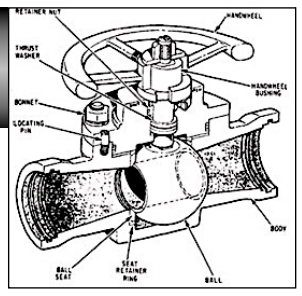
Victory for Valve Turners in Minnesota!



We are pleased to announce a victory in our Minnesota Valve Turner case!

District Court Judge Robert Tiffany acquitted defendants of all charges today in the Clearwater County case of two "Valve Turners," Annette Klapstein and Emily Johnston, and support person Ben Joldersma. Judge Tiffany ruled that the prosecution failed to demonstrate any evidence of damage to two Enbridge pipelines. Klapstein and Johnston faced state felony charges for their part in the "Shut It Down" climate direct action two years ago, in which climate activists successfully disrupted all five pipelines carrying Canadian tar sands crude oil into the United States.

"The Judge found what I was about to tell the jury: that these defendants caused no damage to the two pipelines they closed. Indeed, they acted out of concern for communities that are harmed by fossil fuel pipelines, and the climate emergency," said Dr. Anthony Ingraffea, an expert who authored the American Pipeline Institute pipeline safety guidelines.

The acquittal came a week after the climate activists were preparing to present a *"climate necessity defense,"* with expert testimony in areas including pipeline safety, climate science, climate policy and the efficacy of civil disobedience. The expert witnesses would have corroborated the defendants' testimony that their actions were justified by the need to avert imminent climate catastrophe. However, in a stunning about-face last week, the court forbade all expert testimony related to climate change and civil disobedience, while still allowing safety testimony, and possibly testimony to direct, non-climate impacts of tar sands extraction and pipelines.

"While I'm very glad that the court acknowledged that we did not damage the pipelines, I'm heartbroken that the jury didn't get to hear our expert witnesses and their profoundly important warnings about the climate crisis," said defendant Emily Johnston, 52, a Seattle resident and poet. *"We are fast losing our window of opportunity to save ourselves and much of the beauty of this world. We turned those valves to disrupt the business-as-usual that we know is leading to catastrophe, and to send a strong message that might focus attention to the problem. We will continue to do that in every peaceful way we can; the stakes are far too high for us not to,"* Johnston added.

With the acquittal, the case establishes two important legal precedents. *"First, the climate necessity defense was upheld by the highest court in the State, which affirmed that these climate activists had the right to assert the climate necessity defense to a jury,"* said Lauren Regan, Executive Director of the Eugene Oregon-based Civil Liberties Defense Center.

"Further, the defendants were acquitted of felony criminal damage to critical energy infrastructure and pipelines. In an attack on our democracy, this law, like others of its kind in 31 states, was pushed through the state legislature at the behest of the fossil fuel industry, which sought to increase the penalties against activists who dared to challenge the profiteering motives of some of the biggest corporations," Regan said.

Dr. James Hansen was another of the expert witnesses scheduled to give testimony. *"It's great that the defendants were found not guilty, but we missed an opportunity to inform the public about the injustice of climate change. Now we need to go on offense against the real criminals, the government,"* said Former NASA Chief Scientist Dr. Hansen. *"The government, especially the Trump Administration, is guilty of not protecting the constitutional rights of young people. They should have a plan to phase down fossil fuel emissions, but instead they aid and abet the expansion of fossil fuel mining, which, if not stopped, will guarantee devastating consequences for young people."*

"As older white people, we acknowledge that our white privilege may have resulted in better treatment in the legal system than activists of color often receive. That is why it is important for people of privilege to take bolder risk on behalf of the planet" said defendant Annette Klapstein. *"There are lives in the balance, thousands of people are already dying from the effects of climate change and if we don't put a stop to it, it will be millions within a few short years. It is morally unacceptable to me to stand idly by while even one life is sacrificed to the greedy oil company executives and their already rich shareholders and the banks who fund them can continue to make their even more obscene profits at the expense of all life on earth,"* Klapstein added.

Erin Grady
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To all citizens of the US:
YOU'RE PAYING FOR THIS?

I feel that I am alone sometimes in my belief that President Trump is a political genius. When was the last time we had a New York hustler near the top of the federal heap? Aaron Burr who founded the Tammany machine almost made it. You know how he turned out. FDR did it and he saved Capitalism!?! This guy Trump has managed to stave off a huge defeat in the midterms by a remarkable October Surprise. Not a war on the ground as I thought, but a thoroughly Reaganesque move (as in Grenada) by creating a propaganda war over nothing:

The Invasion of the Honduran Caravan People!

That played to his base and disrupted the thought processes of his opponents. The Walking Dead are on the way, get out your axe handles. The response of responsible military people, as above, is Resistance. When our soldiers push obedience to illegitimate orders, it is time for each of us to Get Real.

Trump doesn't pay taxes – "***legitimately***!" In this case let's follow his leadership and start non-cooperating with paying taxes. The simple isn't easy as the I Ching says and the most effective way is also the ecological way – stop making taxable money, live communally, own little, accept Holy Poverty. Okay, maybe that's nuts though I have done this for 50 years and the Feds get nothing from me except Social Security. Become a self-employed agricultural worker, contract out, or run your own business. If you are conventionally employed take control of your withholding. Sign where it says "I didn't owe any tax last year and wont this year." Nobody owes the Trumpsters anything do we? Otherwise, look at the number of dependents that you need not to be eligible for withholding. Many people do depend on you. Reducing your taxed owed to Zero is the least they can do for you. What about the people of Yemen? Or the dismembered Khashoggi? Or our entire 700 billion dollar war budget? We owe nothing to a criminal government. If you have assets to seize, manipulate your ownership the way the big capitalists do so that ownership is confused – land trust, co-ownership, find a trustee. Remember to let your conscience speak for you, i.e. God made me do it. And creatively speaking, community economics with computer or local paper money avoids the use of the federal dollar. This merits support as a sustainable means of refusal. The Planet made me do it!

Of course you can join the Tax Resistance straight on by holding back money and telling the World, maybe even the IRS. Since half of any dollar you give the government will go to the war machine, refusing everything always made sense. Refusing half of taxes "owed" is also a very defendable public resistance position. In the Vietnam era, people harassed the war machine by withholding the 3% tax on your telephone because it was passed as a war tax. This gave the Feds a real problem with collection. As I meditated on Khoshoggi's bloody fingers and dismembered body, on the other absolute monarchies of the gulf, on Egypt's disgusting military government and on the racist Israeli regime – refusing all taxes that go to supporting these regimes would be an effective means of harassing the government. Roughly speaking refusing Mideast war taxes comes to 1 and a half percent ($10 billion out of $700 billion). Refusing this amount would be satisfactorily symbolic. If you are poor at multiplying, adding the half billion given to Latin America in military and security aid, gives a nudge. The maintenance and modernization of Nuclear weapons will cost 40 billion dollars each year for the next time. This about 6% of the military budget that could be taken off your taxes "owed."

You've heard the saying: Wars will cease when soldiers refuse to fight them. For citizens, the direct way to refuse war is to start refusing war taxes. Any meaningful resistance, outside of the phony war of the Pelosi/Schumer Democrats must find ways to cut off the money to the Federal government. The White Nationalist Republicans have won possession of the government but not us. There will be a meeting with tax resistance experts right before Christmas. Be there to get square with your conscience.

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