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A Testimony for
Radical Peace Action

Wilmer J. Young

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Pendle Hill
Pamphlet 118
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VISIBLE WITNESS

A Testimony for
Radical Peace Action

By Wilmer J. Young

PENDLE HILL PAMPHLET 118

About the Author / WILMER YOUNG, born in the Conservative Quaker community in Iowa, attended the old Scattergood Boarding School, Westtown School and Haverford College. He was a teacher for 22 years, beginning with four years at Friends Boarding School at Barnesville, Ohio, and ending with twelve years at Westtown School in Pennsylvania, where he was Dean of Boys and taught mathematics. In 1936, Wilmer Young, his wife, Mildred Binns Young, and their three children began a stay of nineteen years in the South, working first in Mississippi and then for fifteen years, under the care of the American Friends Service Committee, in South Carolina. Their work in both states was with white and Negro sharecroppers and tenant farmers. For the past five years, Wilmer Young has been teaching at Pendle Hill, offering a course in non-violent methods of dealing with the problems of race, poverty and war. He has felt called to give his entire time to the peace action movement and is now working with the Peace Action Center, 2023 Kalorama Road, Washington, D. C.

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On July 6, 1959, I found myself in jail in Omaha, Nebraska. Having lived for over seventy years without ever being in jail before, I have been asked to explain. Many men who, for one reason or another, have to beg for their daily bread have this experience often. But I, who had never been really hungry in my life and had lived by the accepted rules of society . . . !

Yet this did not just happen. It came after years of travail of spirit, and if I was foolish or unwise, it may be partly because, as a friend once said to me, "Thee is the most naïve person I have ever known." But it just might be for some better reason, and I'd like to see if I can explain it in a way that may make sense to some who are more sophisticated.

Just before going to Omaha, I had written to my three

children that I was going out to help a group of people who were planning to protest the construction of a missile site. I said that I did not yet know what I myself would do there, but felt that I could probably be useful in some way, perhaps drive a car or help with the accounts.

I arrived at Omaha late Saturday night, June 19. The opening public meeting of the project called *Omaha Action* was scheduled to be held that night at the YMCA. I went directly there and found that the clerk at the desk knew nothing of the meeting. But, when I pressed him more, he did admit that he knew of one that was being held at a hotel not far away. His manner, together with the change of place, gave me my first evidence that things were not going to be entirely smooth.

At the hotel, where the meeting was already nearly over, there was an atmosphere of tension. In spite of considerable advertising, only about thirty people had come, and half of them were from our own group. The reporters who were there took pictures of the empty chairs and called special attention to the fact that very few Omaha people attended. It was clear that we were not being welcomed to Omaha. (Well, why should we be?)

A few days earlier, the one local paper had published a long editorial which attacked one of our members who had once been a Trotskyite, and failed to mention that this connection had been repudiated many years ago. Thus the stage was set for fear; no church in the city was found willing to hear any of us.

Sunday morning, some of our group of about fifteen went to hand out our *Omaha Action* leaflets on the streets; others attended church services. I went to the small Friends Meeting held in the YMCA, and found there some cousins who

were sympathetic and did what they could to help us throughout our stay. In the afternoon, we met in an office that had been rented when the forerunners of the *Action* first arrived, and there made plans for the next few days. We divided into two groups, one group to go to Lincoln and walk the forty miles from there to the Mead Ordnance Base, the other to remain in Omaha overnight and, on Monday morning, start walking the thirty miles to the same spot.

Three days were allotted for this march. I was errand boy for the Omaha contingent, taking them food and their sleeping equipment at proper hours, and finding them places to sleep. This latter job proved to be another eye-opener for me. We were in open country, with many beautiful farms and farm homes, the kind of country where I grew up three hundred miles farther east, in Iowa. But to find a place where these walkers could get permission to sleep on somebody's ground required some looking around. Word had got around that we were coming, and nobody had any latchstrings out. For the first night, I found a wood where we were allowed to sleep. But the next night, I could not find any place where the owners would allow it, so the night was spent on a railway right-of-way. By this time, we had become somewhat apprehensive, but after getting the group settled, I returned the twenty-five miles to Omaha. Around midnight, two of us started back to call on both groups, to see if all was well. Everything was quiet and peaceful under the stars, and nothing more had happened than that a few epithets and firecrackers had been hurled their way.

On the third day, the groups converged and completed their march to the entrance of the Base nearest the missile

site. They set up camp on a little bluff in some tall grass on the edge of a clover field. A round-the-clock vigil was then started which lasted over a week, and was continued in daytime until July 21, when the little camp was torn up at night by hostile youngsters.

The Mead Ordnance Base is twenty-six square miles in area, much of it leased for farming to people who formerly had their homes here but had been forced (in some cases) to sell to the Defense Department. This is near the headquarters of the Strategic Air Command. Our vigil site was just outside the entrance, where there was a very ordinary farm gate, and just inside, a little shelter for two guards was set up after we came. In normal times, the gate usually stood open and there were no guards.

I shall not soon forget a meeting held the next week, at which each person of our group gave his decision as to what part he would take in the actions of the following days. Fifteen persons (this perhaps counts a few who came later) said they planned to do some form of civil disobedience, as their part of the protest. When it came my turn, I found myself saying, somewhat to my surprise, that I too planned to offer civil disobedience. Having said it, I found I was quite calm about it and, what is even more surprising to me, I have never since regretted the decision, although it committed me to a form of action that was completely new to me. I shall try to explain this phenomenon later, in so far as I can.

As the vigil continued, we learned more about the situation. The construction of the missile site was still in a very early stage. Probably not over a hundred men were actually at work there, and they lived in the surrounding area of farms and small towns, some as far away as Omaha.

