

Notes and quotes from court, 11 January 1988

Leonard Weinglass (co-counsel for the defendant): If your sentence is that Katya Komisaruk is to be in prison, "that will say much more about the quality of justice than about the culpability of Ms. Komisaruk."

Nora Manella (Assistant United States Attorney): The defendant has been convicted of a "serious crime aggravated by contempt for the democratic process and complete lack of contrition". She was "violent and destructive.... For all the damage she did, she intended to do even more.... We're all grateful that the reach of the defendant's ambition exceeded the reach of her boltcutters."

"Let's not pretend that this a case about muzzling the defendant" or denying her rights. "She knew what her legal rights were, and she abandoned them" when she took up her hammer. Ms. Komisaruk "displayed an appalling combination of arrogance and contempt for the law and the democratic process." She took it upon herself to decide what national security policy should be, and to implement it with a cordless drill. "That's not the way it works in a democracy."

Although she tries to call herself a "peace activist", "The defendant is a disgrace to the movement she claims to represent." The real activists are those who do slow, patient, organizing to achieve change through electoral means. "These dedicated activists cringe at what the defendant has done." Although she speaks of "civil disobedience", "She abandoned civil disobedience. The tenets of civil disobedience include non-violence, non-destructiveness, and willingness to accept full legal responsibility for one's actions." The defendant did none of these.

Sentencing this defendant to a substantial period of incarceration will show the importance of "removing from circulation political zealots who destroy taxpayer-purchased property."

Your sentence must also be sufficient to "convince her and others who are considering similar acts of vandalism" that it's not worth it. You must make sure that the costs of such actions exceed the benefits. "Thus far, the benefits to this defendant of her actions have been substantial." She has been interviewed in the press, she has been on radio talk shows, and "She has enjoyed the benefits of a campaign of self-promotion that would be the envy of most of the politicians in Iowa." While on trial and awaiting sentencing, "She has had a wonderful time."

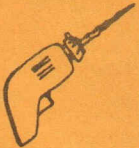
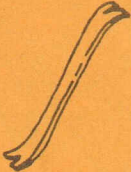
She engaged in her destructive acts to get publicity. "'Look at me', she said, and everybody's watching. Those tempted to use her tactics are watching" to see if she will get off with a slap on the wrist. "Other, law-abiding people -- and I don't just mean the Air Force -- are watching, but they couldn't be here today. They have to work."

"There has never been any question of whether the defendant would be convicted. The question all along has been what would happen to her: 'Will she get away with it?'"

William Rea (United States District Judge)"This is the most unpleasant task a judge has.".... "I've read the letters from her and from her supporters." Most of them refer to her anti-nuclear position, but I'm not in favor of nuclear warfare. "We're all opposed to nuclear warfare.... But if everybody did what she did, we'd have a society of anarchy."

"I've been concerned about how she was able to get on the base and do what she did." ... "The security of the base and the integrity of the important national defense activities carried out there are dependant on the deterrence of such acts as the defendant's," which were a "threat to the legitimate security interests of the Air force and the American people."

"In order for the legal system to function, the court must make the cost of such activity high enough to deter" those who would consider it.



"After Seven O'Clock Count Tonight
Females May Use the Yard Until Nine PM"

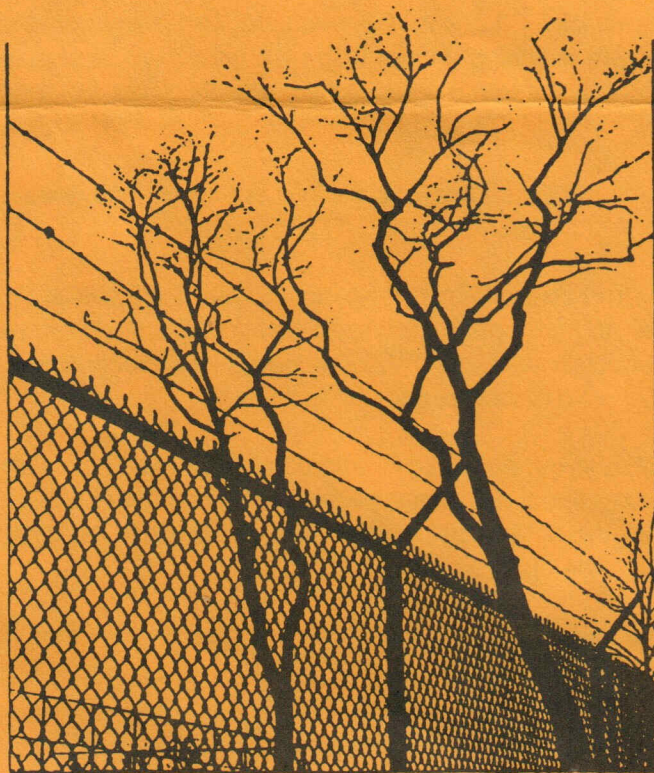
Here in these northern flatlands,
I raise my collar against the night wind
and walk purposefully
in large circles.

The fence -- chainlink with six barbed strands above --
is always at my right shoulder.
It quivers only slightly in the wind.
Steady companion of my rounds,
it murmurs encouragements to me --
Aeolian whisperings from a barbwire harp.

Tonight I long to lean upon it,
hook my fingers into the links,
lay my cheek against cold wire,
and feel the wind bathe me
as it pours through.

But the lights would reveal me;
the cameras would report me;
and loudspeakers would summon me
to be interrogated.

So I do not linger,
but stride by,
foregoing metallic embraces.
And the wind fondles my hair,
thrusting it back from my forehead,
as you used to, darling.



Katya Komisaruk
4/4/88