

Sirhan Appeal Hinted Regardless of Penalty

Attorney Believes Judicial Errors Were
Made; Verdict Disappoints Defense Team

L.A. Times
BY DAVID LARSEN

Times Staff Writer 4-18-69

"Naturally one is disappointed," said Grant B. Cooper, chief defense attorney for Sirhan B. Sirhan. "But I'm not going to quarrel with this jury. They had the case fully and fairly presented to them. They have given it serious consideration and this is their verdict."

The reaction Thursday of defense attorney Russell E. Parsons to the first-degree murder conviction was similar. "I feel very bad about it," he said. "We have a sick man and the psychiatric evidence was overwhelming."

A third defense attorney, Emile Zola Berman, said: "I am disappointed that our defense of diminished capacity wasn't accepted."

"I just regret that the sciences of psychology and psychiatry are held in such low esteem," he said in New York.

Sirhan 'Disappointed'

The reaction of Sirhan himself was, according to Cooper, one of "disappointment."

Cooper said this was evident "by the expression on his face." But the attorney declined to disclose what his client had actually uttered upon hearing the verdict, calling it a privileged matter.

He added that Sirhan had asked that his statements be kept confidential.

Asked if Sirhan fully realized the import of the outcome, Cooper answered: "Of course."

At a news conference following the verdict, Cooper ranged over several points.

When asked if there had been judicial errors during

the lengthy proceedings, he replied that he felt so.

Cooper said that regardless of whether Sirhan gets life imprisonment or the death penalty, there "probably" would be an appeal.

Cooper declined to reveal what arguments he will offer against the death penalty during the penalty phase of the trial, saying he didn't wish to telegraph his punches for the prosecution.

"But obviously we don't consider the death penalty appropriate," he said.

Cooper Tells Timing

Regardless of what the jury decides upon for a penalty, Cooper said, it will be at least a year before the appeal is resolved.

Cooper mentioned a matter that will come before the Court of Appeal today, that of Lincoln High School teacher Sal Castro and 12 other defendants, accused of felony conspiracy for their roles in student walkouts last year.

If the court upholds the defense position that the grand jury was improperly constituted — favoring certain segments of the population—then the Sirhan case would have to be retried, Cooper said.

In response to a question, the attorney said Sirhan has not indicated that he wants any change of lawyers.

Cooper said he had no regrets about the course pursued by the defense.

"I don't know of any other way we could have tried it," he stated. "We did the best we could and we lost. That's all."