Perhaps fifty cars and trucks went in and out of the Base each day. The men would hardly have dared stop and talk with us in the presence of the guards, or take our leaflets, even if they had wanted to. They could hardly fail to read our signs, but that was all. The signs were brief and easily read:

END MISSILE RACE
LET MANKIND LIVE

and

NON-VIOLENT PROTEST
AGAINST NUCLEAR MISSILE POLICY

It is significant that of all the newspaper pictures taken of us, so far as I saw them, only two showed the signs so that they could be read. Nor were they printed in the newspaper stories.

We were acutely conscious that, in this situation, we were only protesting. We could not find a way even to suggest that we did have a positive program in mind, calling for the strengthening of the United Nations, making use of the World Court, studying nonviolent resistance to evil and training for its use. We asked permission to address the workers at the Base during their lunch-hour or give them our literature. This was refused. We asked for their names, so that we might call on them in their homes. This too was refused. There seemed to be only one way in which we could present our positive program to anybody, and that was to hand out leaflets in Omaha and in the towns, and talk with individuals whenever we could. But you cannot present a whole theory on a four-page leaflet; and the channels we are used to using, such as the local newspaper, the

churches, the radio, and TV, were all closed to us, as far as presenting any constructive program was concerned.

What could we do?

Let us remind ourselves for a moment that this condition would be pretty much true in every town and city in America. We are not always aware of it, because we do not often make the attempt to challenge the thought patterns of our neighbors, and to get radical peace messages on the radio or into the papers. The only way we could see to get our message to the people was to dramatize our protest by getting arrested for illegal entry of the Base.

A few days after the meeting where the decisions for civil disobedience had been made, on July 1 at 10 a.m., we held a meeting for worship "after the manner of Friends" at the vigil site. This was a very solemn half hour for us, as it was the preliminary to three of us "going in" to the Base and thus breaking a law. None of us knew what the penalty incurred or even what the charge would be; nor did we know under what court the trial would come.

An 80-year-old man, extremely lively for that age, had come over the road in dramatic fashion, evidently expected by some of the onlookers. He carried a small American flag around our circle a couple of times, causing an occasional guffaw among our visitors, but he did not otherwise disturb our silent meeting. After the meeting, A. J. Muste came to the side of the road and preached a pacifist sermon to the people there. I have attended many meetings, and heard many sermons, but none I think more impressive. Facing him on the left, inside the fence, were perhaps thirty Air Force officers and the Federal Marshal. Opposite him across the road, stood some fifteen members of the American Legion who had come with placards of their own to picket

us. There were possibly forty other people from nearby and from Omaha, including reporters and TV operators.

A. J. and the two others who were committed to offer civil disobedience that day then walked over to the gate, where Air Force officers and the Marshal were waiting for them. As is done in all such cases, we had given advance information to all officials likely to be involved.

It is difficult to describe the excitement for us in a simple first action of this kind. Later, these protests by disobedience of the law took on a quite routine character for us; but this time there were so many unknown factors of possibility. For instance, we had been holding the vigil on land next to that belonging to the Base. After considerable inquiry, we had found that this land belonged to another Federal Bureau, which had no office in Omaha and presumably no representative, so we had been using it without getting permission. Might not the Air Force, in cooperation with this Bureau, have us all arrested together for trespassing, or on some other charge, as soon as the first group of our people entered the Base? In case this were done, we thought it might be well for a couple of us to be away from the group and out on the highway, so as to go and notify our friends of what had happened. It had been decided, then, that as soon as A. J.'s sermon was finished, I was to leave immediately for a car parked some distance away, and another person was to keep away from the group but wait to find out what was done, and then come and join me. This now seems naïve—even to me!—but it seemed sensible at the time. We felt we were a long way from most of our friends.

A. J. Muste and the two others climbed over the gate, and were at once informed by the Air Force officers that

the maximum penalty for entering was six months in prison and \$500 fine. The officers then took them gently but firmly by the arm and led them out and shut the gate. Then the three again climbed over the gate and were immediately arrested by the Federal Marshal and taken to Omaha. This was termed "re-entry after warning" and the charge was "trespassing." They were put into the local jail in Omaha.

I had already volunteered, along with David Wyman, a young man from New York City, to do a similar action on July 6. We both wrote out statements, as did all the others later, of our reasons for offering civil disobedience, and presented them to the radio and press. For the most part, they were ignored. After our usual meeting for worship at the vigil site, and before going into the Base, I read mine to the group instead of preaching a sermon as A. J. had done. About sixty persons were in the audience, including relatives of mine who had come from a Monthly Meeting of Friends in Iowa and, as before, a delegation of about eleven men from the nearby American Legion Post.

As we went up to the gate, the old man who had carried the little flag around our meeting on the first day came up and tried to stamp on my toes. He was very excited and failed to land on them, but his action disconcerted me a little and, as I crawled through the barbed wire fence, I put out one hand to shield myself. After getting through, I was surprised to see him lying flat on the ground. I realized at once that this incident would be used by the press; and, of course, not having any idea what had happened, I said the wrong thing, which was: "I'm sorry!" This of course seemed to imply that I had pushed him. The incident was thoroughly publicized by the Omaha paper, which said, under the headline **PACIFIST WINS MEAD TUSSLE**,

that “. . . two elders with a combined age of 151 years brought violence to the non-violence demonstration of the Omaha Action pacifists;” and after describing the incident: “‘Sorry I pushed you,’ said the septuagenarian to the octogenarian.” This incident provoked the only notice the *New York Times* ever took of us, except when a congressman’s son was sent to prison. It said: “What was supposed to be a non-violent demonstration produced a tussle between two elderly men.” It was sometime afterward that we learned that the old gentleman had candidly told the paper published at Wahoo, Nebraska, that he had not been pushed—he had just lost his balance. It was a relief to have the error cleared up in the press—of Wahoo, Nebraska.

After David Wyman and I had gone through our formal entry and re-entry of the Base, we were taken promptly and put into a “tank” in the Omaha jail. It was designed for twelve men but we found there only our three predecessors, A. J. Muste, Ross Anderson, and Karl Meyer. We five spent two very stimulating days in conversation together there before being called before Federal Judge Robinson. By that time, two more of our comrades had joined us. A. J. presented our defense to the court. As had been previously decided, we pled “technically but not morally guilty” and of course were told that it had to be either “guilty” or “not guilty.” We had also decided not to have a lawyer and not to give bail. I pled “guilty” to trespass.

