations as a possible mechanism for revitalizing NSA's regional structure.¹⁴⁷ But NSA leadership remained cool to the prospect of admitting SSAs as members.¹⁴⁸ State and system associations were not granted even non-voting membership in the Association until 1975, and when they were given voting rights at the Congress — two votes per SSA, the equivalent of a college of 1500 students — in 1976, it was over the objections of the sitting president.¹⁴⁹

NSL was quicker to recognize the SSAs' potential, convening a national meeting of SSAs in July 1975, and follow-ups the following July and in January and July of

¹⁴⁷ "Representatives Discuss Southern Concerns," "NSB Approves NSA-Catholic Association," *USNSA Congress News*, [August 18, 1968], NSA Papers, Box 13. In a 1969 letter to NSA's vice president, its New York regional chair laid out the region's ambitious organizing plan for the year. He said it planned to fund its activities through "a two-cent per student tax on member schools," and asked whether NSA would allow schools that were not NSA members to join the region. [John Paden to Clint Deveaux, [September 1969], NSA Papers, Box 158.] My research has not yet made it clear whether this effort was a direct predecessor to SASU, the SUNY SSA that was founded a few years later.

¹⁴⁸ Robert Powell to Marcia Edgar, May 2, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 21; Clinton Deveaux to Jim Gruba, September 19, 1969, NSA Papers, Box 158; Clarissa Gilbert to Steve Bolme, August 7, 1976, NSA Papers 1983. Gilbert's lack of enthusiasm for SSA organizing, and also of NSA's financial straits, can be seen in a letter she wrote to Sally Heinen of the Colorado Student Coalition in 1975. Heinen had asked for a list of SSAs nationwide, and Gilbert replied that such a list appeared in NSA's lobbying manual, a copy of which "was given out at the NSA Congress." She suggested that Heinen borrow a copy from one of the Colorado attendees. [Gilbert to Heinen, December 22, 1975, NSA Papers 1983, Box 4.

¹⁴⁹ NSA Constitution and Bylaws, 1976 Codification, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2; Clarissa Gilbert to Steve Bolme, August 7, 1976, NSA Papers 1983.

1977.¹⁵⁰ The earlier iterations of these conferences were focused on building NSL's ties to the SSAs and on creating a co-ordinated NSL/SSA federal lobbying strategy, but later meetings would build momentum — and begin concrete planning — for the merger of NSL and NSA.¹⁵¹

Towards Merger

The delegates to the 1976 NSA Congress passed another pro-merger resolution, written by new SASU president Frank Jackalone. It drew on the previous year's text, adding six new "whereas" clauses reprimanding the 1975-76 NSA (and, to a lesser extent, NSL) leadership for "gross negligence" in failing to implement the 1975 Congress's merger resolution mandates.¹⁵² The resolution established a joint NSA-NSL commission on merger, but logistical difficulties and lack of institutional support rendered the commission ineffective.¹⁵³

Tom Tobin, NSA's incoming president, was more supportive of merger than his predecessors, however, and informal discussions continued.¹⁵⁴ NSA and NSL leaders met regularly that year with students from the campuses and SSAs to discuss the merger, and by late spring relations between the two organizations had progressed so far that NSL had accepted a new NSA offer to relocate its offices within the Association's DC

¹⁵⁰ For NSL solicitude to SSAs, see Danny Schottenfels to Thomas Zumberge, April 14, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 30.

¹⁵¹ David Rosen and Barbara Bergin letter, ["Dear Colleague"], November 4, 1976, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁵² National Student Federation Resolution, 1976 Congress, NSA Papers 1983, Box 5.

¹⁵³ TT [Tom Tobin] and BB [Barbara Bergin] to "Gene" at "CAS," [fall 1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁵⁴ Tom Tobin memo to participants on the Columbia, Missouri SSA conference, July 28, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6. See also draft letter [from Tom Tobin and Barbara Bergin] to "CAS," [fall 1976], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

headquarters.¹⁵⁵ When NSL's membership met in April they elected a new chair of their Board of Directors, Joe Sweeney, and in the months that followed Sweeney worked with NSB chair Frank Viggiano to prepare a formal proposal to initiate the merger process. The two presented this proposal to a July conference of state and system student associations in Columbia, Missouri at which the NSA and NSL boards held their first formal joint meeting.¹⁵⁶

The Columbia conference was billed as the country's first national SSA conference, and it was certainly the largest yet held — representatives of 26 state and system associations in 22 states were in attendance.¹⁵⁷ The meeting endorsed a declaration of principles, "The Missouri Statement," which took detailed stands on issues ranging from federal financial aid and student involvement in governance to race and sex discrimination and apartheid divestment.¹⁵⁸ The meeting also saw a new NSL staff selected, as the Lobby's board chose Frank Jackalone and Joel Packer, both of SASU, to serve as their executive director and legislative director, respectively.

The Missouri Statement, approved by general assent of the conference's participants, gives an insight into the agenda of the SSAs in the immediate run-up to the creation of USSA — not just where they stood, but what issues they prioritized, which they were able to reach common agreement on, and how they framed them.¹⁵⁹

The Statement was less a manifesto than a position paper, presenting detailed proposals on tuition policy, access to student educational records, financial counseling,

¹⁵⁵ Tom Tobin memo to participants on the Columbia, Missouri SSA conference, July 28, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁵⁶ "Proposal: National Student Lobby — US National Student Association Merger — Phase I," July 20, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 5. "Merger Phase I" directed the two organizations to continue meeting jointly, and to collaborate in the coming year on a lobbying conference, legislative testimony, and a women's issues desk. It also established a Coordinating Committee to pursue further negotiations.

¹⁵⁷ NSL news release, "NSL announces new staff directions," August 8, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

¹⁵⁸ "The Missouri Statement: A Student Call to Action," [1977], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁵⁹ "The Missouri Statement," [1977], NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

and six separate federal financial aid programs. It made recommendations for the integration of SSAs into the dissemination of educational information from institutions to students and offered a five-point proposal on student involvement in university governance. The section on race and gender discrimination, its lengthiest, moved from historical and sociological analysis to proposals for government action and an agenda for institutional action in areas such as outreach, admissions, retention, and support services. Its discussion of gender discrimination additionally called for affirmative action for women within SSAs, organizing around the Equal Rights Amendment (“state student associations must join in — not merely support — ratification efforts”), enhanced campus childcare, and the reform of rape and abortion laws.

This was the agenda, and the self-presentation, of the mid-1970s SSAs. Engaged with legislative and governance concerns, which they viewed through the lens of social justice and access to higher education. Engaged with issues of race and gender, which they viewed through the lens of public policy and organizational responsiveness. It was an approach that viewed the campus and the statehouse as sites of political organizing and contestation, not protest or pleading. This was the vision of the student movement that would launch USSA a year later.

