

Problems aired; reforms suggested

Panel discusses insanity defense

NEW ORLEANS — A Southern Legislative Conference panel spent much time Tuesday discussing the acquittal of John Hinckley, who successfully argued insanity when he shot President Reagan and three other men in Washington in 1981.

The mother of a mentally ill girl who killed her sister, and was almost released just months later, Maxene Kleir of Florida, said the insanity defense invites abuses and will just put more John Hinckleys "on the street."

Doctors tried to release Kleir's daughter a few months after the girl was found innocent by reason of insanity.

"I will never let my daughter out until she can look me in the eye and say, 'I killed my sister,'" Kleir said.

Mentally ill people who commit crimes should be treated while institutionalized and not released until they can cope with society, Kleir said. Otherwise, treatment of the mentally ill is worthless.

Arkansas Attorney General Steve Clark said a verdict of "guilty, but mentally ill" should be available to a jury, so a defendant acquitted of a crime because of insanity cannot quickly be released from an institution.

The convict would be placed under the jurisdiction of a state's corrections department, Clark

said, but would be treated in mental hospitals while imprisoned.

The insanity defense now allows an Arkansas criminal to walk free an average of 48 days after conviction.

The district attorney for Bell and Lampasas counties, Arthur "Cappy" Eads of Belton, said psychiatrists should not be allowed to make the moral decisions intended for judges, jurors and legislators. The burden of proof in an insanity case should be on the defendant, he said.

"When someone escapes accountability for their actions, it strikes at the very basis of our legal system and our society," he said. "The insanity defense has

become the stone in the shoe of the criminal justice system."

A New York psychiatrist and president-elect of the American

Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, Abraham Halpern, said the insanity defense should be abolished because it is unfair to all participants.

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Killer refused more immunity

HOUSTON — Admitted mass killer Coral Eugene Watts will not be offered immunity in return for information about unsolved killings in the Detroit area, authorities in Wayne County, Mich., said.

However, the former bus mechanic and diagnosed woman-hater confessed to killing 12 women in three cities in Texas and one woman in a Detroit suburb after authorities in those areas promised him immunity from prosecution in exchange for the information.

Authorities said he is a suspect in two other slayings in the Detroit area and 20 attacks in Michigan and Windsor, Ontario.

Dominick R. Carnovale, chief prosecutor of Wayne County, Mich., said Tuesday that authorities there would not strike the same deal with Watts.

"We are not willing to offer him immunity. If we can make a case, we will charge him. That's what we're supposed to do," he said.

Authorities have said Watts is suspected in the November 1980 hanging of Lena J. Bennett, 63, of Harper Woods and the Dec. 1, 1979, stabbing death of Helen M. Dutcher, 36, of Detroit.

Carnovale said a team of detectives is reviewing dozens of other unsolved killings of women similar to those committed by Watts to determine if he might be linked to other cases.

Assistant District Attorney Ira Jones said authorities in Windsor, Ontario and Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo, Mich., also refused to grant immunity to Watts.

Watts is scheduled to be sentenced Friday to 60 years in prison on a burglary charge as part of a pre-arranged plea bargain with Harris County prosecutors.

Nigerian student put on probation

HOUSTON — A Nigerian man was sentenced Wednesday to five years probation on charges that he attempted to smuggle ammunition and handguns to his homeland, officials said.

Kristian Chimah, 30, a student at Texas Southern University, pleaded guilty to one of two charges in exchange for the probated sentence. He had been charged with making false statements to customs agents.

Federal officials said Chi-

mah, who has been in jail since his May 28 arrest, was caught attempting to smuggle 1,050 rounds of ammunition for the .22-caliber pistols to Lagos, Nigeria.

Officials said a form filled out by Chimah stated the items he was shipping to Nigeria were household goods.

Chimah said he has not yet been contacted by the Immigration and Naturalization Service concerning possible deportation.

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