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LOS ANGELES, April 3—A psychiatrist who has testified that Sirhan B. Sirhan had the mental capacity to premeditate the killing of Senator Robert F. Kennedy conceded today that the defendant suffered a "substantial mental illness."

However, the psychiatrist, Dr. Seymour Pollack, clung to his belief that Sirhan was able to plan the crime and weigh the consequences in a "meaningful and mature" way.

It was Dr. Pollack's fourth day on the witness stand and his second under cross-examination by Grant B. Cooper, the chief defense attorney. The questioning today was marked by several sharp exchanges between the two men.

The psychiatrist, for example, strongly rejected Mr. Cooper's suggestion that he had changed his view since making a report to the District Attorney, dated Feb. 5, in which he diagnosed Sirhan as a "psychotic." In a later report to the prosecution, Dr. Pollack referred to the defendant as not being "clinically psychotic."

Resists Defense Counsel

Dr. Pollack agreed that the first report was written after he was given to understand that Sirhan would plead guilty. The agreement was never carried out because Judge Herbert V. Walker of the Superior Court insisted on holding a trial.

Dr. Pollack, however, resisted Mr. Cooper's efforts to show that he had changed his mind on the diagnosis. He said there was a difference between "psychotic" and "clinically psychotic."

He explained that a psychotic was a person suffering from a major mental disorder while a clinical psychotic was one whose mental capacity ranged from the "minimum to the maximum evidences of mental impairment."

He added that he had meant in his first report that Sirhan had a psychotic personality, meaning that he showed some sign of psychosis.

Calls Sirhan Paranoid

Dr. Pollack acknowledged that, in his opinion, Sirhan had a paranoid personality, but he said that this alone did not mean he was a psychotic.

He later described the defendant as a "borderline psychotic" whose behavior patterns were more on the normal side of the border than on the psychotic side.

He agreed with a suggestion by Mr. Cooper that Sirhan's "brakes were not in good order" and that the "glue" that held him together "was not of good quality."

Sirhan laughed at the analogies.

At one point, Dr. Pollack

disclosed that Sirhan once told him in an interview in his jail cell that he expected to be "sent to prison for only a couple of years" for the killing of Senator Kennedy.

Mr. Cooper was quick to seize on this, asking the psychiatrist whether he thought Sirhan had displayed "meaningful and mature" judgment in thinking that he would receive only two years in prison for the shooting.

Tries to Qualify Answer

After some minutes of trying to qualify his answer, Dr. Pollack agreed that, on this matter, the defendant did not display such judgment.

Dr. Pollack repeated his belief that the Senator had been shot for "political reasons" and that Sirhan had expected to escape from the Ambassador Hotel after firing the fatal shots.

Asked if the defendant's refusal to give his name to the police and his attempts to interrogate the policemen who were trying to question him were the actions of a man who had rationally planned an assassination, Dr. Pollack said it was an example that "he knew what he'd done."

"His kidding of the police was an attempt to avoid entering into any meaningful conversation about what he'd done," the psychiatrist said.

Dr. Pollack told the court that he was "strongly opposed" to capital punishment in explaining why he had written in his confidential report to the District Attorney that Sirhan's mental illness "should be considered a mitigating circumstance" on the matter of sentencing.

Psychiatrist Concedes Sirhan Has 'Substantial Mental Illness'