The Merger Year

Documentation of NSA’s 1977 Congress, like most NSA meetings from the mid-1970s, is regrettably limited. There were about 300 people in attendance, including 256 delegates and alternates — a low turnout even by recent NSA standards, though perhaps

a slight uptick from the previous year.¹⁶⁰ Only a fragmentary record of the plenary's votes is preserved in the archives, and no record at all of the officer elections — a campaign flyer and a brief mention in the *Congress News* indicate that Tobin ran for re-election, but it is only by inference from post-Congress materials that we know that NSB chair Frank Viggiano won the race.¹⁶¹

NSA's core agenda for 1977-78 was a pragmatic, even limited one — to stabilize the Association's finances, to mount a joint lobbying conference with NSL, and to conclude the process of merger.¹⁶² With NSA and NSL under the same roof, the year saw collaboration and consolidation in all aspects of their operations. They eliminated overlap in programming and inaugurated weekly staff meetings. They established a structure under which campuses could join both organizations with a single discounted dues payment. They combined their publications programs. They passed identical legislative platforms, so that NSL legislative director Joel Packer could present himself, when lobbying, as a representative of both groups.¹⁶³

Together, NSA and NSL won more respect in Washington DC than either had lately achieved separately. A Democrat had been elected president in 1976, ending eight years of Republican control of that office, and in April 1978 NSA and NSL secured an Oval Office meeting with Jimmy Carter. This was NSA's first presidential meeting since the CIA era, and apparently NSL's first ever. Although no concrete changes in federal policy resulted from that meeting, it did lead to regular monthly NSA-NSL conferences

¹⁶⁰ *USNSA Congress News*, August 19, 1977, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

¹⁶¹ "Re-Elect Tom Tobin," campaign flyer, [1977], NSA Papers 1983, Box 35. "Official Candidates," *USNSA Congress News*, August 18, 1971, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2. That list names eight candidates for president, including Tobin, Viggiano, and Tom Duffy, the eventual winner of the vice presidency. Five candidates for vice president are listed, including incumbent Ed Kennedy.

¹⁶² Minutes of the October 28-30 1977 NSB meeting, NSA Papers 1983, Box 3. Other projects discussed at the meeting included area conferences, publications, and the activities of the Women's and Third World Desks.

¹⁶³ Viggiano annual report, NSA Papers 1983.

with White House staffers, and helped the two organizations win the creation of a staff position for a student liaison at Carter's Office of Education.¹⁶⁴ The administration even gave financial support to an NSA-NSL delegation's visit to the USSR and Romania.¹⁶⁵

Finances remained a serious problem, but NSA and NSL were able to secure outside funding for several projects in 1977-78. In a welcome departure from previous experience, much of this funding came from other student organizations. The University of Wisconsin's SSA paid part of the salary of the coordinator of the NSA-NSL legislative conference, for instance, and UCLA's student government sponsored an NSA-NSL financial aid project. In addition, the National Abortion Rights Action League funded an NSA-NSL staffer to work on pro-choice organizing. Grant money obtained by the National Student Educational Fund (NSEF), a foundation with close ties to NSL, underwrote an invitation-only student conference on federal education issues that NSA and NSL co-sponsored.¹⁶⁶

Soon NSA and NSL began to make formal plans for a joint conference, to be held in the summer of 1978, at which the merger would be formally approved.¹⁶⁷ As planning for merger moved forward, the process of working out a structure for the new group was complicated somewhat by differences between NSA and NSL. The Lobby, as has been noted, relied primarily on staff rather than officers and de-emphasized the involvement of membership in policymaking — in its early years, NSL had not even held national conferences. The Association, in contrast, had for more than three decades regarded its officers as its head and the Congress as its heart.

¹⁶⁴ The Office of Education would be elevated to cabinet-level status as the Department of Education in 1980.

¹⁶⁵ Viggiano annual report, NSA Papers 1983.

¹⁶⁶ Viggiano annual report, NSA Papers 1983.

¹⁶⁷ NSA-NSL news release, "NSA-NSL to Merge at August Convention," July 12, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

Over the course of 1977-78 the two groups' joint Coordinating Committee and the NSA and NSL boards hammered out a structure for their successor. The new group would have an elected chair and an appointed executive director, as in NSL, but the chair's powers and duties would resemble those of NSA's president. The new group would hold Congresses much like NSA's, and preserve NSA's commitment to affirmative action in Congress delegations — a commitment that I will discuss in detail below.

The USSA Board of Directors would be larger than NSA's National Supervisory Board. It would be made up of two representatives each from thirteen regions rather than NSA's seven areas, as well as seats for up to seven "National Affiliates."¹⁶⁸ These affiliates, referred to as caucuses in casual usage, were described in the USSA bylaws as national groups that "represent[ed] distinct constituencies within the overall national student population," and for 1978-79 the Association recognized caucuses for women, students of color, community college students, and non-traditional students.¹⁶⁹

One contentious question in the negotiations was that of proxy voting. NSL, which as a lobbying group held all of its membership meetings in Washington DC, allowed each college to designate a single delegate as a proxy for its allotted delegation. West Coast schools would thus be less disadvantaged in representation in the national group, and schools with the wherewithal to fund travel by large delegations would not be able to "buy votes." But for NSA proxy voting stood at cross-purposes to the Congress's role as a site of debate, consciousness-raising, information exchange, and organizing among the representatives of the members. At least as important, it threatened to undo the gains the Association was beginning to see in the recruitment of people of color and preclude the expansion of those strategies to the recruitment of women.

¹⁶⁸ The USSA regions ranged in size from a single state, in the case of California and New York, to seven, in the case of the Southeast region, which stretched from Kentucky to Florida.

¹⁶⁹ "Colorado Convention Unites Student Movement in Merger of NSA and NSL," *USSA News Update*, September-October 1978, NSA Papers 1983.

NSA's first attempts to ensure racial diversity had been the non-specific — and thus essentially unenforceable — directives of the late 1960s, discussed in chapter seven. But in 1975 the Association had for the first time imposed a requirement that representation of students of color in each delegation be “proportionate with” campus enrollment of such students.¹⁷⁰ If proxy voting were allowed, a student government would be able to circumvent these regulations by granting proxies for all but one of its votes to a single white male delegate.

The Coordinating Committee and the boards of NSA and NSL were unable to arrive at a broadly agreeable solution to the proxy-voting problem, and so the issue was held over for the August 1978 joint membership conference. With the merger all but concluded, it was the only major structural issue that remained to be resolved.

USSA

As the summer conference approached, it had long since become clear that NSA and NSL would merge. The two groups were working in close concert, they had arrived at a tentative structure for merger, and they had integrated their operations in ways that would not be easily reversed.¹⁷¹

Turnout for the National Student Conference — for the first time since 1947, an NSA annual meeting would not be billed as a “Congress” — was robust by the standards

¹⁷⁰ In the new USSA bylaws, delegations of three or more would have to include at least one woman and one student of color. Exceptions were made for slates in which all members were elected rather than appointed by the student government, and provision was made for consideration of remedies short of disqualification in cases in which schools showed a history of diversity or good-faith efforts to comply. [USSA Administrative Manual and Platform 1978-79, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.]

