

News Summary and Index

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1965

The Major Events of the Day

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y., TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1965

The two Democratic majority leaders of the State Legislature have called on Governor Rockefeller to double the number of attendants in state institutions for the mentally retarded. The Democratic leaders said they would be willing to authorize Mr. Rockefeller to spend state funds for the emergency program immediately, without waiting for the Legislature to convene in January. [1:6-7.]

D.A. Asks Kennedy To Jury Session

District Attorney John M. Braisted Jr. said yesterday that he has invited Sen. Robert F. Kennedy to appear before the grand jury investigating conditions at Willowbrook State School.

The jury, which next convenes Sept. 22, is halfway through its probe of three accidental deaths at the institution for the retarded since last February.

Braisted, whose immediate reaction to the disclosures Kennedy made of "intolerable" conditions at Willowbrook and Rome State Schools, was that he knew about most of the things the senator described, said the invitation was issued in the hope Kennedy could "contribute something material to the investigation."

The prosecutor made an outright denial of a report that he had heard an eye-witness account from the mother of a Willowbrook patient concerning the beating of five patients by an attendant using a club last week.

"There is nothing to that at all," Braisted commented.

Assemblyman Lucio F.

Russo today said he received complaints of alleged brutalities at the institution several weeks ago from employes and immediately telephoned Acting Commissioner Christopher F. Terence of the Mental Hygiene Department at Albany.

He was told, he said, that District Attorney Braisted was conducting a thorough probe of

the charges, that the department was cooperating fully with the district attorney, and that he should await the outcome of the probe so it could be conducted impartially.

"I agreed completely," he said, "in the interest of fair play. Since a grand jury investigation was under way, I agreed to take no position until the grand jury could weigh all the facts in this unfortunate situation. Certainly Sen. Kennedy could not obtain a complete picture of the situation in one visit to the institution."

The assemblyman said he could only conclude, therefore, that the senator's sharp criticism of conditions at the institution, made at a hearing before the Joint Legislative Committee on Mental Retardation, "was motivated by politics rather than by a sincere desire to improve conditions."

Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller last night defended his administration's record in treating the mentally ill and accused his latest Democratic critic of hypocrisy.

The Republican governor said a master plan he recommended in 1962 was so outstanding it became a blueprint for a program presented to Congress by President John F. Kennedy.

Rockefeller made the statement in a letter from his New York office to Dr. George L. Wadsworth and Dr. Alan D. Miller, members of the State Planning Committee on Mental Disorders.

Later in Albany, Rockefeller's office released a statement in which he said State Sen. Harry Kraf, D-Bronx,

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Dems Cut Willowbrook Aid: Rocky

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was "shockingly hypocritical" in demanding more money to operate New York's schools for the mentally retarded.

The statement was the latest in a dispute sparked by remarks last week by Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y. Kennedy sharply criticized conditions he said he found in state institutions in upstate Rome and on Staten Island.

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ROCKEFELLER said Kraf "and the Democratic majorities" in the legislature this year eliminated \$3.5 million in operating funds for the Department of Mental Hygiene.

The funds were restored "upon my insistence and that of the Republican minority leaders," Rockefeller said, when the supplemental budget was passed in June. He said \$1.5 million of the total was proposed to enlarge staffs to care for the mentally retarded.

But the governor said the recruitment programs were held up for three months "because of these Democratic majorities' cuts in the original budget."

"No other state—in fact, no nation—can cite a comparable record of achievement," the governor wrote.