

## **The President's Message "As I See It"**

As you know from my programs and papers, I am actively promoting and pursuing the goal of forensic psychiatry as a specialty. In this effort I need energetic support from AAPL members and others who share this objective.

Many people criticize this goal. Some, in psychiatry, law, and other fields, believe that this pursuit is premature. Others hold that it is detrimental to the traditional image of psychiatry as a helping and healing branch of medicine. Many decry the application of psychiatry to limited legal ends in light of the great unrealized and unsatisfied need for psychiatric treatment. As many believe that the history of our being "misused" by both law and lawyers should move us to avoid the potentiality and likelihood of serious abuse of psychiatry through its application to law. And finally, there are some who see forensic psychiatry as an insidious force for social, political, and even economic suppression that is useful to and used by the ruling establishment and its agencies to maintain the kind and degree of social control they desire. Undoubtedly additional criticisms could be listed.

None of these opposing viewpoints should be taken lightly. All require analysis, consideration, and rebuttal. If we are ever to be successful in achieving our objective, we must become more vocal. We must popularize our position. We must present in our professional journals an increasing and continuing number of well-reasoned articles supporting our position. And we must obtain support from the legal profession and other professional groups, as well as the community at large.

The promotion of a specialty, in my opinion, requires more than a formal program of education and training directed to the establishment of minimum standards of special knowledge and advanced skills. It requires professional acceptance of forensic psychiatry as an accepted subspecialty of the field of psychiatry and medicine. Communication has already been established with both the Psychiatry and the Law Committee of the American Psychiatric Association and the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology to explore the paths for APA certification and/or AMA Board accreditation.

I can report with pleasure that the combined AAPL/APA Committee on Psychiatry and the Law meeting in Phoenix, Arizona on March 15 and 16, 1974, was a marked success. As a result, it was decided to establish this combined meeting as an annual one.

The next annual AAPL/APA meeting will take place in Las Vegas, Nevada, in 1975, immediately preceding the combined AMA/ABA meeting. Further announcements will be forthcoming, and we hope that an even larger number of AAPL members will attend. An AAPL meeting with the AMA and ABA combined meeting on medicine and law should be a stimulating and valuable professional experience.

AAPL membership is growing steadily. As increasing interest in Psychiatry and Law develops throughout the nation, a greater number of our professional colleagues are called upon to become more involved with social and legal issues. They should be invited to join AAPL.

I hope that many of you were able to attend the Semi-Annual AAPL meeting in Detroit. Our 1974 Annual meeting has been set in Williamsburg, Virginia, for October 24, 25, and 26, 1974. Mark it in your calendar books!