¹⁷¹ “Merger Plan and Agreement” approved by NSA and NSL boards June 17, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

of the 1970s. In the previous half-dozen years only the two Washington DC Congresses had drawn higher attendance. It was still, however, well below the benchmarks set in earlier decades. Turnout would likely have been higher if not for the meeting's location at the University of Colorado at Boulder, which attendance records show clearly depressed turnout from the Northeast.

Formally the merger was accomplished by absorbing NSL into NSA — the delegates to the conference amended NSA's governing documents, rather than creating a new entity.¹⁷² They banned proxy voting in the new group, after nodding to NSL's sensitivities by requiring that legislative stands be approved by a 60% super-majority vote in the plenary.¹⁷³ And they gave the new organization its new name — The United States Student Association.

Four candidates declared for the new position of USSA chair. NSL Executive Director Frank Jackalone and NSA Vice President Tom Duffy were the most popular candidates by far, and in a run-off Jackalone prevailed with a twenty-three vote margin.¹⁷⁴ (In a break with both NSA and NSL tradition, the election was conducted by secret ballot rather than roll call.¹⁷⁵) NSA President Frank Viggiano declined nomination for chair, and was then made USSA executive director through a bylaw provision that gave that position to the outgoing NSA president on an interim basis.¹⁷⁶

At the close of its founding convention, USSA's two most powerful positions were thus filled by the most powerful people in its two predecessor organizations, bringing an

¹⁷² "Merger Plan and Agreement" approved by NSA and NSL boards June 17, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2. The merger itself was approved by separate NSA and NSL plenaries.

¹⁷³ "Colorado Convention Unites Student Movement in Merger of NSA and NSL," *USSA News Update*, September-October 1978, NSA Papers 1983.

¹⁷⁴ "Election Results," *USSA Coalition Daily*, August 11, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2; "Jackalone Elected Chair," *USSA Coalition Daily*, August 12, 1978, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

¹⁷⁵ "Colorado Convention Unites Student Movement in Merger of NSA and NSL," *USSA News Update*, September-October 1978, NSA Papers 1983.

¹⁷⁶ USSA Bylaws, USSA Administrative Manual and Platform 1978-79, NSA Papers 1983, Box 2.

experienced leadership to USSA that NSA had conspicuously lacked between 1968 and 1977. That leadership would provide considerable continuity to the Association in its first years — Viggiano was chosen by the Board to stay on as executive director, and remained in that position until May 1981, while Jackalone ran successfully for re-election as chair at the 1979 Congress.¹⁷⁷ Joel Packer, NSL's legislative director, was retained as USSA's legislative director after the merger.¹⁷⁸

In its early years, USSA worked in a variety of ways to consolidate its stability.¹⁷⁹ NSL's SSA conferences were institutionalized as an annual USSA event, and the Association launched an SSA Development Project in collaboration with NSEF.¹⁸⁰ The NARAL staff position was continued, and in the mid-1980s the Association joined with the Midwest Academy to establish a program of Grass Roots Organizing Weekends (GROWs).¹⁸¹ GROW, a structured, participatory small-group seminar in organizing techniques, was intended to build USSA at its base by strengthening the skills of activists and student government leaders at the campus and SSA level.

For several years after the NSA-NSL merger USSA worked to gain 501c3 status for a new USSA foundation, and for a time, it seemed possible that the Association

¹⁷⁷ "Re: Staff Layoffs," Nancy Cross memo to USSA staff, May 6, 1981, NSA Papers 1983, Box 5; "Jackalone Re-Elected National Chair," USSA press release, September 1, 1979, NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁷⁸ *Resources for Student Activism II*, USSA 1979, NSA Papers 1983, Box 23.

¹⁷⁹ Though a full recounting of the organization's post-merger highs and lows is beyond the scope of this dissertation, this section should not be taken as an indication that USSA's arc was an uncomplicatedly positive one in the 1980s. Particularly before the advent of referendum funding, the Association experienced a number of financial and organizational crises.

¹⁸⁰ "Building State Student Associations," 1978 conference manual, NSA Papers 1983, Box 23. (The SSA conference continued as an annual event through at least 1980.) "The Beginning of the State Student Association Development Project," Kathy Downey and Joe Sweeney memo to SSA leaders, June 17, 1980, NSA Papers 1983, Box 5.

¹⁸¹ USSA Congress Manual 1989, author's collection.

would regain control of the NSA Foundation from Drew Olim.¹⁸² But neither of these plans came to fruition, and over time USSA developed a closer working relationship with the National Student Educational Fund.¹⁸³ By the early 1980s NSEF was working as closely with USSA as the law allowed, and about a decade later it was formally renamed the United States Student Association Foundation (USSAF).

Financing remained a chronic problem for USSA until about 1985, when the Association finally adopted the referendum-based funding mechanism that had proved so successful for the PIRGs and some SSAs. USSA did not transition completely to referendum funding — it allowed campuses to continue to pay enrollment-based dues in many cases.¹⁸⁴ But referendum funding was a success for the Association, and over time the proportion of member schools that paid referendum dues grew. The success of referendum financing demonstrated that large-scale government or foundation funding was not — or at least no longer — a necessary precondition for the Association’s success. By 1988-89, ten years after the merger, USSA’s revenue was nearly double that of a decade before, with almost ninety percent of total income deriving from dues and conference fees.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² “Re: Legal Affairs,” Frank Viggiano memo to USSA Executive Committee, March 7, 1979, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35; “Application for Recognition of Exemption,” [c. 1979], NSA Papers 1983, Box 6.

¹⁸³ “August Update,” Frank Viggiano memo to USSA Executive Committee, August 29, 1980, NSA Papers 1983, Box 35.

¹⁸⁴ USSA Congress Manual 1989, author’s collection.

¹⁸⁵ That year USSA took in a total of more than \$222,000, with \$66,000 coming from dues and another \$130,000 coming from conference fees. [USSA Budget, 1988-89, USSA Congress Manual 1991, author’s collection.]

Conclusion

I opened this dissertation with a discussion of the tensions present in NSA around questions of democracy — internal democracy, campus democracy, and political democracy at home and abroad. I would like to close with an exploration of a related issue, perhaps the central issue that the Association addressed itself to — that of the student’s role in the university. In so doing, I’d like to interrogate some of the ways in which a serious engagement with the story of NSA can help to illuminate the still-dim field of American student history, and indeed the history of postwar America.