The Judge’s sentence was six months and \$500 fine, with sentence suspended and one year on probation. I had not expected this and took some time to decide what to do. But Karl Meyer, a Catholic and the son of a congressman, knew at once what he would do. He told the probation officer that he could not accept probation, and probably would

be out at the Base next day when two others of our group were planning to make their protest. True to his prediction, he went out the next day. The authorities were nervous about this, and they handcuffed him and obviously wanted to rough him up, but they did not. Apparently the Judge realized now for the first time that we were not the type of people that the press had tried to make out; he was quite angry with Karl and sent him to federal prison at once, warning the other members of *Omaha Action* at the same time that they need expect no leniency from that Court.

In the meantime, I had decided that I could not accept probation. Among several other stipulations, it meant monthly reports to a probation officer and staying away from all military installations for one year. So I addressed the Judge in a letter. After pointing out the direction that I believed our military policy is taking us, I said: "In view of these and other factors which I shall not go into here, what shall I do? I am an old man. I have had a happy life and found it interesting. That I should have my life ended now in a war is of small moment. But I have many young friends. I have three married children and eight lovely grandchildren. I'd like them all to have the opportunity for life as I have had. My one desire in this time is to make a maximum protest against the unnecessary descent of mankind into oblivion. I believe that, at the present time and under the circumstances of today, this protest requires me to spend this time in prison.—If I were an orator or a great writer or a diplomat, perhaps I would not need to do this. But for me, the processes of education, of speaking, of conferences, of writing, alone, seem likely to be 'too little and too late.' There come times in history when action is essential to break through the hard crust of inertia and

custom. I believe this is one of those times.—It is in the tradition of my people, Quakers, to go to prison rather than take part in war. I believe the time has come for me, as a Quaker and a human being, to go to prison as a protest against preparation for war.

“You told me the other day that you were turning the prison key over to me. By my own act, in joining a vigil at the Mead Ordnance Plant, I propose to turn that key.”

On July 21, therefore, I was arrested again at the Mead Base, this time for violation of the terms of probation. Before our meeting for worship began, the Chief Probation Officer simply asked me to come with him in his car. We had a very friendly talk on the 30-mile drive to Omaha. He said that if I didn't mind, he'd like to make some suggestions. Instead of stirring things up this way, why did we not do educational work in the usual way, write books and articles for magazines, give lectures, use the radio? This would not make people angry and excited, and they could think more clearly. I assured him that we had been trying to do these things for 25 years, and here he didn't even know it!—but I reminded him that one could not get the radio or any of the mass media to accept and use what we were offering. I told him that the very fact that he knew nothing about the writing and lecturing on peace that had been going on for years was a clear indication that other methods are needed.

He informed me that the Judge was away for a vacation and a conference, so that I would have to wait several days in jail. Later we learned that the Judge's conference was in order to get counsel about what his attitude toward *Omaha Action* ought to be.

My next six days with 34 other men in a “tank” designed

for 32 was not as pleasant as the previous internment had been. A young man, Arthur Harvey, was with me this time. As we entered, carrying our mattresses, all eyes were upon us, and almost immediately a voice cried out, "Are you those pacifists?" Arthur replied "Yes!" with what seemed to me rather more gusto than the situation was likely to warrant. And sure enough, there was no gathering around to discuss our experiences. We were left to our own thoughts. The men would not look us in the eye if they could avoid it, nor greet us unless we spoke first.

The "tank" was about fifty feet long and sixteen wide, with two stories of nine cells each on one side, leaving a freeway of 8 x 50 feet on the main floor, for walking back and forth. There were benches to sit on along one side, and a narrow walkway and guard rail in front of the upper tier of cells. To get exercise one had to walk up and down past the cell doors in front of men who were sitting there reading or talking or smoking, or just sitting.

After a day or two, a man would now and then ask a question, and eventually some became rather friendly. The loneliness that one can feel in such a situation is very real. It was heightened one evening when three men asked about my sentence—this was a routine question—and after some discussion, one of the men said: "If I'd been the judge, I'd of given you twenty years." While the others talked, he kept shaking his head and muttering: "You mustn't let your country down." After six days and nights, a few showed signs of seeing some light on pacifism, and many had become friendly, but I saw more clearly than ever how deep is the hold of the military mind in our country.

Getting letters was a tremendous help, but it made one feel all the more sympathy for many of the men who never

got any letters at all; some of them had no contact with anyone outside. The many letters I got obviously caused considerable speculation among the men and really puzzled them. This particular "tank" was filled with men who were in for the more premeditated offences, such as forgery, robbery, sexual crimes and murder; there were few alcoholics. The men were relatively young, intelligent, and good-looking. This, as is almost inevitable in our prison system, was a fine school for teaching criminals to be more clever.

It was a county jail, reasonably well run as such jails go. I did not feel the urge, as some sincerely do, to protest the jail treatment, particularly to make things difficult for the jailers. There is a place for protest against the cruelties of prisons, but I wanted to make it as clear as possible that what I was protesting was the building of a missile base, and that I was trying to bear witness to a way of life that renounces war. The real cruelty of the prison system is that it is an arm of a larger system which protects the rich and powerful at the expense of the poor. A cardinal point in nonviolent resistance to evil is willingness to take on oneself the chief part of the suffering, and taking it cheerfully.

