

New York World-Telegram

Specialist Brands Gouverneur Hospital 'Old and Rotten'

By FELIX KESSLER

A specialist intimately familiar with Gouverneur Hospital stated unequivocally today that the 67-year-old building was unfit for continued use as an institution housing mentally retarded children. "It's an old, rotten building,"

he said. "It should be torn down."
This man cannot be identified. He spoke freely to the World-Telegram but this newspaper is withholding his name. He has a thorough insider's knowledge of Gouverneur's program and its problems. He praised generously the

medical and physical care that the 208 young mentally and physically handicapped children receive at Gouverneur, but he condemned the building in no uncertain terms. "They should have torn it down years ago," he said. The expert said that the young children housed at

Gouverneur, an overflow from the almost 700 patients at Willowbrook State School on Staten Island, are being deprived of fresh air at the Lower East Side institution. The rusty, ancient balconies jutting the five-story building's rear wards are "unsafe," he charged.

The specialist bluntly denied an assertion by Dr. Jack Hammond, director of Willowbrook and Gouverneur, that children regularly are taken outside on balconies "in nice weather." "Not true," he said. "Not once in the past year were children taken out for air on any of these balconies,"

he said. "The children just do not receive fresh air."
The importance of fresh air for these severely handicapped children—most cannot sit up—must not be underrated, this specialist noted. "Their breathing capacity is less than 50 percent of normal," he explained. "When you

breathe deeply, your chest moves, but their chests do not. They need fresh air."
"If there is cross ventilation in the wards, there is a draft and the children catch cold," he went on. "At least half of them get respiratory infections. Gouverneur uses

Continued on Page 12