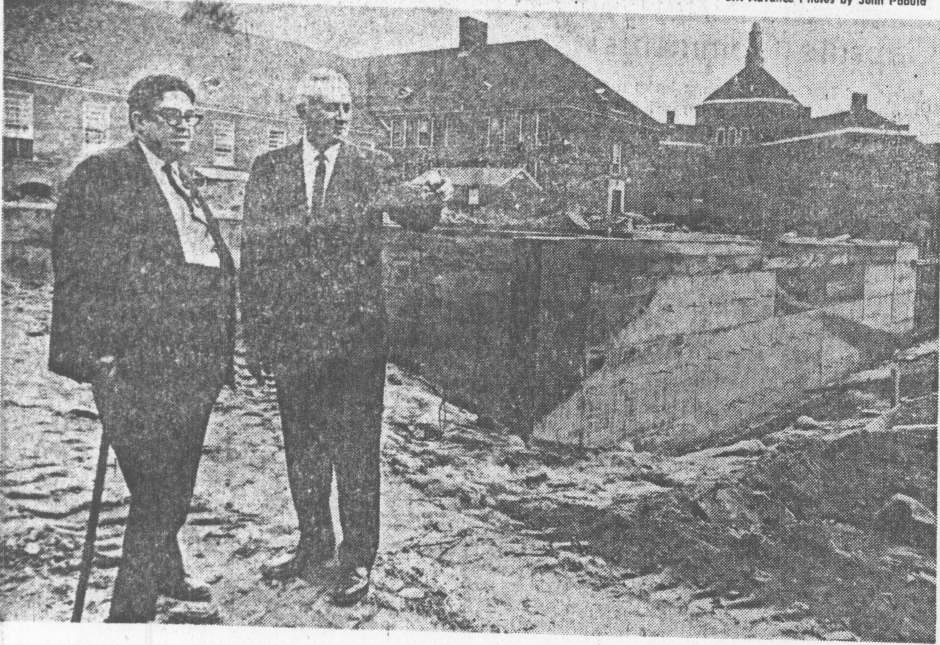


(over)

Dr. Jack Hammond director, answers questions during a press conference called to answer accusations of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy about the "intolerable" conditions at Willowbrook State School.

S.I. Advance Photos by John Padula



Dr. Hammond, right, and Ernest C. Palcic, senior business officer, point out construction underway at Willowbrook to add additional classrooms to its school building.

Senator's School Blast Draws Mixed Reactions

By JULIE SUMMERS
Reaction from officials and parents to Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's criticism of Willowbrook State School was both critical and favorable today.
Parents of patients at the school have one thing to say, while others in the "those who know" group say another.
Kennedy, who visited the school unannounced described what he had seen in a statement prepared for the Joint Legislative Committee on Mental Retardation.

"I have often said that the place is a snake pit," she commented. "The board has tried to correct conditions, but we don't get any cooperation from the Department of Mental Hygiene at all."
She agreed with Kennedy's

statement that there is understaffing at the institution.
"Of course, there is the problem of understaffing; also of not proper pay," she said. "The staff numbers are so small that the children cannot be taken care of adequately."
* * *
C. ERNEST SMITH, chairman of the Board of Visitors, disagreed with the senator and Mrs. Ellis on most points.
"I'll admit that conditions are

Among his statements about the conditions at the Staten Island institution were assertions that there are overcrowding and understaffing, children "without exercise, appetite or strength," and many living in filth and rags.
* * *
ACCORDING to Mrs. Jerome Ellis, a member of the school's Board of Visitors, Kennedy speaks the truth.
"I agree heartily with everything he said," she remarked. "The conditions at the school are terrible. Dr. (Jack) Hammond (director of the institution) came in last year under intolerable conditions. He is trying very hard to improve the

state of things here, but he's not having much luck."
Mrs. Ellis contended that "it is politics; you have to go through so much red tape," that any action finally taken is negligible.
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(Continued on Page 8)

What RFK Said:

The first shock waves of Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's blast at conditions under which the retarded live in state institutions shook the schools he described—Willowbrook and Rome State Schools. The Staten Island facility was particularly singled out for withering criticism.
The full text of his message before the meeting in the Bronx of the Joint Legislative Committee on Mental Retardation and Physically Handicapped added up to a much wider indictment for the "intolerable" situation.
"At the outset," Kennedy

began, "I want to make clear that all of us bear full responsibility for these people and for the lives they lead!"
He went on to say: "The recognized standards for these institutions are here in a pamphlet of the American Association on Mental Deficiency. You can open it to almost any page and measure another way in which we fail to meet these standards."
* * *
"BUT BECAUSE we know so much—because we know how much can be done for the re-
(Continued on Page 8)

S.I. Advance
September 10, 1965