

But there appeared to be a direct conflict between doctors on either side of the Atlantic.

British doctors to whom we spoke seemed to welcome the logic of the court's decision. American doctors engaged in pioneer Transsexual research expressed dismay.

The April Ashley ruling, said a sex doctor who has been closely concerned with sex change operations in this country, "actually improves the situation."

"People in this predicament have never been in doubt about their sex. They know what sex they are and they recognise surgery does not change their sex."

## Illogical

But in New York, Dr. Harry Benjamin, an endocrinologist and author of *The Transsexual Phenomenon* said that in his mind 34-year-old April Ashley was for all practical purposes a female.

"The Judge's ruling is terribly illogical," he said. "It is a very inhuman decision, because these people after the operation live as women."

"While we should be very careful and very conservative in advising the operation, once it has been done we should do all in our power to make life easier for them."

"The High Court decision is terribly backward, unscientific and inhuman. Chromosomal tests are pure-

ly a technical thing and of no practical value.

"In practical life the definition of a man is a person who has male sex organs. April Ashley has a vagina—so she is a woman."

"It is a terribly cruel thing to render a decision like that. It is a good thing that there are so many people in London who will support her."

The British doctor said: "These people live in a half-world of reality, mixing with other misfits because they cannot mix with people we regard as normal."

"Everyone else is different from them, a normal pattern of life doesn't apply to them

# What happens now to the April Ashleys?

by

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and yet they appear to be exactly what they seem."

Sex change operations do not miraculously solve such shattering problems. Life, for them, is just as difficult as before, but at least it IS life.

Psychiatrists believe that such operations at least pre-

vent mutilation and suicide.

More than 1,000 operations have been performed throughout the world in the past 17 years, perhaps 50 to 100 in this country.

Most of the patients were men who, like April Ashley, looked, felt, thought and behaved as women.

The medical world, or at least the psychiatrically enlightened section of it, encourages such people to assume the role they feel.

"It is the only suitable way of treating their problems," one of them explained. "It is the only method of relieving their immense distress."

And sex change opera-

tions have shown a general improvement in their social adjustment.

The leading centre for transsexual treatment in New York is at the John Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. There, a team of surgeons transform people in a three-to-four-hour operation.

They remove organs, construct artificial penes and vaginas and can even build breasts with injections of polyethylene plastics.

Ninety per cent. of the patients who have the operation are males wishing to assume the characteristics of a female. They undergo a rigorous examination by the hospital's "gender identity committee" before being wheeled into the operating theatre.

Dr. Howard Jones jr., a gynaecologist and obstetrician who sits on the committee, discussed the High Court ruling.

## Definition

"There are various ways to identify sex, and I have been interested to find that in American law although 'male' and 'female' is frequently used, nowhere in the law is there a definition of what male and female is."

"If you don't know what male and female is to start

with I would think it difficult for a judge to change something that hasn't been defined.

"Sex can be identified in a number of ways—by chromosomes, by identification of the gonad, examining to whether it is testes or ovary, by examining the genitalia, external and internal, and by looking at the hormones."

"The sex an individual considers himself to be is an equally important factor."

"If an individual considers themselves to be female, you have not got a clear-cut case of someone being male or female. Therefore, it is not a matter of changing sex."

## Foolish

"It isn't the operation that changes the sex, the operation merely reinforces a decision that has already been made. One who is familiar with this particular problem soon comes to the conclusion that you can't disregard the fact that someone believes he is a female."

America's most famous sex-change case involved Christine Jorgensen (nee George Jorgensen), an ex-G.I. photographer.

Miss Jorgensen's career has been similar to April Ashley's. Now aged 44 she appears in cabaret.

She viewed yesterday's ruling with dismay.

"The judge must be a cop out. It's a very foolish move because it just isn't going to stand up. At this point of the game I hope Miss Ashley appeals against the decision. They obviously have not properly considered the medical aspects of the case."

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