When I was called before the Judge again, a little farce was enacted. We both knew that I had been arrested the second time because I had appeared at the Base in violation of the terms of a probation I had stated I would not comply with, and that the Marshal had taken me away before the silent vigil began that morning. "Mr. Young," said the judge, "did you attend the vigil?" I smiled at him: "No, I was not allowed to do so." He then asked me if I had been in jail the last few days; and then he said, "Mr. Young, in view of the fact that you did not attend the vigil, I am going

to continue you on probation.” This, although it was clear that I had refused compliance with the terms of probation! A few days later we had another vigil at the entrance of the Base, and a number of Friends from the area joined us. Almost as soon as the meeting started, a man whom I did not know came up to me and said: “Mr. Young, the Attorney said to tell you that you will not be arrested.”

It was now clear that if I were to reinforce my witness by serving a prison term at this time, I should have to repeat the entrance into the Ordnance Base, and thus force the hand of the Judge. Marjorie Swann, the mother of four children, and Arthur Harvey were in the same situation. We decided to spend ten days in making our decisions.

Several Friends from the Meeting at Paullina, Iowa, had come to visit us at various times and take part in the vigil. Most of them I had known for a long time, so I went there and we had a conference, in which I stated my dilemma and asked their advice. They were very sympathetic, but no one wanted to advise me to repeat my protest by civil disobedience. They thought that having made my position clear, I might now be satisfied. I also visited some other relatives, including our son Bill in Wyoming. He had spent three years in Civilian Public Service and later on had served a year and a day in a Federal prison for refusing to register for the military draft. After my visit, he wrote his mother: “I did not feel like discouraging Dad from going ahead.” But in the end I refrained, largely because of my wife’s strong feeling against a repetition of the illegal action in the circumstances. Marj Swann and Art Harvey did “go in” a second time and were sent to prison. The Judge was obviously very reluctant to put Marj or me into prison. The younger men, who were for the most part relatively free of

responsibilities, he felt no particular compunction about, and in one or two cases said as much.

Looking back, I am inclined to feel that both Marj's decision and mine were right for ourselves. Her protest made far more impact than mine, and it may be pure rationalization on my part to think that what little impact mine made would not have been greatly augmented by my actually serving six months in prison. But in her case, the serving of the term while her husband took care of the children did make a great deal of difference and many hearts were deeply touched by their joint sacrifice.

* * *

I said above that I have never regretted the decision to commit civil disobedience, although I had been actually surprised to find myself calmly announcing my intention to do it. I believe both these statements are true; and the same has been true of other situations in my life when important decisions were in question. I have made many mistakes, done many wrong things, and failed to do many things I should have done. But when we went south in 1936, leaving a relatively good and very happy position to go into what looked like a very precarious one, the decision was made only after several years of heart-searching, long and earnest discussions with many friends, and many prayers for light and guidance. This searching with the mind is the preliminary. But one cannot possibly know all the factors that will be involved, nor predict with certainty the results of any but the most elementary acts. One has to seek in the deepest spiritual levels that he knows for the answer, which will not necessarily come as an immediate result of

the prayer and meditation. It may come, as I believe it did at Omaha, because the time for decision has come.

When the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, we were in the midst of a project with tenant farmers and sharecroppers in South Carolina. But it almost seemed as though the bomb had dropped on us too. For many years I had felt that what Jesus really meant when he said, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword" was not that the individual who takes the sword will necessarily perish, for that obviously isn't always true, but that in that method lies destruction. That is, if men continue to depend on war to settle their disputes, they will one day come to the end of the road. On the first Hiroshima Day, I thought we had now just about reached that dead end. If, as a people, we did not recognize this, we were going to perish, as Jesus said.

Not long ago, I heard a quotation from a story by Irwin Shaw, published in the *New Yorker* in 1942. The latter part of it expresses almost exactly how I felt after Hiroshima. The story tells of a touching farewell party of just a father and a son, as the son was going off to war. After the party, the father had this insight: "I've wasted my life. I'm an old man and alone and my son has gone to war and all I did was pay rent and taxes. The war was being fought for twenty years and I didn't know it. I waited for my son to grow up and fight it for me. I should've been out screaming on street corners. I should've grabbed people by their lapels in trains, in libraries, and in restaurants and yelled at them, 'Love, understand, put down your guns, remember God.' I should've walked through Germany, France, England, and America. I should've preached on the dusty roads. . . ."

This is much the same as what I felt at Abbeville, South Carolina in 1945. But we had undertaken a project involv-

ing several people, and it would not be completed for another ten years. Moreover, I am not the oratorical type, nor would I be good at seizing people by the lapels. Maybe now, I thought, others everywhere would take up the work of awakening men to our peril, and pointing another way. But, although a few saw it and worked at it, not enough did, and the mighty of the earth did not. The methods that would have to be learned if we were to get peace were too revolutionary; they involved so much else besides simply not "taking the sword." And besides many of the powerful people had never heard of non-violent resistance, or had never given it serious thought. They thought that you have to fight fire with fire, and resist evil with more evil. So America, which might have led the way, led the way toward doom.

The people who believe that there are other ways of solving international conflict have worked hard. They have studied and taught, and given conferences and lectures, and distributed printed material, and whenever they could they have used the mass media to try to communicate with the vast stratum of population which never goes to classes or work camps, or reads much. But there are many closed channels. The question is: How are we to get to the people, with an urgency that will shake them out of their complacency, and with a poignancy that will pierce the wall of their stereotyped ideas?

It was in answer to this question that Direct Action for Peace began. It started in 1957, with illegal entry to an atomic bomb testing area at Las Vegas, Nevada. In 1958, pacifists sailed the two small vessels, *Golden Rule* and *Phoenix*, into forbidden waters in the Pacific where bomb tests were being carried out; also in 1958 a group protested the

building of a missile base in Cheyenne. Then in 1959, *Omaha Action*.

Although we do not, in theory, have censorship of the press, we have it in fact, and in some ways it is more effective than if it were official because when censorship is known to exist, people are aware of it and make some allowance for it. As it is, there is a tendency to believe whatever is said in the press or on the air, and not to suspect that part of it is propaganda, and far from the truth. People often do not realize—even many pacifists do not realize—that the mass media will not publish material which is pacifistic unless it has some special news angle. This was our difficulty at Omaha. If we were to make ourselves felt, we had to do something dramatic and symbolic. Many questions have been raised as to why our action took the form it did, and it is eminently fair to ask such questions.

