

of the Vietnam War, Inc.

MR. MILNE: Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Robert Milne, and I am the National Director of the Veterans of the Vietnam War.

I would like to say we finally have a memorial to the service of the Vietnam veterans in our Nation's Capital, something long awaited, and long needed, and still we find ourselves divided. It seems even in peace we cannot decide on a good thing. But people will differ and that is what makes them people.

So I believe we have to look at our disagreements with both logic and emotion.

What is the point of this memorial? Is it a monument to war? No, because we are a people who do not want war. Rather the memorial is a dedication to the memory of those who have unfortunately served in a war; it is something of design to help us keep in mind the value and unselfish service of those living and dead, who did what was required of them. It is something also which tells a story to those who did not have to serve. It tells a story of these veterans and will keep telling it for a long time to come.

Therefore, the appearance of the memorial and all the individual parts and aspects of it must be just right in

order to tell that story the way we feel it should be told.  
It must be a reality.

With that in mind, I cannot see why we are arguing over the inclusion of the statue and the flag. The statue has its own statement to make and I feel it is very much a part of the overall realities. The monument itself is a most beautiful one. It is beautiful in its appearance and it is beautiful in that it pays honor and tribute to those who gave their lives. It is very fitting. But so ~~it~~ is a statue for this statue provides part of the reality. It enables people to see the Vietnam veteran as he was when he fought this war. It is not intended to be obscenely glorious in character. It is a honorable creation of reality. I believe that it does not detract from the meaning or the beauty of our memorial. Rather it should enhance both. This is why. First, it does not obstruct one's view of the monument. It is more out of the way. It is part of the story. It preserves its part of the memory for the veteran and the non-veteran alike. Without actually standing directly before and becoming a physical part of the large monument, the monument can be viewed and the roll call of the fallen can be seen. Any argument that the statue is in the way is invalid. It is only there to be an additional truth or part of the truth. It is not a

counterstatement. It is more in the nature of punctuation.

For those who would claim that the vision of three soldiers, who know what they did, looking as they did, is aesthetically wrong, I have this suggestion. We should, if we believe that, tear down the monument to the courageous flag raising of Iwo Jima. When photographer Joe Rosenthal took that picture, he did not know that the proud nation would transform that image into one of the proudest monuments. We of the grand Vietnam War will never see such, but without a picture of a Vietnam trooper, we will at least have something a little like it. If it is issued that that also be taken away, why don't we take away the Iwo Jima monument? Then we can go to work and take away the statue of the Minuteman as well as General Lee atop his horse, and so on. Let us not depict any soldiers of any war in metal or stone. Let us just offer the school children and the veterans and the people in general just walls with names and only the names of the fallen. Better yet, dispense with the names. Let us just put down the date of the war on each.

I am saying to you such things have meaning and sense in this case. Our small statue is not in the way of a large monument. There can be no harm in its being there. Perhaps there is some harm in its not being there.