NSA and the Idea of the Student

Of all of the questions that NSA confronted in its thirty-one years of existence, none was more fundamental, or more enduring, than that of the role of the student in the university.¹ The Association was premised on the idea that student identity was an identity that could ground collaborative organizing around common goals, and as a student government organization in a time of tremendous institutional upheaval in

¹ I have adapted the phrase “the idea of the student” from *The Idea of a Student*, the title of a collection of essays on the student’s role in the university and society that was compiled by the NSA national staff in 1959.

higher education, NSA was immersed in pressing, shifting questions of university structure, governance, and power.

As we have seen, NSA's conceptualization of the student's role evolved over time. The university community model, in which students were seen as one campus constituency among several, each with its own proper place in the governance structure, persisted from the late 1940s until the mid-1960s, acquiring a new emphasis on the student as a responsible university citizen during the latter part of the 1950s. The middle 1960s saw the rise of Student Power and a concomitantly more ambitious agenda for student involvement in governance questions traditionally regarded as the province of faculty and administration. The 1970s saw a growing embrace of the concept of the student union, under which students would negotiate for their interests as a bargaining unit, rather than making their case for a seat at the table as community members or agitating as student power activists.

The National Student Association was founded at a moment in which students on many campuses were denied autonomy over even the most basic elements of the extracurriculum, and in that climate NSA put embraced the metaphor of a community, in which the various groups present tended to their own affairs, respected each others' prerogatives, and came together to discuss and resolve issues of common concern. Over the course of the 1950s, NSA came to emphasize the concept of student responsibility more and more in this analysis, presenting the argument that students possessed the maturity and sobriety to be entrusted with the work of managing their own affairs. Concomitant with that was the concept of the student as a citizen-scholar who occupied, in NSA president Harald Bakken's words, a "unique position as one dedicated primarily to the search for truth."

After 1960, student activism transformed students' relationship to American higher education, and that activism spurred off-campus developments that weakened administrative control over students' lives still further. From the 1961 court case on the due process rights of student protesters to the 1971 constitutional amendment that gave 18-to-20 year olds the vote, government action strengthened students' position on the campus and in the larger society.

Though NSA was rarely at the vanguard of 1960s student activism, its university reform agenda — shaped in no small part by the influence of activists from SDS and other groups — was influential among students. As the decade wore on, NSA began to make bolder claims regarding the rights of students. It coined the term “student power” at mid-decade, and by 1969 it had adopted the slogan “A Free University in a Free Society.” In NSA and in the larger student movement, the idea of the student body as one of several equally worthy university constituencies was on the wane, replaced by an ideology of student-centered education — of a university organized around students' needs and concerns.

This demand for a more responsive university was not, however, a request to be catered to, not simply a demand for a different and better educational product. The advocates of ethnic studies programs, of experimental curricula, or of on-campus childcare saw the departments, courses, and resources they advocated for as laboratories for the creation of new modes of learning and governance, and pressed for students to be brought in as decision-makers in curriculum, structure, even hiring. This insistence on a formal student role in governance would be one of the strongest strands of continuity between the student activism of the 1960s and that of the 1970s.

The metaphors that NSA's members and leaders used changed over the course of the Association's life. In their aspirational literature they might refer to students as

citizens of the university or as residents, as workers or as union members. In criticizing higher education they might describe their presently degraded status as that of trainees, or children, or commodities. Whatever their precise conception of student identity, however, from the 1940s to the 1970s their vision was of an active, engaged studentry, working to shape the university as partners in the educational process and managing their own affairs within the student sphere.

The question of the student's proper role in the university remains an unsettled one. On the one hand, some of the advances in governance won in the 1970s have proven resilient, and many campuses have seen new victories for student power in subsequent struggles. On the other hand, no student victory is ever permanent — when vigilance slips, or student governments go through periods of weakness, or SSAs fail, hard-won concessions may be swiftly rolled back. In the university of today, demographic and economic changes have left many student bodies with far greater non-academic commitments — and far less energy to devote to organizing and participation in governance — than their predecessors of one or two generations ago.

But if the students of today face new challenges in asserting their institutional prerogatives, the tension between students' and administrators' views of the university has in at least one respect changed less than might be imagined. The principle of *in loco parentis* and the student consumerist model of student identity promulgated by administrators in the 1970s and after both asserted that students lay outside the institutional structures of the university — that higher education existed prior to and independent of a student body that would come to the campus in search of educational services, obtain those services, and leave. NSA's paradigm, in contrast, even before the advent of student power, had seen students as residing *within* the university, at its very heart, and that paradigm persists in USSA's idea of the student today.

The Significance of the National Student Association

NSA was not the only student activist organization of its era. At times when activism was most widespread, it was not the most potent. It was, however, the only major student organization of its time to consistently foreground the role of the student in the campus community, and despite its many undemocratic failings it was the only one to attempt to create a representative democratic structure that reached down into the campus itself. It was the closest thing the United States has seen to a national union of students.

In some ways, the most striking fact about the National Student Association is the bare fact of its longevity. At this writing, six decades after NSA's constitutional convention in Madison, the Association is, as USSA, still extant, still a national confederation of student governments, still concerned with the student's role on campus and with exerting student influence in the nation and the world. This is itself an achievement without parallel in the history of American student activism.

Assessing the Association's influence is of course much less straightforward than quantifying its longevity, not least because its most loudly trumpeted endeavors were rarely its most significant. From the moment of its founding the Association saw itself as the representative of American students to American higher education institutions, to American government, and on the world stage. It lobbied Congress. It counseled university administrators. It held membership in UNESCO and a raft of higher education organizations. And it passed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of resolutions on matters of public interest, offering unsolicited advice to bodies ranging from the Inter-Fraternity Council to the Supreme Court. To many of the Association's critics — and a few of its partisans — such hortatory activities represented the apex of NSA's work. But for all the

fanfare that accompanied such interventions, it is hard to identify many circumstances in which they had any discernable effect on policy.

In the realm of political action, NSA was compromised on several fronts. For the first twenty-three years of its existence it represented a constituency that was largely disenfranchised on the basis of its age, and even after the passage of the Twenty-Sixth Amendment in 1971 students faced substantial barriers to exercising electoral power. NSA rarely roused itself to direct political organizing, and was only an intermittent actor in lobbying efforts — threatened with government sanctions if it acted too aggressively, divided over the question of whether lobbying was a legitimate part of its mission, and hobbled by a lack of resources to devote to such efforts, it never committed to the full exercise of what electoral strength it did possess.

The Association's most dramatic attempts to sway higher education policy were similarly ineffectual. When it attempted to influence events on individual campuses, as with its Student Bill of Rights investigations of the 1950s, the results were generally negligible. Association involvement in support of local protests was rare. And although NSA did consistently advocate a students' rights perspective within the national academic organizations with which it was associated, there is little evidence that such efforts had much effect. In the educational sphere, it represented a constituency with little power and even less intellectual influence.

In short, the Association rarely achieved dramatic successes when it asserted itself in high-profile ways.² If it is judged by the results of such efforts — as it often has been, by contemporary observers and historians alike — its record of accomplishments seems decidedly meager. But much of NSA's most significant work was infrastructural,

² I am speaking here to the Association's domestic work. The question of what effect NSA may have had on international affairs is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

aimed at facilitating action by others rather than effecting change directly, and it is to that work that we must look first in assessing the Association's influence.

