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Perjury Count On Ex-Convict To Be Sought

Felony Charge Possible Against Tuccillo, Held In State School Beatings

District Attorney Sidney O. Simonson will ask a grand jury tomorrow to indict Ralph Tuccillo, 48, who in the past has spent time in state prison and a mental institution, alleging that Tuccillo is guilty of perjury and violating the state civil service laws.

The demand to be placed before the grand jury by the district attorney is one result of Simonson's investigation of the personnel system at Willowbrook State School, after he learned that Tuccillo had been employed there as an attendant last January without discovery of his past record.

The situation came to light when Tuccillo was arrested Aug. 20 and was accused of striking two children in the school with a broom handle. He is at present out under bail awaiting disposition of that charge, but it is not upon tomorrow's grand jury calendar.

Cites Statements

Instead, Simonson said today, he will charge before the grand jury that Tuccillo committed perjury when he made statements under oath Jan. 23 in his application for the job at Willowbrook. Such a charge constitutes a felony and the district attorney said he will ask in addition a misdemeanor count of violating the state civil service laws in the same connection.

Tuccillo, whose home is at 298 Bay street, Tompkinsville, applied for the state school job under a false name. He stated also that he had never been in a state prison or a mental institution.

His fingerprints were taken at Willowbrook, but due to incorrect information typed on the fingerprint card the applicant's past record was not discovered in a print check at the State Civil Service Office in Albany.

Simonson has not yet given out his conclusions from the investigation he conducted a week ago today at his office. Officials and employees of Willowbrook State School were questioned by the district attorney's assistants and some of these probably will be witnesses tomorrow before the grand jury.

Willowbrook Criticism 400 Workers Protest

By STANLEY TERKELSEN

Stung by recent criticism of Willowbrook State School since an ex-convict was discovered there as an employe, workers of the institution last night drafted a letter to the public in an effort to combat what it called "the false impression that the school is a natural haven for criminals and the socially undesirable."

More than 400 employes turned out for a meeting on the school grounds, and heard members of the institution's Board of Visitors and its benevolent society, the counterpart of a parent-teacher association, express their confidence in the school's entire staff.

The rally was in effect a showing of support for the school's director, Dr. Harold H. Berman, whose regime has been a target of criticism since Ralph Tuccillo, 48, an ex-convict with a criminal record

dating back 20 years, was arrested last Aug. 20 on a charge of beating two boys with a broomhandle.

The arrest was followed by a probe into the institution's hiring system by District Attorney Sidney O. Simonson. Tuccillo apparently had worked at the school under an alias for seven months. Tuccillo a Stapleton resident, and an ex-mental hospital inmate, is out on \$2,500 bail pending grand jury action.

The letter, prepared by a committee and read to the employes by Mrs. Ethel Stevens, an instructor of nursing, states that "we... direct this letter to the general public in vigorous protest against the unfair publicity recently given to this institution."

"The inferences," the letter continues, "have tended to create a false impression that the school is a natural haven for criminals and

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the socially undesirable... understand the tremendous amount of good the director and his staff are successfully doing, disagree wholeheartedly with this opinion. We are taking this means of expressing the other side of the story.

Refers to Children

"Willowbrook State School is a home for the defective child. There are thousands of children with bodies and minds that are crippled. These children in public life are faced with insurmountable difficulties and many heartbreaks. On the other hand they find happiness, security and loving care at Willowbrook.

"Regardless of the capacity in which we are employed we are all trying to do our best with the welfare of the 'children of all ages' foremost in our minds. Could this be true if our administration and our employes were as lax as have been pictured?

"Our feeling is that the time has come when the need and the desirability of such work be recognized by the surrounding community and judged on its own merits. Visitors are and always will be welcome at the school. We urge the public to come either singly or in groups and see the progress being made by these children.

Director, Staff Lauded

"We the employes of Willowbrook State School take this opportunity to commend our director and his capable staff. We know of their interest in the welfare of our children and that their hours are not regulated by the clock but by their concern for the children above the call of duty."

Of the plaudits directed toward the workers by several speakers, most warmly received were those of representatives of the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children of Willowbrook State School. The society's members are parents of residents of the institution.

Louis Hultz, president of the society said the children at the institution receive as good care as can be given anywhere outside the home.

"Stating that I won't think any more of perjury in the future... criticism, whatsoever, against the staff and workers," Hultz said, "I hope you will continue to do as fine work in the future as you have in the past."

Workers Commended

Other commendations of the workers came from Irving Redler and Irving Lesnick, also of the society.

Redler called for a fair treatment of the hospital and its employes by the press, who he said should try to temper any tendency toward "yellow journalism" with a desire to fulfill its "duty to bring forth some of the good things."

He suggested that "perhaps resentment that the Veterans Administration has been moved out" has caused some of the attacks against the school.

The plant of Willowbrook State School, originally erected as a school for retarded children, became a hospital for GI's during World War II, and was used as a hospital for ex-servicemen for a time following the end of hostilities.

Confidence Expressed

Former Judge Ernest C. Smith, president of the hospital's Board of Visitors, expressed for the board its "absolute confidence in the integrity, ability and sincerity of every employe, from Dr. Berman to the scrubwomen."

Operation of the hospital was lauded similarly by two other members of the board, Frank Pavis and Edward Gideon. Pavis, in addition, expressed his admiration "for the workers backing of Dr. Berman," but warned, "don't lose our heads. In the end we'll win out."

The meeting was under the chairmanship of James Lindsey, and was opened by a short talk by Mrs. Catherine Webb, who said that recent attacks were attacks against the integrity of the school's workers.