

FP ask
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CIA Blunder

Even the stoutest defenders of the Central Intelligence Agency must be hard put to justify its involvement with the National Student Association.

Was the CIA using the students in any kind of espionage efforts. The CIA and association leaders say not. Were students being used in any kind of active subversive efforts, as opposed to information gathering? Again both the intelligence agency and association leaders deny the charge. If the denials are taken at face value—which is always more difficult when admittedly covert activities are in question—then the CIA was hardly getting its money's worth. If the association or its members were involved in intelligence work in any way, however, it was a distasteful business which is bound to cast doubt on the supposed disinter-

est of other private organizations that purport to be nothing more than groups of American citizens acting on their own.

The State Department's feeble efforts at justification—or perhaps only explanation—are unconvincing.

The student association serves a useful purpose, the department claims, by engaging in various international youth activities which are or were in danger of being dominated by heavily financed Communist front groups. Perhaps the danger exists and perhaps as an interim measure, when private funds were insufficient some Government support may have been in order. But at the very least this should have been extended openly, and certainly through some agency other than the super-secret CIA.

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