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Canadian victims take the CIA to court

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When it became obvious, a couple of years into the suit, that a guilty conscience was not likely to goad the CIA to a satisfactory settlement, Mr. Rauh hitched his litigation to the Canadian Government, hoping it could shame the Americans into paying up. His reasoning was simple: "If an American congressman's wife had something like this done to her at the behest of agents of a foreign power, you can bet that the U.S. Government wouldn't settle for 'expressions of regret.'"

Some Canadian diplomats and bureaucrats did genuinely sympathize with the plaintiffs (early this year Ottawa awarded them an ex gratia payment of \$180,000 to help with legal costs). But the action that ended up counting the most counted against Mr. Rauh's clients.

The Mulroney Government commissioned Halifax lawyer George Cooper to determine whether Ottawa bore any liability as a consequence of its own financing of Dr. Cameron's research. His report, released in 1986, basically exonerated the psychiatrist and found that the Canadian Government bore no legal or moral responsibility for his research.

The CIA immediately entered the entire three-volume report as evidence for the defence, and persuaded some of Mr. Cooper's panel of psychiatric experts to testify as defence witnesses in the trial.

On Tuesday morning, Mr. Turner and his new co-counsel, Len Rubenstein of the Washington-based Mental Health Law Project, will present the case before District Court Judge John Penn. The mission is twofold, he says. "First, we want to try to right the terrible wrong that was done to these Canadians, and the way you do that in our system is by means of monetary compensation. Our second objective is to try to impose a judicial curb on the excesses of government agencies."

To Mr. Turner it is clear that it is the CIA that will be on trial. But the person on trial in the minds of his former patients is Ewen Cameron, a man who wanted to win the Nobel Prize but suffered posthumous vilification instead.

Yet Dr. Cameron did not hide what he was doing — it was played out in full view at the country's foremost psychiatric institute, and detailed reports on the treatments undergone by his patients went to their referring physicians. He made no bones about his ambitions — to lick schizophrenia, to win big for psychiatry any way he could — and was unrepentant when the shoddiness of his research techniques was pointed out to him.

He had good big intentions, but



Dr. Ewen Cameron

hurt people brutally in the relationship between doctor and patient. He said he revered freedom and memory above all else, yet he systematically attempted to apply the mechanisms of brainwashing to the treatment of mental illness, wiping out memory and freedom in the process.

Dr. Cameron knew the temptations thrown in the way of psychiatrists in the Cold War mood of the fifties. In his address as outgoing president of the American Psychiatric Association in 1963, he actually issued a warning: "Our knowledge of human nature, our techniques for the exploration of motive and memory, if torn from their framework of professional integrity and proper concern for the individual and for the community, may, their use perverted, become the most deadly weapons yet directed against the dignity and serenity of human life."

Apparently he never questioned his own "professional integrity and proper concern."

The \$64,242.54 he received from the CIA between 1957 and 1960 allowed him to escalate and intensify his research, but there is no doubt that he was using all the controversial techniques before any of the agency's money came his way. In one sense that makes the case against the CIA more compelling. It must have known exactly what it was doing when it decided to finance Dr. Cameron.

But to get to the heart of the man, and to judge him, is not easily done in a court of law. For both his good intentions and his brutal excesses were bound up not in demands made on him by the intelligence agency but in the desires and dreams of his profession: the desire to help and the temptation to make people better, even against their will.

Anne Collins' book, *In the Sleep Room: The Story of the CIA Brainwashing Experiments in Canada*, will be published late in October.