

Editor's Page

A New American Sport

It is an open-season on Presidents. With the baseball season being what it is, and a questionable football and hockey season ahead, big-game hunting for the President of the United States offers much promise. It is exciting and real newsworthy, as good a prescription against doldrums as a bull fight. It makes for good conversation. It is a wonderful antidote to boredom, depression, and the morbid pre-occupation with oneself that many in our society would fall prey to, were it not for the distractions of big time sports.



DR. BAR-LEVAV

Political commentators and newspapers have had much to say about the recent two attempts on President Ford's life, but it is, in reality, a medical problem of the first magnitude. These attempts on the life of the President are the product of sick individuals, and such individuals have not rationally been dealt with because psychotic-like distortions of reality have been allowed to exist in many of our institutions, and mislabeled as expressions of sane judgment. Newscasters, politicians, judges, even physicians and others, have all been infected by irrational fear and guilt. These caused failures in diagnosis of such persons as sick, and inhibited the taking of rational public measures to contain and control manifestations of such a disease. President Ford may lose his life in a next attempt soon, and a similar fate is likely to befall future holders of this and other high political offices, unless conditions change basically, and fast.

Individuals with mental illness have always existed, but our society is more accepting of unusual types of behavior than were societies of the past. Eccentricities that would have been recognized previously as forms of mental illness are now tolerated as unusual styles of being and living. Radical groups have always attracted discontented individuals, those with much anger, hate and rage, which distorted their personalities. Today such individuals are often thought of as having a justified cause, and "social injustice" is cited as an explanation.

Unfulfillable promises made over a period of several decades, together with unreasonably permissive attitudes in child rearing, have combined to produce a generation that expects to be taken care of, unconditionally and completely. Most members of this generation feel some resentments, and a few have more extreme expectations. When such expectations are frustrated, as they must be, such individuals feel justifiably angry and very self righteous, and they lash out at Society. Murder of public representatives of such a society is no longer considered a crime in this context, but just a retribution for the failure to feed the hunger and gratify the demands that are expected as a birthright.

This cancer of our society is not easily healed, if it can be healed at all. By showing such deranged individuals on national television and by quoting their words from coast

to coast, newspapers and television programs are directly supportive of the wish of such people for more gratification, thus increasing the flame of irrationality. Anonymous, bitter, angry and hurt individuals who feel impotent in their attempts to force society to take care of them, are suddenly catapulted onto the cover of national magazines and to front pages of newspapers, and become top billing on television programs. They have thus succeeded in forcing society to do what they wanted it to do for them, which must encourage other individuals who also feel forgotten to try doing the same.

The specialty of psychiatry and medicine in general have a special responsibility to make such obvious truths self evident to all, if hope for change is to be maintained. The news media are contributing directly to a dangerous situation, perhaps innocently or out of ignorance. When the tragedy occurs, as it is likely to, none of us will be able to say with clear conscience, "My hands have not shed this blood," unless we raise our voice now to educate the public and to change the conditions that make the existence of such insanity possible.

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