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Jury Expected to Get Mayday Test Case Today

A Superior Court jury will be asked to return a verdict today in a test case involving the arrest of Mayday antiwar protesters on the steps of the U.S. Capitol.

The jury of 12 men and one woman is to decide the guilt or innocence of eight of about 1,000 protesters, all of whom were charged with disorderly parading and unlawful entry at the Capitol on May 1.

The verdict is expected to have a decisive impact on prosecution of 800 other demonstrators whose trials have been postponed pending the outcome of this case. Previously charged were dropped against more than 100.

In a closing argument yesterday in the trial before Judge Stanley Harris, Assistant U.S. attorney Luke C. Moore pictured the protesters as "having been a massive crowd" chanting antiwar slogans and interfering with office routine inside the Capitol.

The four defense attorneys, on the other hand, pictured

the demonstrators as high-minded, peaceful protesters who had assembled at the invitation of members of Congress and had carried out their constitutional right to "petition for redress of grievances."

Moore emphasized that the jury should not consider the demonstrators' concern with war, racism and other issues but only focus on whether the group had broken a statute forbidding demonstrators on the Capitol grounds without permission of authorities. The statute has been interpreted as one which allows peaceful gatherings.

Defense attorney Monroe Freeman countered that the antiwar protesters were victims of "selective enforcement" of the law because of their political views. Maintaining that the group had been "less disruptive than are tourists normally," he accused the government of "telling these people here that they cannot do what others can freely do."