

## HOSPITAL'S GOALS ARE MODEST ONES

### Gouverneur Tries to Make Life Easier for Retarded

By McCANDLISH PHILLIPS

More than 200 mentally retarded children are housed in wards at the old Gouverneur Hospital at 621 Water Street on the Lower East Side, and hope there is measured in terms of modest goals.

If a 4-year-old child who has always been fed flat on his back takes food in a semi-sitting position, that is a triumph. The triumphs are few.

The children there are "non-verbal." They don't talk. They are "nonambulatory." They can't walk. Most are in what was once called "the imbecile and idiot range, but now we call them profoundly and severely retarded," a physician explained.

Gouverneur, a 73-year-old municipal institution, was closed by the city in March, 1961, as antiquated and inadequate. The state soon rented it as an annex to the Willowbrook State School for the mentally retarded on Staten Island, which was overcrowded.

Willowbrook and other state schools were criticized by Senator Robert F. Kennedy on

Thursday as "a reproach to us all."

Yesterday afternoon Dr. Jack Hammond, director of Willowbrook, invited the press to take an unlimited look at conditions in the five-story brick building near the East River waterfront.

A very pale boy of 4 with abnormally thin legs lay in a narrow bed in a second-floor ward. Dr. Hammond was asked if such a child would have to spend his entire life in bed.

"The prospect is that this child will never walk," he said. "He has severe cerebral palsy and a scissors deformity of the legs. But perhaps some day he will be less spastic, more comfortable, easier to wash or dress."

One child in the ward was squeezing a noise-making rubber duck—Honk, honk, honk. Butterfly mobiles, fixed to the head bars of several beds, twisted slowly. Two white-clad women attendants were going from bed to bed trying to get each child to take a small plastic glass of apple juice. It was a task requiring great patience.

Dr. Harold Schiller, the man in charge at Gouverneur, said two things were necessary to work with such children: "Protective mentality, so you don't go home and weep as I did 21 years ago — and I was a doctor — and an empathy for the children. If you don't have them you can't remain in this work for long."

There are occasional rewards, he said.

"You walk along and all of a sudden you see a child who

has never shown any facial expression at all and you get a faint smile or a grin," he said. "He does not recognize you as you, but he does recognize a person showing some interest in him."

The objective, Dr. Schiller said, is to "do whatever you can to make their lives as pleasant as possible."

Gouverneur was reopened for retarded children after the state spent about \$100,000 for repairs. Dr. Hammond said a

staff of 592 employees cared for the 208 children there.

"This building, while it's old, is safe and clean and it's one of the few such institutions anywhere that is not overcrowded," Dr. Hammond said. "I would rather have these children here than shoved in on top of my crowded pediatric wards at Willowbrook."