In contributing to the integration of liberal activism into the history of American student organizing, NSA's history helps us to situate 1960s student radicalism, particularly that of the New Left, in a larger political context. Just as it is useful to be reminded that the American student organizing of the 1960s did not begin with the Berkeley Free Speech Movement, it is important to remember that the collapse of SDS did not mark the end of campus agitation — a focus on the Association and its work offers insight into the relationship between the New Left and other movements for social change. When we conceptualize student activist history as part of the fabric of postwar American social agitation, we make visible trends and continuities that have sometimes gone unnoticed in more narrowly focused treatments of the student scene.

At the same time, NSA offers new illumination of relations between student and non-student actors in American political movements. Again and again in the histories of student groups that interacted with NSA — Students for Democratic Action, Students for a Democratic Society, the Catholic student organizations — we see ongoing tensions between “adult” groups looking for reliable footsoldiers and students who insisted on forging their own paths without fealty to dogma. To an extent, even the stresses in the Association's relationship with the CIA can be interpreted in this way.

The tensions between NSA's affiliated student and non-student groups flared most strongly around the question of communist inclusion. Postwar historiography has tended to portray liberal organizations as overwhelmingly exclusionist with regard to acknowledged communists in their membership, but an examination of liberal student organizations shows a very different trend. NSA's majority was always emphatically anticommunist in the 1950s, but the Association never even considered adopting an

exclusionist membership policy. As I have argued in these pages, student history and the history of NSA in particular have the capacity to lead us to a new and more complex understanding of the interplay between inclusionist and exclusionist impulses in American Cold War anticommunism.

The Association also had a powerful impact, in ways both intended and unintended, on other activist organizations. This effect was most pronounced in times of greatest activism nationally, and can be seen most clearly in SDS and SNCC in the 1960s and the SSAs of the 1970s.

The early leadership of SDS made contact with each other and with new members through NSA Congresses and honed their ideological appeals in NSA debates. At the same time, the intransigence of Association leadership and SDS activists' failure to win lasting victories within NSA soured some of them on organizing among the more moderate elements of the mainstream, and the disclosure of the CIA relationship helped confirm for many the fundamental corruption of the liberal project. While the ubiquity of the late-1960s' activist embrace of revolutionary ideology has often been overstated, it was a real and significant phenomenon and one that the exposure of the NSA-CIA relationship did much to encourage. As cautious partners in the early 1960s and as embittered antagonists later in the decade, NSA and SDS exerted an influence on each other whose significance for the course of American liberal and radical activism has yet to be fully explored.

SNCC was less grounded in the campus than SDS was, and consequently less enmeshed with NSA. But Connie Curry's Southern Project did provide the new group with much-needed material support in its early years, and the NSA national office did help to nationalize the lunch-counter sit-in movement and its offshoots in 1960 and 1961, organizing sympathy demonstrations and soliciting donations on member campuses throughout the North and West. Individual NSA officers provided SNCC (and

SDS) with support in a variety of smaller ways then and in the years that followed. Even after SNCC's radicalism permanently outstripped that of even the most left of NSA's national officers, the organization continued to maintain a presence at NSA's summer Congresses, and continued to influence the Association's approach to racial issues.

It is in some ways surprising that NSA did not do more to promote the growth of state student associations in the early to mid-1970s. The Association's institutional weakness in that era impeded it to some extent, but NSA was also slow to grasp the significance of the SSAs — either for activism in general or for the Association itself. But as the leaders of SDS and SNCC had in the previous decade, the founders of the new SSAs exploited NSA as a site of organizing and recruitment, and the project of reforming and rejuvenating the Association later gave SSA leaders a sense of common purpose that helped to integrate their disparate local organizing projects into a national movement. Because of those successes, the Association and the SSAs would in the 1980s develop a profoundly symbiotic relationship — one that would invigorate local student government, state organizing efforts, and the national campaigns of USSA itself.

In all of these ways and others, the study of NSA contributes significantly to our understanding of American political and social activism in the postwar era. In its demonstration of the vibrancy of student culture in the late 1940s, the subterranean currents of the 1950s, and the contending ideological impulses in the upsurge of campus activism in the decade that followed, and in the opportunity it affords to explore the wealth of student organizing that took place in the 1970s, NSA enriches our understanding of the continuities and disjunctures in American activist history, while contributing to an emergent student-centered analysis of the history of American higher education.

NSA was unusually engaged with issues of university governance — more so than any comparable American student group before or since. To its members on the campus level, the Association offered a rich array of ideas and strategies for university reform and student government improvement. It presented its membership with advice on strengthening student government and the student press, improving relations with administrators, and planning and implementing programs to serve the student interest. In publications, regional and thematic conferences, the Student Government Information Service, campus visits, and the Congress itself, such practical advice was wedded to an assertive vision of the student's role in the educational project and the larger society. By making these connections, NSA provided student government leaders and other activists with a coherent ideological rationale for their organizing efforts.

In putting forward its vision of the student's proper role in the university, and its concomitant critique of the university as it existed in practice, NSA laid the ground for a more fundamental social critique as well. As it articulated a conception of the university in which divergent groups — each with legitimate interests but some with far more power than others — contested for control, NSA advanced a particular vision of power politics in democratic institutions more generally. And because in this vision of the university students occupied the role of an oppressed constituency, NSA fostered empathy and affinity with, not merely sympathy for, other disenfranchised groups. As some within NSA came to see themselves as members of an oppressed class, they found new commonalities with those who were oppressed in other ways, or found new ways to articulate their other oppressions to those who had not experienced them directly. In this way, the Association encouraged its members to draw connections between student issues and broader questions of social justice, and facilitated its members' entry into other forms of activism.

This process of politicization was by no means unique to NSA. Again and again in American student activism — in the New York City anti-ROTC organizing of the early 1930s, the Berkeley Free Speech Movement of 1964, the Columbia gym protests of 1968, the apartheid divestment campaigns of the 1980s and the anti-sweatshop organizing of recent years — students have stood against campus policies that affected them directly and through that organizing found common cause with others. But because NSA was an association of student governments, it drew on a crucial and often neglected constituency for such campaigns — students who were in the early stages of developing a politicized perception of the student role, but whose ideological commitments were otherwise unformed. Students grew into activism through NSA, including many who did not consider themselves activists when they first encountered the Association. This is why the communists and liberals of the 1940s, the student radicals of the 1960s, and the SSA organizers of the 1970s recognized NSA as a place where they could find — and form — a campus base for their work.