When Friends of the seventeenth century were forbidden by law to gather for worship, they could break the law which was directed right at them, and everyone knew exactly why they did it. Whenever men have been ordered to go to war, they could break the law directly by refusing to go. When one is protesting preparation for war, the matter is not so clear. How can it be done?

Some of our group had come to Omaha intending to commit an act of civil disobedience. I had not. However, when I saw the situation, it seemed the right thing for me to do. And I may say, as I said there, that throughout the whole time I had a very strong feeling that I was doing just what I ought to do. Nor have I felt differently since, although so far I have not taken any further action involving civil disobedience. But I think it is almost certain that I shall do so, if I feel it right to take part in some project

that seems to call for it. Many of my friends, perhaps most of them, do not approve of civil disobedience, and I understand that; neither do I approve of it, unless one's conscience is deeply touched. To be arrested for trespassing, as I was at Omaha, is not something to do lightly.

However, the story is told that a man was going along a road where he noticed many signs forbidding passers-by to enter a certain field. Suddenly he heard cries for help from within this forbidden area, and saw that a child had fallen into a pool, and would evidently drown if he did not go in and help. Seeing this, he went in and saved the child in spite of the signs. Did he do wrong?

Now this does not furnish an exact parallel to the case, as very few illustrations do. But is it very far off? There, in that enclosure at the Mead Base, which is usurping land capable of raising food for the hungry, were being prepared the means for killing millions of children. That some believed this was being done to save lives makes the problem far more complex, but none the less urgent. This has always been the reason given for making the instruments of war. Certainly there seems no reason to suppose that this form of rescue will be more successful in the future than it has been up to now. In fact, far the contrary.

Recently a minister said to me that he thought the only thing we can do is to get everybody to pray for peace. Now I believe in praying for peace, but I believe that virtually everybody who prays at all has already been praying for peace for years. This man admitted that when he prayed for bread, he didn't just leave it to the Lord to put the bread on his table. I believe in prayer, but I believe God gave me my capacities, however small, so that I might help him in his purposes. I know people who say that it is wrong to

work for peace. How do we know what God's purpose is? They say that if war comes, it comes as punishment for our sins, and it may be that our sins are now so great that we shall all have to be destroyed. I agree that, if war comes, it will be a punishment for our sins, and I could mention a number of them. I'll just mention two: (1) preparing for war, and (2) doing nothing to try to prevent it.

War is made by man, methodically and deliberately. I simply do not believe it comes through the Will of God. He allows us to choose it.

The whole tenor of Jesus' teaching condemns war. That he nowhere explicitly condemns it seems to me almost irrelevant. He was very outspoken against the evil that men do against each other. If you doubt this, turn to Matthew 23. Here is a chapter of thirty-nine verses, almost every sentence of which contains denunciation. And it seems to me that something we are prone to forget is that his denunciations of wrong-doing on the part of men were so profound, searching, specific and often-repeated that he was crucified for them. Whatever Jesus means to us, and he means many different things to different people, surely one thing must be clear to us all, that he was crucified because he stood against human wrong-doing.

And what did he gain by standing against it? Surely those who saw his body on the Cross, knowing that he had been betrayed and denied by his own followers—surely, they thought that here was a clear case of failure, if ever there was one. What impact had he had on the great and powerful and influential of his day? He had just made them angry, so angry that they had eliminated him.

Do not think that I am suggesting that the pacifists are martyrs—though such a thing could happen. I am calling

attention to the fact that immediate success is not the only criterion, and also that in working for great causes, one cannot expect that nobody will ever be made angry. I want to return to this later.

* * *

After Judge Robinson made it clear that I was free to go on my own way, I often joined in the Vigil at Fort Detrick, which had begun by then and was protesting research for biological warfare. This involves the propagation of viruses and germs for spreading diseases in enemy countries. Studies of methods for the prevention of disease are also made at Fort Detrick. The latter is a matter of civilian concern for medical men, but this work is under army control because of the former purpose. In the course of the Vigil, it came to the group that we should advocate having the whole installation turned into a World Health Center under civilian control, and its facilities turned entirely to research for the prevention of disease. This proposal has gained some local support and, if successful, might turn out to be a breakthrough toward disarmament.

This Vigil lasted for twenty-one months, and has been succeeded by the Peace Action Center in Washington, which keeps a walking vigil before the White House. A program of education and appeal for making the Fort Detrick institution into a World Health Center is still going on. There is little doubt that to many of the more than fifteen hundred people who stood in the Vigil line outside the Fort, this was a deep spiritual experience; and there is evidence that some impact was made on the people in the city of Frederick.

To me, as I stood in that Vigil, there gradually devel-

oped a kind of revelation of the importance of my own inner attitude. Musing over the probable reactions of the people who passed us on their way to work in the Fort, who must have been aware that, although we called our protest "An Appeal," it was in a sense a criticism of what they were doing, I came to realize how alike we all are. As I stood there, in a sense standing in judgment on them, I came to see that many of them, like me, were troubled about their lives, wishing they could be more loving, could see more clearly what they ought to do. Still others—again like me—were convinced that what they were doing was right, and they were puzzled that anyone should think the opposite, but were not sufficiently curious to ask why. Others, perhaps less like me in one way, were not interested in all this questioning. They had good jobs and were raising their families comfortably. Why worry? Still others were perhaps angry: Why are these people sticking their noses into our business? Why don't they 'tend to their own?

And why don't I attend to my own? I remember how, years ago, I planned to get a little house and a garden, and live out my last years peacefully and happily. I was going to have a little garden tractor. That now seems a far-off dream. But I could see these people as really like myself, looking ahead and dreaming—so why shouldn't I love them?

