

Jury Finds 15 Protesters Not Guilty In CIA Trial

Fifteen protesters, including Amy Carter and Abbie Hoffman, were acquitted last week of trespassing and disorderly conduct charges stemming from the November 24 takeover of Munson Hall during an anti-CIA demonstration.

Using the "necessity defense" during the week-long trial in Hampshire District Court, the defendants, including six University students, had argued that CIA crimes justified their seizure of the building to protest on-campus recruitment by the intelligence agency.

Defense arguments contrasted sharply with assistant district attorney Diane Fernald's assertion that broader political issues were irrelevant to the misdemeanor charges.

Twelve of the 15 defendants were charged with trespassing after they refused a request to leave Munson Hall during the afternoon-long occupation. Three others were charged with disorderly conduct for attempting to block a bus carrying other protesters to be booked.

To demonstrate the moral necessity of the protesters' actions, defense attorneys Leonard Weinglass and Thomas Lesser placed the CIA "on trial" with testimony by a parade of prominent agency critics, including Daniel Ellsberg, former National Security Council aide Morton Halperin, and former attorney general Ramsey Clark.

After defense lawyers and prosecutors completed their summations, the six jurors deliberated for about three hours before delivering not guilty verdicts for the 15 activists.

Prior to the jury's announcement, Judge Richard Connon had warned spectators against any courtroom demonstrations. Despite his admonition, however, cheers and applause erupted as the first defendant was declared innocent. Following the outburst, Connon called a

(continued on page 3)

Chronicle Vol II No 30 pg 7

Jury Says "Not Guilty"

(from page 1)

recess and the room was cleared of all spectators. Only reporters and court personnel were allowed to remain.

Later, the defendants were greeted outside the courthouse by more than 200 supporters chanting "CIA, go away," and "Langley, Langley," a reference to a planned march in Washington and civil disobedience action at the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia on the weekend of April 25-27.

Noting the defendants had been judged by "a mainstream jury," defense lawyer Weinglass told the crowd, "This case was not defended, this case was prosecuted and the guilty finding was against the CIA."

District attorney W. Michael Ryan Jr. called the verdict an expression of public disapproval of CIA activities. "It was a great jury for us. They weren't kids. There were a couple of senior citizens. And they believed the defense. Middle America doesn't want the CIA doing what they are doing," Ryan said.

Campus Adheres to Existing Policy

Reviewing the trial before the Faculty Senate, Chancellor Joseph Duffey said, "It's clear the students and their lawyers presented an effective case. It's not so clear the jury's decision reflects the nature of the University and the limits

of protest on campus."

"When an issue such as this is raised, we must search for its basic significance and clarify perspectives," added Duffey. "Issues arise each week which require responsible and reasonable response to protest. The University will continue to observe the picketing code and the recruitment policy."

Recruitment procedures and the picketing code are currently under review by an ad hoc Faculty Senate committee which is expected to report its recommendations prior to the end of the semester.

— DF