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The National Student Association Anthology and Source Book is an absolutely indispensable reference work for anyone interested in what really happened in colleges and universities during the post-World War II era. This important work is also a wonderful window on social and political change throughout that period, change that was promoted by undergraduate and graduate students across the country.

This is a story book of almost magical dimensions. Anyone who starts reading it will be hard-pressed to stop. It is a tale of a dazzling array of young men and women and the differences they made in our society and its quest for equality in America. The NSA helped shape the character of some of the most extraordinary leaders in the last half of the 20th century, leaders such as Sylvia Bacon, Allard Lowenstein, and Clif Wharton.

"You know the clichés of my generation," said Judge Bacon in 1952 when she was an NSA vice-president and spoke to a group of college newspaper editors. "I belong to that group typified as the silent, fearful group of jellyfish. Then I tell them that this is not correct. I tell them about NSA. It is the best evidence I know. It is the evidence of students speaking as a coordinated voice nationally" on issues of national importance. Over the years, NSA stood up and stood out in support of civil rights and civil liberties, including in the darkest days of Senator McCarthy.

The great challenge of democracy is a challenge of civic engagement. Democracy works only if each new generation gains the knowledge, the skills, and the habits of mind and heart that will ensure civic leaders who are actively engaged in important policy issues of the day. More than any other organization, over the years between 1950 and the end of the last century, the National Student Association was the training ground for our civic leadership. This fine book tells how this happened in wonderfully rich detail.

All of us concerned about our American democracy and its future can learn much from the pages of this fine volume. I applaud its contributors and editors for making a lasting contribution to our understanding of the post-World War II era generally and the history of American higher education in that era particularly. Up to now, this history has been seen primarily in terms of colleges and universities and their leaders. Now, for the first time, we have a real set of windows into the group that matters most--students.

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