* * *

When the Friends Co-ordinating Peace Committee decided to hold a vigil at the Pentagon in November, 1960, they gave a tremendous lift to the peace action movement. After months of careful preparation, it came to pass: well managed, well disciplined, orderly and impressive. A thou-

sand Friends stood in the line during the two days of Vigil. It was primarily religious in its emphasis, and to many it was a deeply moving time. That it also had some impact on the military authorities, and those who work with them in the Pentagon, is possible. I hope that it is only the first of many such visible witnesses for their peace testimony on the part of the Society of Friends.

In the summer of 1960, a proposition was made to the Committee for Nonviolent Action that a Walk for Peace be undertaken, across the United States and Europe to Moscow. This seemed to me an excellent project and I volunteered to join it during April and May, 1961, though not to do much walking. There would be many things that needed doing apart from walking.

Ten people left San Francisco on December 1, 1960. They walked first to Los Angeles and then east, going through Phoenix, Arizona, Kansas City, and St. Louis, Missouri, on the way. I joined them on April 4 just east of Chicago and accompanied them to Idlewild Airport at New York, where they took a plane for Europe on May 31. The group averaged about thirty-five as they walked across the states, so it was possible to do a great deal of vigiling, picketing, distributing of leaflets, and speaking in schools and colleges and on radio and TV broadcasts. My own part, aside from some speaking, was chiefly to give advance notice to the press and to radio stations, find hospitality, and help see that we left things in good order in the places (mostly churches and meeting houses) where we stayed overnight.

After having travelled a couple of thousand miles on foot, the Walk for Peace had become newsworthy, and it got good coverage in most of the towns and medium-sized

cities. The same cannot be said for the press or radio of the large cities. Sometimes the attitude toward the *Walk* was hostile, but not often. People could not help seeing that the Walkers were in earnest. The program was a very radical one; we were urging our government to take the initiative in disarmament. While people in general of course did not agree with this, they were challenged by the example of these serious-minded Walkers to think along new lines. The fact that the same request was to be made to the governments of all the other countries disarmed some hostility.

It was this radical approach, which is criticized by many pacifists as well as non-pacifists, that this group felt needed to be made now. Too long, we felt, we have sidestepped the issue of initiative in disarmament, hoping that some international agreement will be reached. And international agreement seems to be farther away now than it was fifteen years ago.

The *Walk*, as a project, was extremely interesting and sometimes exciting. Constantly in motion and in new places each day, we were often joined by other people who felt strongly about peace. Some walked with us for a few hours, some for a few days. Some of them had a real understanding of non-violence, but many did not. Most of these left again before long, but occasionally one would stay with us for reasons it was difficult to determine. Sometimes such people were a real handicap to our purpose, and perhaps we ought to consider carefully whether, once in action, a project of this kind should also attempt to be a training course for the tyro or the wayward.

However, the core-group of Walkers was made up of clear-headed, dedicated, and articulate people. With two

or three possible exceptions, they also had a clear understanding of non-violence. I still feel, looking back on my weeks with the *Walk*, that it was an excellent project. No civil disobedience was involved or contemplated in the United States phase of it. It was, in its simplest terms, an unusual form of public witness for peace, carried out with considerable imagination and courage, and with almost unbelievable energy.

But it was more than that. It was also a prime opportunity for communication. Literally millions of people heard it mentioned on TV or radio; hundreds of thousands heard broadcasts of interviews with the Walkers, or read our leaflets; and several thousand attended expositions and discussions of our positive program. These meetings were held in churches and Friends meeting houses, college classrooms, and Y's along the way, and lasted from half an hour to three hours or more. Probably many in these audiences had never before heard pacifism intelligently discussed. Some had never had any idea that people exist who believe that the world could live without war. We pacifists have been talking just among ourselves too long.*

Over two thousand people asked to be put on the mail-

* The *Walkers* reached Moscow on schedule in October. They had not been permitted in France, but after walking in England they crossed Europe from Rotterdam to Moscow on foot, except for a part of East Germany, where they had to agree to bus transportation. In Poland they were welcomed. In Moscow they were, for the most part, well received and met university students and other groups. They were permitted to hand out their multi-lingual leaflets on the streets. Everywhere their message was the same: that people of all countries should ask their governments to take initiative in disarmament, end nuclear tests, and work toward world law. The great newspapers which ignored them as they walked through our American cities have published objective accounts of their Moscow visit.

ing list of the Committee for Non-Violent Action as a result of the *Walk*. Yet it would be idle to deny that we encountered some people who were repelled or amused by the appearance of some of our group, and their ineffectiveness in explaining our purpose. More discipline within the group and more training in advance might have strengthened the witness by deleting certain irrelevant and apparently contradictory features of it. But we learn by experience. Gandhi experimented for many years before he hit upon the idea of the Salt March. And this would never have had the powerful effect it did have, had there not been many previous projects, some very much less successful, which prepared his followers for this larger one.

The Sit-ins and Freedom Rides of today are having a more immediate success than the Peace Actions. There may be many reasons for this, but one certainly is that they are pleading directly for clear personal rights; this is the kind of situation in which early Friends also suffered so fruitfully. And many exactly parallel examples can be given from the struggle in India: for example, the Vykom case in which untouchables stood for months, through rain, flood, and heat, in mute appeal for the right to use a public road that had long been closed to them.

The appeal for disarmament and for the building of a world that renounces the use of war to settle its disputes is a more difficult thing to get at directly. We need projects that are more clear cut, more understandable, and with more obvious meaning, than any we have yet had. But we shall find such projects only by doing what we see to do, not by drifting and dreaming.

* * *

What is the process of arousing public opinion? of getting laws changed? The chief method is the use of the mass media of communication: the newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio. But these are almost entirely closed to pacifists. Pacifists in our country can indeed print their own ideas, and for this much we should be and are extremely grateful. But we do not reach the general public with our printed words. Even if we got into the mass circulation press, we would not necessarily be read. We need to use ingenuity if we are to get our message to the public.

