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Defense Attacks Doctor's View That Sirhan Was Not Legally Ill

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LOS ANGELES, April 2—The defense in the murder trial of Sirhan B. Sirhan began an intensive effort today to undermine the testimony of a psychiatrist who contends the defendant was not mentally ill when he killed Senator Robert F. Kennedy.

The cross-examination of Dr. Seymour Pollack, a professor at the University of Southern California, began at mid-day.

Defense attorneys were planning to rely primarily on a confidential report that Dr. Pollack gave the prosecution several months ago, in which the psychiatrist allegedly said that Sirhan was too mentally ill to have premeditated the death of Senator Kennedy. Dr. Pollack is said to have changed his mind.

Grant B. Cooper, the chief defense lawyer, began questioning Dr. Pollack in a gentle manner, asking him to define once again such psychiatric terms as "psychotic," "grandiose delusions" and "schizophrenic paranoid."

Observations by Laymen

Mr. Cooper got Dr. Pollack to agree that if a person is not "severely disturbed," it is difficult for a lay person to recognize schizophrenia. The psychiatrist then conceded that the basis of many of his conclusions as to Sirhan's mental state before, during and after the shooting had come from eyewitnesses.

He reminded the attorney, however, that he had also interviewed members of the defendant's family.

Mr. Cooper then read from the confidential report to the district attorney's office, in which Dr. Pollack said that because the defendant's "reliability and credibility are questionable," his inferences about Sirhan's mental state "are drawn from witnesses."

Under continued questioning, Dr. Pollack said he regarded the testimony of laymen more valid than psychological testing.

Dr. Pollack, who sipped water frequently, appeared almost frightened. He had displayed a confident manner while testifying for the prosecution.

Earlier, in telling the court that Sirhan had demonstrated

a lack of psychotic symptoms, the psychiatrist occasionally became so excited that he shouted into the microphone hung around his neck.

Thus far in the 13-week-old trial, Dr. Pollack is the only psychiatrist to have testified that the volatile, 25-year-old Jordanian immigrant had the "mental capacity" to plan and carry out the assassination of the New York Senator. The jury has heard testimony from three psychiatrists and six clinical psychologists.

This morning, the psychiatrist repeated his belief that there was no evidence in Sirhan's behavior before and after the assassination that would lead him to a diagnosis of schizophrenic-paranoid psychosis.

'No Psychotic Reasons'

"He revealed no psychotic reasons for killing Senator Kennedy," Dr. Pollack told the court. "There was nothing crazy about his planning."

The psychiatrist, a short man with a florid face, dismissed earlier testimony that the defendant was in a self-hypnotic trance at the time of the shooting. He said Sirhan was "in no other mental state than his usual one."

He conceded however, that Sirhan might have been in a trance "in the brief seconds before he killed the Senator and in the brief seconds after the shooting."

Had Sirhan been in a "an altered state of consciousness," Dr. Pollack said, he would have been "perplexed when he came back to his usual self and found himself questioned by police officers."

There had been none of this feeling, the psychiatrist told the court, explaining that Sirhan had been rational and calm under interrogation.