

*A. J. Muste's Letter
to
President Dwight Eisenhower
June 29, 1959*

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STATEMENT BY A. J. MUSTE, CO-COORDINATOR OF OMAHA ACTION

June 29, 1959

President Dwight D. Eisenhower
White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

In accord with our practice of acting openly at all times and seeking an understanding with any of our fellows with whom we are dealing, we are sending you this letter about our plan of action at the Mead missile base on Wednesday, July 1, 1959. We write also because you are vested with authority in this matter and we wish you to be able to reflect on the decision you may be called upon to make.

Our action is scheduled to begin at 10 a.m. on July 1 at the gate near the little knoll where Omaha Action has maintained a quiet vigil for several days. We ask to be admitted to the missile site at that time.

Our reason for this is that we feel called to speak with our fellows who are building the missile base at the point where our government is carrying out this crucial part of a nuclear military program, which we believe to be both profoundly evil and practically suicidal.

There is another and more fundamental reason why we wish to enter the site and will attempt to do so, if our request is refused, though this would presumably be an act of civil disobedience. The great stretch of land which is being used for military purposes at Mead belongs, in the final analysis, to God, as does the entire earth. Man did not create the land. It was given to him as a heritage to use for the production of food and clothing and shelter, and that he might enjoy its beauty. Men are now preparing destruction, which can hardly be called war in the old sense at all, which may actually wipe out vegetation and poison the soil. This is a desecration of God's own gift to mankind which must not be permitted to happen.

From the human standpoint, the land is a trust committed to each generation. Our fathers cultivated and enriched this land. It is not the property of this generation or of the present government of the United States to do with as it pleases. They have an obligation to pass it on unspoiled to the generations to come.

For the reasons which we have set forth in our literature, we do not believe that our nation has any right to engage in preparations for mass destruction by nuclear weapons or to hold the threat of such destruction over the people of other countries, to make "the women and children and noncombatants of another country," as Mr. George F. Kennan recently put it, "the hostages for the conduct of their government." The fact that our own people are similarly threatened by the

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Soviet Union only means that in this nuclear missile race we are preparing our own destruction as well. The whole policy, on the part of every nation engaged in it, is mad as well as evil.

Therefore, we cannot recognize the right of the government to take over, directly or indirectly, more and more land and equipment of all kinds for mass destruction. Rather, we stand aghast at what is happening, as the farmers everywhere usually do when their lands are first seized, taken out of cultivation and devoted to war purposes. We stand aghast because more and more hundreds of thousands of acres are thus desecrated while there are hundreds of millions of people on this earth who go to bed hungry every night.

The land at Mead does not belong to the United States government for the purpose to which it is being put. It does not belong for any such purpose to any person, military or civilian, who is engaged there in constructing a missile site. It belongs to the people of Nebraska, the people of the United States, the people of the world. It belongs to us of the Omaha Action project as human beings, members of the family of mankind. All those who use the land for evil purposes, whether deliberately or otherwise, are the invaders, not we as we enter the missile site.

We bear no malice toward anyone. We do not arrogate any moral superiority to ourselves. We contemplate no use of violence under any circumstances and no resort to subterfuge. We are driven to act on the Truth as we see it. Somehow we hope that what is most truly human in us may speak to what is most truly human in our fellows.

As a Christian minister, I feel called to speak what I believe to be the word of God to all who may be present at the Mead site, as, on Wednesday, July 1 at 10 a.m., along with two of my companions in Omaha Action - Ross Anderson of Americus, Georgia and Karl Meyer of Chicago - I initiate the undertaking described above.

Sincerely yours,

A. J. Muste

OMAHA ACTION: Nonviolence Against Nuclear Missile Policy
Room 35, 105 South 16th Street, Omaha 2, Nebraska.

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