We need no less ingenuity to get it to the centers where policy is made. Friends of the seventeenth century simply refused to obey laws that forbade them to meet for worship or required them to pay tithes to the established church. They suffered imprisonment and many of them died in prison. They offered neither violence nor reprisal and left us one of the first examples in modern history of the use of non-violent resistance. And they did succeed in changing the laws. We honor them now for their resistance. Mary Dyer and three others went into Boston after they had been forbidden on pain of death to preach there again, and they were hanged on Boston Common, where today there stands a monument to Mary Dyer.

These people were all acting in direct violation of obnoxious laws infringing the rights of conscience. It is hard to make resistance to the war system as clear as that, except for the young men who can simply refuse military service. The compulsion upon older men and upon women is much less direct than the military draft is. Except for tax refusal, they have no direct way of refusing to play any part in the war system; even tax refusal is difficult to make clear as a rational witness. And unless the refuser imple-

ments his refusal with further civil disobedience, it is an invisible witness, all done out of sight; it may clear one's conscience, but does little to communicate with others or convince them.

So we must be more imaginative than we have ever been and find other means, not instead of, but in addition to, every means we have been using. We have the vote but it doesn't reach far enough. Richard Gregg, in *The Power of Nonviolence*, says: "... The machinery of voting and representation [is] so complex and warped, that real control by the people in matters of ultimate power is nearly impossible with that machinery. The only power left to the people is the power of veto. . . ." We need to find powerful vetoes that are available to everybody whose heart and mind and conscience revolt against the criminal wilfulness that is dragging us deeper and deeper into a morass. These vetoes need to be not only available to every person, but also so visible and their meanings so unmistakable, that the dullest and least politically-conscious citizen can get their point. They should appeal to the religion, to the humanity, and to the good sense of every passer-by.

* * *

In my lifetime, I have seen some vivid examples of what a small minority can do in changing the current of public opinion. I can remember, at the beginning of the first World War, when there was practically nobody who wanted America to enter the War, that there suddenly began to be "Preparedness Parades" all over the country. The vast majority of Americans were then opposed to our entering the War. These parades were worked up by a very small minority. But this minority could get money, and whatever else

was needed, including a few people to walk in parades. Before long, Congress began to appropriate money for preparation. To assure an army, conscription was made a law for the first time at the beginning of any war, and with probably ninety per cent of the people opposed to it. Then, suddenly, hardly anybody but the handful of pacifists was against the War.

When women started to ask for the vote, there were perhaps not more than half a dozen women in the movement—a tiny minority, unpopular in the extreme. For eighty years they worked and the minority augmented, and though they convinced many people of the rightness of their cause, they could not convince enough politicians so as to succeed in getting votes for their proposals. Then they started parades in the streets, and eventually they picketed at the White House, and they could no longer be ignored. They had become visible to the eye of the citizens. The most dramatic of their parades occurred on the day before Wilson's first inauguration.

There were many women, of course, who disapproved of "direct action," so a second organization was formed. These two groups, the National Party and the Women's Party, both worked in their own ways toward the same end, the first using only conventional methods, and the second using "action" methods. It is recorded that more than two hundred women from twenty-six of the states were arrested for picketing the White House. By 1920, about eight years after they began using parades and picketing, the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, giving women the vote. No one claims that this method alone was responsible for the victory, but undoubtedly it had a great effect.

The Women's Party did not have the chief negotiators. It was the more radical group, and contained a larger proportion of Friends, who throughout the century of struggle often played a leading part. Many of them were from highly respected Quaker families. The members of the National Party, when their negotiators visited the President, did not have to tell him how strong the sentiment behind them was. He had seen the others picketing and would tip his hat to them as he went by. Before the end of the struggle, the movement had won his support. This was a struggle in which both the "dignified" and the "undignified" method played their parts and supplemented each other.

We pacifists fully realize that we are not likely to be the ones at the negotiating table, if disarmament comes. But we are confident that there will not even be such negotiations unless large numbers of common people make it clear that they want disarmament. It is extremely doubtful if they can make this clear if they wait until they can use the mass media, or if they rely on the religious and liberal press, indispensable as these are.

When speaking of "direct action for peace," I am often told that one must never do things that make men angry. Now for many years I had the idea that this was true, and a basic part of non-violent resistance. But I am no longer of this opinion. It is true that, when one is resisting an evil, one should do it without anger on one's own part. The manner and spirit in which a protest is made is of paramount importance. But one should be straightforward, frank, and clear, and not evade issues because they are controversial and people are touchy on them. A person who is very angry or on the defensive is often having a real learning experience. I remember vividly once when some schoolfellows

took me to task for a thoughtless act. It was a very real learning experience for me. It raised my defenses certainly, but also my respect for my colleagues; and it taught me much that I needed to know about myself.

When Gandhi was working for justice and freedom in his projects, many of his opponents became extremely angry; in at least one case, he had to flee for his life. Jesus certainly knew, when he went the last time to Jerusalem, that his very presence would make people angry. There is no hope of getting justice for Negroes in America, nor of getting rid of war, without making some men angry, just as there is little hope of raising a child to maturity without both the parent and the child being at some times angry with each other. Occasional anger is part of our education.

It is sometimes said that projects in "direct action for peace" do the cause more harm than good. There is no doubt that some people do react very unfavorably to such projects, but there are others who respond with inquiries and attentiveness. We have no means of knowing what the total effect is, for any given project, nor for that matter for all of them put together. We wish that there were some way to evaluate. If those of us who believe in such actions could be shown that they do tend to precipitate the opposite of what we are working for, we would certainly be glad to stop. But we have not been shown. For instance, there have recently been large-scale protests in England against nuclear armament and the resumption of testing. *Peace News* for June 23, 1961, quotes the following from President Kennedy's report to Congressmen after his return from his Paris-London-Vienna talks: "He (Mr. Macmillan) took the position that a change in our testing policy would seriously weaken his government because of widespread op-

position in Britain to nuclear tests. He pointed out that a policy change would play directly into the hands of the Labour Party, and give it an issue on which its now bitterly hostile factions could unite. But even more important from our point of view, the Prime Minister pointed out that a policy change would definitely lead to more numerous and violent demonstrations against our Polaris submarine base there. He was frankly fearful these demonstrations would get out of hand."

