

## Editorial

The recent highly publicized movement to abolish the insanity defense in the state of New York should merit serious consideration from anyone who calls himself a forensic psychiatrist. As one reads the paper on the juror's dilemma in this issue of the Bulletin, it is clear that the public's disenchantment with psychiatrists in adversary roles, saying that a defendant is or is not responsible, has reached a new low. One hopes that this condition will focus attention on the need of the forensic psychiatrist to give priority to the consideration of the ethics of his behavior. In the opinion of many, fulfilling this need represents the major task of our sub-speciality of psychiatry. Some of the ethical problems of the pre-sentence psychiatric evaluation are addressed in another paper which appears below. It is to be hoped that many more such efforts will follow.

A great deal of hard work is done by capable and responsible forensic psychiatrists in court clinics, county jails, prisons, and the like. Unhappily, this achievement has been almost universally ignored. Anyone, however, can appear in a murder case as an expert witness and immediately receive recognition in the press, on radio, and on television.

Surely the time has come to abolish the insanity defense and to substitute the concept of diminished capacity, as has already been done in California. That this idea dates back to 18th century Scotland must surely give it some measure of respectability!

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