The question of how much of an influence NSA's conferences, training programs, campaigns, and publications had on the profound changes in American higher education between 1947 and 1978 remains an open one. There is ample evidence that many students — at both the membership and the leadership level — *felt* transformed and energized by their NSA experiences, and that they took that energy back into their subsequent campus organizing efforts. A full reckoning of their impact will only be possible, however, in the context of serious local studies that are not now extant, and of a maturation of our understanding of the impact of student government and student organizing on the American campus more generally. It is my hope that this dissertation will, by illuminating the national concerns and campaigns of NSA, assist future researchers in uncovering the ways in which local struggles fed and were fed by national efforts.

In NSA students were given the opportunity to interact with people whom they otherwise would never have met. They were exposed to ideas and perspectives that were in many cases radically different than those they had encountered before, ideas and perspectives that in some cases resonated with them in profound ways. They were confronted with new moral challenges and ethical dilemmas. They were presented with opportunities to argue, to explore, to befriend, to confront, to question, to lead, and to love that they had never faced before. And they were encouraged to see themselves as participants in an educational project in which they were denied their proper status. In NSA they saw themselves as adults, even as many came to see themselves as infantilized, even exploited, by the universities that housed them. In the contemporary and retrospective accounts of officers, staff, and Congress participants alike, one frequently sees passionate declarations of the impact of NSA on their lives.

In assessing the Association's influence in the lives of its members, and the significance of that influence in American history more generally, it is crucial to remember who those members were. Student government in the NSA era was disproportionately the province of the bright, the charismatic, and the politically and professionally ambitious. NSA brought together the most successful of these student government leaders, many of them from the nation's most elite public and private higher education institutions. The Association took students who had the desire and the expectation of achieving great things, and gave them experiences, opportunities, and connections that sped them on that path.

An examination of the Association's roster of officers in its very first year tells a story that would be repeated again and again thereafter. The Association's 1947-48 president was William Welsh, who would go on to be the legislative director of AFSCME and an assistant cabinet secretary in the Carter administration. Its domestic vice

president, Ralph Dungan, would serve as a Special Assistant to president John F. Kennedy and as the chancellor of higher education in New Jersey, and IAVP Robert Smith would serve as deputy assistant secretary of state for African Affairs in the Nixon administration, and as ambassador to the Ivory Coast under Gerald Ford. The anthology *American Students Organize*, a compendium of documents, historical essays, and memoirs of NSA's first five years, is replete with testimonials from NSA alumni as to the training in public speaking and politicking they got from Congresses and other NSA events, the relationships they formed with students whose backgrounds and perspectives were far removed from their own, and the ways in which NSA encouraged them to think seriously about new questions, and to approach familiar questions in new ways.

Similar testimonials are rarer for the CIA era and after, both because of the pall the revelations cast over involvement with even the Association's non-Agency-related work and because of the circumspection with which those who were engaged with the CIA have tended to discuss their time with the Association. But NSA officers continued to rise to prominence in a variety of fields — president Ray Farabee spent more than a decade as a Texas state legislator before serving as vice chancellor and general counsel of the University of Texas system, president Robert Kiley has headed the public transport systems of Boston, New York City, and London, and program vice president Tim Zagat co-founded the Zagat guides, while 1971-72 president Marge Tabankin serves as executive director of both the Barbra Streisand Foundation and Steven Spielberg's Righteous Persons Foundation.

The Association influenced those who never worked in the national office as well, from Congressman Barney Frank, who cut his legislative teeth as an NSA Congress delegate, to film critic Roger Ebert, who served as US Student Press Association president in the mid-1960s, to Al Gore's presidential campaign manager Donna Brazile, a member of the USSA board of directors in the 1980s. And of course thousands of less

well-known individuals participated in the Association over the last six decades and were shaped by that experience in large and small ways.

In this dissertation I have begun to explore the ways in which local student leaders were influenced by their experiences in NSA, and the informal networks that emerged from contacts made at Congresses and regional meetings, as well as the work of the national office. There is much more to learn, however, particularly regarding the ways in which ideas and tactics were disseminated among students across the country. The subject of how NSA influenced students — officers, staff, and members — is one that I intend to explore in far more detail as I revise this dissertation for publication.

Student attitudes toward their role in higher education and the Association's stances regarding that role evolved together over time. It is of course impossible to say with complete assurance which was the cart and which was the horse at any given moment — NSA tended not to get too far out in front of its membership on domestic issues, and it was by no means the only force acting on its members. But the Association did articulate a coherent aspirational vision of the student's role in a democratic university, and that vision was an engine in moving the student agenda for university reform forward. The ideas that students picked up at Congress were taken home with them, and through them disseminated throughout their campuses, and the nation. At the same time, NSA's publications, its regional and thematic conferences, and its Student Government Information Service all provided local campus leaders with concrete, substantive information and training and an often sustaining sense of being a part of an effort that was larger than themselves.

At this writing, the Association has recently celebrated its 60th anniversary, and the 40th anniversary of its break with the CIA. Although USSA has never risen to the heights NSA attained in the mid-1960s — not in terms of its budget, its membership, or

the size of its Congresses — it has survived. It remains the largest and most prominent national student organization in the country, as well as a significant lobbying presence in Washington. At a conservative estimate, between twenty and thirty thousand students have attended NSA and USSA Congresses over the years, and hundreds more have served the Association as officers or staff. It would of course be an exaggeration to suggest that the history of the postwar American student is the history of NSA. But it is no exaggeration to say that the history of that student cannot be written, and will not be written, without contemplation of the history of the Association.

Appendix A: Acronyms Used in the Manuscript

Note: When more than one entity shares the same acronym, the two are distinguished by dates of use. Acronyms that refer to institutions or offices within the National Student Association or United States Student Association are indicated with a parenthetical “NSA” or “USSA” after their names.

