

Rockefeller Enters Hospital Dispute

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Wants Retarded Children Moved

Gov. Rockefeller today insisted that the archaic and once-abandoned Gouverneur Hospital was meant to be used for mentally retarded children only as a "temporary crisis provision."

At the same time he said the turn-of-the-century Lower East Side institution—which was abandoned by the city in 1961—would be emptied of its more than 200 pathetic patients as soon as possible.

Despite this assurance from the Governor, however, Dr. Jack Hammond, who is in charge of the facility, said today it would be 10 years before

the children could be moved out.

Rockefeller, questioned on it, continued state use of the bleak and antiquated hospital, said he did not know when Gouverneur would be closed down.

"I will have to ask the Men

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Governor Enters Hospital Crisis

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tal Hygiene Department about their schedule," he said. "The money spent by the state to rehabilitate it makes it *useful* for the time being."

Rockefeller said that conditions at Gouverneur and Willowbrook "weren't just discovered."

"I've been to both of them myself," he said. "We could have avoided overcrowding just by not taking these people in."

Recommendations to expand facilities for the retarded were made in a \$310,700 seven-volume report submitted to Rockefeller during the week-end by an 800-member committee considering the problem for the past two years.

Hammond, director of Gouverneur's parent institution, the Willowbrook School on Staten Island, also ruled out transfer of the children to the Suffolk State School in Melville, L. I., when that facility is completed within a month.

Hammond said many youngsters from Willowbrook and the Bronx State Hospital would be switched to Suffolk, while children at Gouverneur eventually would be sent to a new Manhattan hospital for the retarded. The Manhattan facility would probably be ready in 10 years.

The official also said Gouverneur was still being used because Manhattan parents find it easier to visit their children there than at schools outside the borough.

A check of visiting records showed that about 30 to 40 parents go to the hospital each week to see their children. There are 208 youngsters. Many of them infants, at the institution.

Many of the children have parents, but were put in Gouverneur because Willowbrook was too crowded, Hammond said.

Despair Haunts Kin Of Retarded Tots

By MAXINE LOWRY

Of the World-Telegram Staff

"Why me? What have I done to have this happen?"

This anguished cry is the first reaction of most parents when they are told their child is mentally retarded.

These immediate feelings of guilt and despair are followed by the frantic, often expensive, always fruitless search for a more hopeful verdict.

"You spend as much as you can possibly afford to find someone to tell you it isn't true," said Mrs. Israel Epstein, whose retarded son died 12 years ago at the age of 9. "I went from doctor to doctor, convinced that he was suffering only a psychological block."

Mrs. Epstein is president of the Benevolent Society for Retarded Children, a volunteer group of parents who have or have had children in Willowbrook State School on Staten Island or its facilities at Gouverneur Hospital or the Bronx State Hospital.

It is not enough to tell parents that their child is mentally retarded; they must accept it. And that is never easy.

"Many parents become mentally disturbed over this and it's hard to know how to help them," Mrs. Epstein said. "I've known people who have given up something like smoking as a kind of penance for having a retarded child."

There is a "pitiful lack of counseling" available to such parents, she said.

She has been told, she said, that most medical students, unless they are specializing in mental health, receive only two hours of instruction in the field of retardation.

"So when you do have a child and turn for help to your obstetrician or pediatrician, he is unable to help. Often, parents are told that nothing can be done and to institutionalize the child."

There are severely retarded children who must be institutionalized because they need constant, round-the-clock care—an impossibility in most families, particularly if there are other children.

But there has been more effort in recent years to keep retardates at home whenever possible. Many, with the proper training, can hold jobs and live in the community; more could if more funds and instructors were available.

For parents whose children have not been trained or are untrainable, there is always the fear that the retardate will outlive the parents.

"I've been told many, many times that I'm fortunate that my son died," Mrs. Epstein said. "A mother told me just today that she prays every night that her child will die before she does. Who will care for him? It is a constant concern."