
SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

*Status Report
on Psychiatry*

"Psychiatry: Dead or Alive?" by Alan A. Stone, in *Harvard Magazine* (Dec. 1976), P.O. Box 301, Uxbridge, Mass. 01569.

In 1960, "as many as one out of 300 Americans was involuntarily confined in a state mental institution," reports Dr. Stone, a Harvard psychiatrist and vice president of the American Psychiatric Association; the ratio is now only one in 2,000.

Better, quicker care is not the only reason for this change. Since the mid-1960s, Stone writes, an "anti-psychiatrist crusade" by civil libertarians in the courts and state legislatures has restricted treatment techniques and confinement of the severely disturbed; Stone sees too ready acceptance of lawyers' claims that "we can solve the problems [of the mentally ill] by giving them their freedom and nothing more."

Moreover, in the early 1970s, psychiatry faced other problems. The profession suffered from bitter internal disputes among transactionalists, existentialists, gestaltists, sex therapists, group therapists, behavioralists, and neurobiologists. Finally, a new "social psychiatry" blossomed with the notion that most mental illness stemmed from job trouble, racism, sexism, the atomic threat, and the like, and hence almost "everyone can do with some treatment." This "elastic" approach, Stone notes, almost destroyed psychiatry. Fortunately, he adds, the approach is now more realistic; and the nation's 25,000 psychiatrists have begun to focus on their real mission: treating those who suffer from "incapacitating mental illness."

*How Volcanoes
Change Climate*

"Volcanoes and the Climate" by Owen B. Toon and James B. Pollack, in *Natural History* (Jan. 1977), P.O. Box 6000, Des Moines, Ia. 50340.

In 1815, 12,000 people died in the Dutch East Indies when the Tambora Volcano exploded, spewing ash high into the sky. The following year, New England and parts of Europe endured a "year without summer," with record cold weather destroying crops and causing famine and mass migrations. Were the two events connected? Many scientists believe so, say Toon and Pollack, climatologists with NASA's Ames Research Center in California. Most experts agree that a large volcanic explosion can cause bad weather for a few years but there is disagree-