

Judge Wilson 'Lays Down Law' To Attorneys for Jack Ruby

Judge J. Frank Wilson "laid down the law" to defense attorneys in the Jack Ruby murder trial Tuesday.

After he substituted for ailing Judge Joe B. Brown as presiding jurist in the Ruby trial, Judge Wilson bluntly informed defense lawyers Melvin Belli and Joe Tonahill that he would not tolerate temper tantrums or heated arguments.

The gruff-voiced former congressman also told them they would risk a jail sentence or fine for contempt if they insulted prospective jurors.

MINUTES LATER, when Belli began making a lengthy objection, Judge Wilson snapped, "That's enough. Take your seat."

The California lawyer, who has never been at a loss for words, kept talking.

"Take your seat, Mr. Belli," Judge Wilson repeated. "When the court says to you to take your seat, it means take your seat. Now sit down."

Belli sat down.

Judge Wilson cut short another lengthy objection with a curt comment.

"I get your point, Mr. Belli," the judge told the defense lawyer. "You can get it into the record. I want it there. But you don't have to keep repeating it. There's no use belaboring the issue."

IT DIDN'T TAKE Belli long to realize that the black-robed, distinguished-looking jurist meant what he said. There was a noticeable lack of outbursts such as had disrupted previous sessions of the trial.

Judge Wilson said he intended

to see that only jurors with open minds passed judgment on Ruby. They must decide whether the balding manager of a downtown striptease club is guilty of murder because he shot Lee Harvey Oswald.

"I wouldn't require any defendant of any race, creed or color to accept an unfair juror," the judge said.

But, Judge Wilson said, he intended to protect prospective jurors against insulting remarks.

"I don't want any insinuations cast against any juror," he said. "Each juror will be treated with respect by both sides."

JUDGE WILSON did not elaborate, but he may have referred to defense inferences that some prospective jurors lied during questioning. Belli and Tonahill have challenged potential jurors to take lie detector tests.

Judge Wilson also rejected a renewed defense request that he hold Maurice A. Melford, national director of the National Epilepsy League, in contempt because he distributed pamphlets outside the courtroom. The pamphlets attacked the defense claim that Ruby shot Oswald while in an epileptic seizure.

"The court will stop anyone from passing out literature in the courtroom," Judge Wilson commented. "We cannot stop them outside the building. This is a free country and we have the right of free speech. The lawyers in this case have certainly exercised that right."

This was considered a reference to the numerous press conferences which attorneys have conducted in the courtroom and nearby corridors during trial recesses.—CARL FREUND.

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