The large demonstrations against the Polaris submarine base at Holy Loch in Scotland were admittedly inspired by the little project at New London, Connecticut, called *Polaris Action*. For various reasons, I have not myself taken an active part in this one. Centered at New London, it has done a great deal of educational work through vigils, speaking, and giving out leaflets. When the Polaris submarines are launched, efforts are made to get on them by coming near in boats or swimming. This is done as a protest against the very existence of these submarines, one of which alone carries nuclear weapons powerful enough to destroy millions of people. In Scotland, as the quotation from Kennedy shows, this technique devised at New London is being used with telling effect.

In a recent pamphlet, *The Community of Fear*, which is the report of a study by the Ford Foundation, we are told that "there is little doubt that the Armed Services exert more control over Congress than that body exerts over the Defense Department. . . . Indeed, the military élite is clearly in a position to assume actual political command over the U.S. striking forces."

What does this mean? C. P. Snow, the English scientist and author, in a recent address said: "We are faced with an

either-or, and we haven't much time. The *either* is an acceptance of a restriction of nuclear armaments. . . . I am not going to conceal from you that this involves certain risks. They are quite obvious, and no honest man is going to blink them. That is the *either*. The *or* is not a risk but a certainty. It is this. There is no agreement on tests. The nuclear arms race . . . not only continues but accelerates. . . . Within, at the most, six years, China and several other states have a stock of nuclear bombs. Within, at the most, ten years, some of those bombs are going off. . . . *That* is the certainty. On the one side, therefore, we have a finite risk. On the other side we have a certainty of disaster. Between a risk and a certainty a sane man does not hesitate."

This expresses it for me. On the one side is a risk. In a risk there is still hope. We pursue the hope. That is, we work in every way that we know for a change in our country's military policy. The risk is still there even if we make the change, but unless we make it, we have a certainty of disaster.

There are, of course, many good ways of working and all of them should be used. Direct Action projects are only one way. But the others have been steadily worked on, some for more than forty years, and the situation has grown steadily worse. New methods seem to be called for. Gandhi used new methods with telling effect in Africa and India. The Norwegians and Danes used them under the Hitler occupation; and the early Friends used them in England. Many instances of their use are on record, but most historians tell not about victories gained in peaceful ways, but about war. And the world comes to believe that war is necessary.

To return to the "certainty of disaster": C. P. Snow does

not predict how great the disaster might be, nor does it come within the purpose of this paper to do so. Conceivably there might be war of limited scope and we might hope this would happen instead of total disaster. But let us face honestly the fact that the picture is extremely dark.

The program that is being used to convince people that large numbers can survive a nuclear war by digging cellars to live in seems more fiendish than just to let people be destroyed at once by bombs and fallout. As Governor Meyner of New Jersey says: "What [when they come out] will they use for air? what will they use for water? what will they use for food? what will they use for people?"

Let us remind ourselves again that Gandhi worked for many years before he led the historic Salt March to the sea. Its tremendous impact was made against a background of many preparatory projects carried out over many years. The fact that we may not have many years to work simply makes action the more urgent. We must learn by doing. As we get new ideas for better witnesses, and develop them, the effect will grow.

We need to find things for everyone to do. We really cannot all go to prison, and very few can swim out to board submarines. But some can do these things, and almost any of us can stand in a quiet line and hold up a sign that gives the message, or hand leaflets to passers-by. There is some way for each of us to stand up and be counted against the madness that has already all but brought the final disaster on mankind: to stand up and be counted for a world in which all men can live as brothers, the sons of one Father.

for Wilmer Young

Here am I, an old man in a dry courtroom,
trespasser at the seat of power, tester
of fears and fences, gate-scaler
in a world of wire, guards, checkpoints. I, grandfather
to a universe of playing children, far from home:
yet not so far as you. You say I turn the key,
imprisoning myself within those childless walls
and fences without progeny. Let it be so.

Because I do not hope to climb
those many fences more. Because my age
is not for acrobatics, and my arms
will not support this weight of blood,
guilt, hatred, passion, men call *world*.

I was a climber once: I hurdled pasture-fences,
scaled the sides of barns, and ran
through life and wheatfields. Now,
testing each foothold, painfully,
must climb the fences men erect
to hide their works from God. O eagle-eyed young
men,
did I amuse you as I crossed your fence?
Did wagers gauge my progress? Had my shirt been torn,
would you cast lots for souvenirs? I have returned:
across your orchard-fence the apples are not edible.
Atop your gate I saw my prison walls, and turned the
key.

And what that key unlocks we cannot know:
prison or garden, man must make it so. The mole
lacks vision to distinguish, and is jailed
beneath the rosebush. There's security.

And I must climb, to make my grandchild free.

J. H. McCandless

A Brief Peace Action Reading List

- Bulletin of the Committee for Non-Violent Action*, 158
Grand Street, New York 13, New York.
- Peace News* (a weekly newspaper), 5 Caledonian Road,
London N 1, England.
- The Voyage of the Golden Rule*, by Albert Bigelow;
Doubleday & Co., New York, 1959.
- The Conquest of Violence. The Gandhian Philosophy of
Conflict*, by Joan V. Bondurant; Princeton University
Press, 1958.
- Community of Fear*, by Harrison Brown and James Real;
Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, Santa
Barbara, California, 1960.
- The Power of Nonviolence*, by Richard B. Gregg; Fellow-
ship Publications, New York; 2nd revised edition, 1959.
- Defense in the Nuclear Age*, by Stephen King-Hall; Fellow-
ship Publications, New York, 1959.
- Forbidden Voyage*, by Earle Reynolds; David McKay and
Company, New York, 1961.

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