A.J. Muste Memorial Institute

339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012 (212) 533-4335

December 5, 1998

Dear Friends and Supporters of the Muste Memorial Institute,

It's hard to believe that the A.J. Muste Memorial Institute will be twenty-five years old in 1999!

Twenty-five years of work adds up to over a million dollars in grants and sponsorships to groups, more than 25,000 pamphlets distributed and a stable, affordable home to more than fifty organizations. While we're proud of our accomplishments, many of our hopes for the growth and impact of the peace movement remain unrealized. We are rededicating ourselves in this anniversary year to a greater effort to support nonviolent education and action for social and economic justice.

We constantly face the challenge of how to best carry on the legacy of A.J. Muste. A.J. was known for his ability to absorb new information and assess changing situations. Using his long experience, he was able to analyze events and create vehicles for continuing the process of nonviolent activism. We take inspiration from his example. The path to peace changes and shifts; it is not a clear, direct one. It requires that we be open to new experiences and opportunities to agitate and organize.

The Institute was started at a time when we thought we could effect change more quickly. We've come to understand that the kind of radical transformation of society we are seeking is a much longer process. Institutional violence is rooted deeply in most places, fed by the rapidly globalizing economy. The challenges of organizing have deepened in twenty-five years.

Yet this is also a time of hope. We have seen some tremendous victories over the past year: grassroots lobbying that brought new restrictions on US weapons and training for Indonesia's brutal armed forces; public pressure that forced withdrawal of dangerous new federal guidelines on organic foods; nonviolent protests that prompted the US to reconsider its plan to bomb Iraq; and global mass action--primarily organized over the Internet--that forced world governments to back off on the Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI), which opponents had dubbed "NAFTA on steroids."

Perhaps you haven't heard of these victories. Maybe you don't know about other events like how students are risking their lives to protest their government--nonviolently--in Indonesia. Or how a whole generation of environmentalists has embraced nonviolent civil disobedience, from tree-sitter Julia Butterfly to the young people in California and Oregon whose peaceful sit-ins were met with police pepper spray. Or how sweatshop workers around the world are defending their dignity and organizing against labor abuses--often with support from conscientious consumers.

When the War Resisters League celebrated its 75th anniversary with "A Day Without the Pentagon," young people showed their strength, their tolerance, and above all their commitment to

(over, please)

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