| | |
|-------------|--|
| AAUP | American Association of University Professors |
| ADA | Americans for Democratic Action |
| AIMS | Association of Interns and Medical Students |
| ASU | American Student Union, formed by merger of NSL and SLID. |
| ASUC | Associated Students of the University of California |
| AU | Academic Underwriters |
| AUY | American Unitarian Youth |
| AVC | American Veterans Committee |
| AYD | American Youth for Democracy |
| AYFW | American Youth for a Free World |
| CADA | Campus Americans for Democratic Action, formerly SDA. |
| CAVP | Campus Affairs Vice President (NSA) |
| CCC | Commercial Credit Corporation |
| CCNY | City College of New York |
| CER | Center for Educational Reform (NSA) |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CID | Community Involvement Desk (NSA) |
| CIE | Confédération Internationale des Etudiants |
| CSC | Congress Steering Committee (NSA) |
| COSEC | Coordinating Secretariat of the International Student Conference |
| CSL | California Student Lobby |
| EAVP | Educational Affairs Vice President (NSA) |
| ETI | Educational Travel Incorporated (NSA) |
| EVP | Executive Vice President (NSA) |
| FSM | Free Speech Movement |
| FYSA | Foundation on Youth and Student Affairs |
| GROW | Grass Roots Organizing Weekend (USSA) |
| HIACOM | Harvard International Affairs Committee |
| HUAC | House Un-American Activities Committee |
| IAT | Inter-Association Transfer (NSA) |
| IAVP | International Affairs Vice President (NSA) |
| IC | International Commission (NSA) |
| ICA | International Campus Administrator (NSA) |
| ICS | International Council of Students |
| IRS | Internal Revenue Service |
| IRS (1950s) | International Research Service |
| ISC | International Student Conference |
| ISCU | International Student Cooperative Union |
| ISRS | International Student Relations Seminar (NSA) |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| ISS (19??) | International Student Service |
| ISS (1905) | Intercollegiate Socialist Society, subsequently LID. |
| IUS | International Union of Students |
| IYC | International Youth Council, subsequently WYC. |
| JCSA | Joint Committee on Student Action |
| LC | Liberal Caucus (NSA) |
| LID | League for Industrial Democracy, parent body to SLID. |
| LSG | Liberal Study Group (NSA) |
| LYL | Labor Youth League |
| NAB | National Advisory Board (NSA) |
| NABS | National Association of Black Students |
| NARAL | National Abortion Rights Action League |
| NAS | National Academic Services |
| NASPA | National Association of Student Personnel Administrators |
| NAV | National Affairs Vice President (NSA) |
| NCC | National Continuations Committee (NSA) |
| NCYC | National Catholic Youth Council |
| NEC | National Executive Committee (NSA) |
| NFCCS | National Federation of Catholic College Students |
| NGSC | National Gay Student Center (NSA) |
| NIC | National Interim Committee (NSA) |
| NICC | National Intercollegiate Christian Council |
| NO | National Office (NSA) |
| NSA | National Student Association |
| NSAF | National Student Association Foundation (NSA) |
| NSB | National Supervisory Board (NSA) |
| NSC | National Student Congress (NSA) |
| NSEF | National Student Educational Fund |
| NSF (1925) | National Student Federation, subsequently NSFA. |
| NSF (1920s) | National Student Forum |
| NSFA | National Student Federation of America, formerly NSF (1925) |
| NSL | National Student League, subsequently constituent member of ASU. |
| NSO | National Student Organization, subsequently NSA. |
| NUS | National Union of Students |
| OEO | Office of Equal Opportunity |
| PCS | Purchase Card System (NSA), subsequently SDS (1950s). |
| PIRG. | Public Interest Research Group |
| PL | Progressive Labor |
| PVP | Program Vice President (NSA) |
| ROTC | Reserve Officer Training Corps |
| SASU | Student Association of the State University of New York |
| SAVP | Student Affairs Vice President (NSA) |
| SBPC | Student Body Presidents' Conference (NSA) |
| SCATE | Student Course and Teacher Evaluation (NSA) |
| SDA | Students for Democratic Action |
| SDS (1950s) | Student Discount Service (NSA), formerly PCS. |
| SDS (1960s) | Students for a Democratic Society, formerly SLID. |
| SEAC | Student Editorial Affairs Conference (NSA) |
| SGIS | Student Government Information Service (NSA) |
| SGVP | Student Government Vice President (NSA) |
| SLID | Student League for Industrial Democracy, subsequently SDS. |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| SNCC | Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee |
| SNYC | Southern Negro Youth Congress |
| SSA | State- or System-wide Student Association |
| SSHHP | Southern Student Human Relations Project (NSA) |
| SSHRS | Southern Student Human Relations Seminar (NSA) |
| SUNY | State University of New York |
| SVM | Student Volunteer Movement |
| TAB | Travel Advisory Board (NSA) |
| TAC | Tutorial Assistance Center (NSA) |
| TWC | Third World Commission (NSA) |
| UCLA | University of California at Los Angeles |
| UF | United Front, subsequently FSM. |
| USNSA | United States National Student Association, aka NSA. |
| USSA (1935) | United States Student Assembly, subsequently SDA. |
| USSA (1978) | United States Student Association, formed by merger of NSA and NSL. |
| USSAF | United States Student Association Foundation (USSA) |
| WFDY | World Federation of Democratic Youth |
| WYC | World Youth Council, formerly IYC. |
| YAC | Young Adult Council |
| YAF | Young Americans for Freedom |
| YCL | Young Communist League |
| YM/YWCA | Young Men's/Young Women's Christian Association |
| YMCA | Young Men's Christian Association |
| YPSL | Young People's Socialist League |
| YWCA | Young Women's Christian Association |
| YWL | Young Workers' League |

Appendix B:
NSA National Officers and Organizational Meetings

Note: Part-time positions are italicized. Where an officer was replaced mid-year, the name of his or her successor, if any, is noted parenthetically.

1946-1947

Elected at NSO organizing meeting,
University of Chicago.

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| NCC President | Jim Smith |
| NCC Vice President | Russell Austin |
| NCC Secretary | Clifton Wharton |
| NCC Treasurer | John Simons |
| NCC Staff Committee | William McDermed, Tom Farr, Al Houghton, Janis Tremper |

1947-1948

Elected at NSA Constitutional Convention,
University of Wisconsin.

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| President | William Welsh |
| National Affairs VP | Ralph Dungan |
| International Affairs VP | Robert Smith |
| Secretary | Janis Tremper |
| Treasurer | Leeland Jones |

1948-1949

Elected at First National Student Congress,
University of Wisconsin.

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| President | James "Ted" Harris |
| International Affairs VP | Robert West |
| Educational Problems VP | Eugene Schwartz |
| Student Government VP ¹ | Richard Heggie |
| Secretary-Treasurer | Helen Jean Rogers |

1949-1950

Elected at Second National Student Congress,
University of Illinois.

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| President | Robert Kelly |
| Educational Affairs VP | Richard Medalie |
| International Affairs VP | Erskine Childers |
| Student Affairs VP | Ted Perry |
| Executive Secretary | Eugene Schwartz, Robert Delahanty, Fred Houghteling ² |

¹ Full title was "Vice President for Student Government and Student Life."

1950-1951

Elected at Third National Student Congress,
University of Michigan.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| President | Allard Lowenstein |
| Educational Affairs VP | Herbert Goldsmith |
| International Affairs VP | Herbert Eisenberg |
| Student Affairs VP | Elmer Paul Brock |
| Executive Secretary | Shirley Neizer |

1951-1952

Elected at Fourth National Student Congress,
University of Minnesota.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| President | William Dentzer |
| International Affairs VP | Avrea Ingram |
| <i>Educational Affairs VP</i> | <i>Rollo O'Hare</i> |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>Sylvia Bacon</i> |
| <i>Student Government VP</i> | <i>John Haley</i> |

1952-1953

Elected at Fifth National Student Congress,
Indiana University.

