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Sirhan Bjt 510

By HARRY F. ROSENTHAL

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES AP - For 18 exhausting, repetitive and oftentimes boring court days, a swarm of psychologists and psychiatrists has interpreted the mind of Sirhan Bishara Sirhan to the jury trying him for the murder of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy.

"I suspect everyone in the trial may be tired of it," sighed one of the defense lawyers.

Nevertheless, when the jurors are finally permitted to discuss the case later this week, their choice of which expert to believe may decide whether Sirhan lives or dies.

On one side, for the defense, is Dr. Bernard L. Diamond of the University of California, a giant in the field of psychiatry and the law. On the other side is prosecution psychiatrist Seymour Pollack of the university of Southern California, a man of equal professional stature.

They agree Sirhan is mentally ill. They diverge on the extent.

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Sirhan is not so mentally ill that he should escape legal responsibility for the assassination, Pollack insists.

"If you lower the scale too much, most murderers and bank robbers will escape imprisonment," he said.

"Where do you draw the line? I can only give the facts, my view. Where does society draw the line?"

Pollack said Sirhan "understood fully and completely what he had done." It was, the psychiatrist said firmly, "a political assassination by a psychotically disturbed individual." In short, Pollack said, Sirhan killed because he hated Kennedy.

And Diamond is equally insistent that Sirhan is "pitifully ill, with a demented psychotic rage, out of control of his own consciousness and his own actions." He called the 25-year-old Jordanian a paranoid schizophrenic.

Sirhan, he said, "actually executed the crime knowing next to nothing as to what was happening."

Diamond and Pollack are only two among 89 witnesses who have testified in 12 weeks of trial. But with no element of doubt that Sirhan pulled the trigger and acted alone in the murder, their testimony has been the most important.

Such differences of opinion by men eminent in their field and nationally known as experts are bound to perplex the jurors when they start their deliberations late this week.

Ironically, Pollack-whose testimony if believed could send Sirhan to California's gas chamber-also made an eloquent plea for Sirhan's life.

As a strong opponent of capital punishment, Pollack said, he had tried diligently to find that Sirhan wasn't capable of "maturely and meaningfully" reflecting on the gravity of his act-in California necessary for a first-degree verdict. But, unlike the six psychologists and two psychiatrists who testified for the defense, Pollack said he couldn't find sufficient evidence of mental incapacity.

"Do you think it is mitigating to the extent of reducing the penalty from first degree to second degree?" asked Cooper on cross examination.

"No," Pollack replied.

"Is it sufficient to mitigate it from death to life?"

"Yes," said the state's psychiatrist.

Defense psychiatrist Diamond insisted that in a fully conscious mental state Sirhan "would have been quite harmless, despite his paranoid hatreds and despite his loaded gun."

But when he killed Kennedy in the Ambassador Hotel the morning of June 5, 1968, Diamond said, Sirhan was "confused, bewildered and partially intoxicated," triggered to murder by mirrors, flashing lights and the general confusion in the hotel.

It is these opinions the jury will have to weigh in deciding whether Sirhan is guilty of first-degree murder, second degree murder or manslaughter.

Trial resumes 12:30 p.m. EST with another psychologist on the stand.

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