

Catholic Worker Found Guilty in Juneau County

CATHOLIC WORKER, PEACE ACTIVIST DON TIMMERMAN FOUND GUILTY IN JUNEAU COUNTY, WI

*Report by Joy First of NCNR, The National Coalition for
Nonviolent Resistance*

In another farcical trial for the 14 activists arrested at Volk Field Air National Guard Base in Wisconsin, Don Timmerman was found guilty of trespass in a Juneau County trial presided over by Judge Curran on February 1. Apparently Judge Curran, who said he did not want to consolidate our trials because it could be prejudicial to us, has fine-tuned his skills in short-circuiting any defense we might provide and the whole trial lasted about eleven minutes.

As predicted, DA Solevey had Juneau County Sheriff Brent Oleson and Deputy Sheriff Thomas Mueller take the stand and establish that Don was at Volk Field on August 25 and that he crossed onto the base after he was told not to by the Sheriff.

Under cross-examination Don asked Oleson if he knew why we were there. The DA objected as irrelevant and the judge sustained the objection. Don asked Mueller if he was aware that the base property was purchased by the taxpayers. Don was going to make the point that we had the right to be on the property, but this question was also objected to and the objection was sustained.

Don took the stand and said he wanted to talk about why we were there. Curran said it was irrelevant to the charge – that intent is not an element of the trespass charge – and

therefore he would not allow this testimony. The judge complained that he has heard this information repeatedly over the last couple of years and that moral convictions are not relevant to the case.

Don said that if he was not allowed to talk about why he was there, he didn't have anything else he wanted to say.

The judge quickly told Don he was guilty of trespass and would be fined \$232, and that it would be attached to his income tax refund if he didn't pay it. Again, a defendant was tried and convicted without being allowed to provide a defense.

Don asked Curran if he could do community service or jail time and the judge said no. The judges made the same empty argument that it would take too much time to administer community service with a number of additional hearings being required. This is simply not true. We have models for community service in both Milwaukee and Madison where it is a matter of filling out a form that would be signed by a local minister and then turned into the court.

Don asked Curran if he could say one more thing and the judge said he would allow it. Don said, "I cannot allow killing of innocent people in my name. This needs to be stated over and over. We are always going to be protesting killings." And with that the judge stood up and quickly left the courtroom.

Don was hoping to read the following statement on Nuremberg from Nuremberg and American Justice during his testimony, but was not allowed:

Allegiance to the nation-state must be replaced by a loyalty to the human community and by a respect for international law. It is not the rebel who threatens civilization, but the compliant conformist who mechanically suppresses his moral qualms when confronted with the dictates of authority. The famous therapist R.D. Laing reminds us that the perfectly adjusted bomber pilot poses a greater threat to the survival

of the human species than does the hospitalized schizophrenic. Laing goes on to note that so-called normal individuals have been responsible for the unnecessary death of perhaps one hundred million of their fellow human beings in the twentieth century.

And so we are reminded of the importance of continuing our work. It might seem disheartening to witness the outrage and absurdity of the United States criminal justice system, but as I was driving to court today I was thinking of the words that Art Laffin always shares, "Keep your eyes on the prize." Whether we are found guilty or not in this sham of a court does not really matter in the big world picture. What we need to stay focused on, and what really matters, is the thousands and thousands of innocent children, women, and men who are being killed by U.S. drones. Continuing our message to stop the killing is what is important. And Don told the judge, "We will be back."

This is one of 3 great descriptions by Joy First and Bonny Block of trials for civil resistance activists protesting drones at Volk Field Air National Guard Base in Wisconsin. These scenarios seem very similar to the ones we face at Hancock Air National Guard Base in Upstate New York. It isn't every day that we get such a careful transcription of events.