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| President | Richard Murphy |
| National Affairs VP | Leonard Wilcox (Phillip Berry) |
| International Affairs VP | Avrea Ingram |
| <i>Educational Affairs VP</i> | <i>Manfred Brust</i> |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>Janet Welsh (Eugene Keating)</i> |
| <i>Student Government VP</i> | <i>Steve Voykovich</i> |

1953-1954

Elected at Sixth National Student Congress,
Ohio State University.

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| President | James Edwards |
| National Affairs VP | Eugene Keating |
| International Affairs VP | Len Bebhick |
| <i>Educational Affairs VP</i> | <i>Cynthia Courtney</i> |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>Lois McPherson</i> |
| <i>Student Government VP</i> | <i>Amy Botsaris</i> |

² Houghteling was elected to a term that began in January 1950. Schwartz was appointed to serve on an interim basis until then, but he resigned in September and Delehanty was appointed to complete his term.

1954-1955

Elected at Seventh National Student Congress,
Iowa State College.

| | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| President | Harry Lunn |
| National Affairs VP | Wallace Longshore |
| International Affairs VP | Paul Sigmund |
| <i>Educational Affairs VP</i> | <i>Bernard Yudowitz</i> |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>Alexander Nagy (Ann Beckner)</i> |
| <i>Student Government VP</i> | <i>Maurice Blumberg</i> |

1955-1956

Elected at Eighth National Student Congress,
University of Minnesota.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| President | Stanford Glass |
| National Affairs VP | Gene Preston |
| International Affairs VP | Clive Gray |
| Student Government VP | Ray Farabee |
| <i>Educational Affairs VP</i> | <i>Joel Sterns</i> |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>James Turner (Manning Muntzing)</i> |

1956-1957

Elected at Ninth National Student Congress,
University of Chicago.

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| President | Harald Bakken |
| Executive VP | Clifford Sheats (Daniel Idzik) |
| International Affairs VP | Bruce Larkin |
| Student Government VP | James Pomroy |
| Educational Affairs VP | Ann Beckner |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>Charles Jones (Robert Bennett)</i> |

1957-1958

Elected at Tenth National Student Congress,
University of Michigan.

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| President | Ray Farabee |
| Executive VP | Donald Clifford |
| International Affairs VP | Bruce Larkin |
| Educational Affairs VP | Willard Johnson |
| Student Government VP | Robert Kiley |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>Reginald Green</i> |

1958-1959

Elected at Eleventh National Student Congress,
Ohio Wesleyan University.

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| President | Robert Kiley |
| Executive VP | Diane Hatch |
| International Affairs VP | Willard Johnson |
| Educational Affairs VP | Reginald Green |
| Student Government VP | Fred Werner |
| <i>Student Affairs VP</i> | <i>James Harrington</i> |

1959-1960

Elected at Twelfth National Student Congress,
University of Illinois.

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| President | Donald Hoffman |
| National Affairs VP | Curtis Gans |
| International Affairs VP | Isabel Marcus |
| Program VP (East) | James Kweder |
| Program VP (West) | Richard Rettig |

1960-1961

Elected at Thirteenth National Student Congress,
University of Minnesota.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| President | Richard Rettig |
| National Affairs VP | Timothy Jenkins |
| International Affairs VP | James Scott |
| Program VP (East) | Donald Smith |
| Program VP (West) | Daniel Johnston |

1961-1962

Elected at Fourteenth National Student Congress,
University of Wisconsin at Madison.

| | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| President | Edward Garvey |
| National Affairs VP | Paul Potter |
| International Affairs VP | Donald Emmerson |
| Program VP (East) | Eugene "Tim" Zagat |
| Program VP (West) | Michael Neff |

1962-1963

Elected at Fifteenth National Student Congress,
Ohio State University.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| President | Dennis Shaul |
| National Affairs VP | Timothy Manring |
| International Affairs VP | Donald Smith |
| Program VP (East) | Dennis Yeager |
| Program VP (West) | Stephen Brookbank |

1963-1964

Elected at Sixteenth National Student Congress,
Indiana University.

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| President | Gregory Gallo |
| National Affairs VP | Joel Sharkey |
| International Affairs VP | Alexander Kornis |
| Student Government VP | Vance Opperman |
| Student Government VP | Jack David |

1964-1965

Elected at Seventeenth National Student Congress,
University of Minnesota.

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| President | Stephen Robbins |
| National Affairs VP | Phil Sherburne |
| International Affairs VP | Norman Uphoff |
| Student Government VP | Michael Lawler |

1965-1966

Elected at Eighteenth National Student Congress,
University of Wisconsin.

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| President | Phil Sherburne |
| National Affairs VP | James Johnson |
| International Affairs VP | Charles Goldmark |

1966-1967

Elected at Nineteenth National Student Congress,
University of Illinois.

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------|
| President | Eugene Groves |
| National Affairs VP | Ed Schwartz |
| International Affairs VP | Rick Stearns |

1967-1968

Elected at Twentieth National Student Congress,
University of Maryland.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| President | Ed Schwartz |
| Educational Affairs VP | Teddy O'Toole |
| Community Affairs VP ³ | Dan McIntosh |

³ Full title was "International and Community Affairs Vice President."

1968-1969

Elected at Twenty-First National Student Congress,
Kansas State University.

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| President | Robert Powell |
| Executive VP | Bill Shamblin |
| Campus Affairs VP | James Graham |

1969-1970

Elected at Twenty-Second National Student Congress,
University of Texas at El Paso.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| President | Charles Palmer |
| Executive VP | Jim Sutton (resigned January 1970) |
| Campus Affairs VP | Clinton Deveaux (resigned October 1969) |

1970-1971

Elected at Twenty-Third National Student Congress,
Macalaster College, Minnesota.

| | |
|----------------|--------------|
| President | David Ifshin |
| Vice President | Don Shall |

1971-1972

Elected at Twenty-Fourth National Student Congress,
Colorado State University.

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| President | Margery Tabankin |
| Vice President | Thomas Mooney |

1972-1973

Elected at Twenty-Fifth National Student Congress,
Catholic University, Washington DC.

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| President | Tim Higgins |
| Vice President | Ron Ehrenreich |

1973-1974

Elected at Twenty-Sixth National Student Congress,
Deauville Hotel, Miami Beach, Florida.

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| President | Lawrence Friedman |
| Vice President | Kenneth Walker |

1974-1975

Elected at Twenty-Seventh National Student Congress,
Chase-Park Plaza Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri.

President Kathy Kelly
Vice President Sunny Wise

1975-1976

Elected at Twenty-Eighth National Student Congress,
Mayflower Hotel, Washington DC.

President Clarissa Gilbert
Vice President Gary Kampel (removed from office June 1976)

1976-1977

Elected at Twenty-Ninth National Student Congress,
Airport Marina Hotel, San Francisco, California.

President Tom Tobin
Vice President Ed Kennedy

1977-1978

Elected at Thirtieth National Student Congress,
Sheraton Hotel, Houston, Texas.

President Frank Viggiano
Vice President Tom Duffy

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