

Specialist Calls Hospital 'Rotten'

Continued From Page One

the same amount of antibiotics in a half-year that another hospital gives in one year."

The specialist charged further that Gouverneur's "basement is rotten" and he said "the roof leaks and the ceilings leak."

Problem Plumbing

"And the piping, the plumbing is no good," he said. "You can't tell the hot water taps from the cold—the cold from the hot. Sometimes you turn a cold tap and boiling hot water comes out. And sometimes there is no water."

He charged that the radiators heat up in the summer and cannot be controlled from within Gouverneur. The building's heating plant is across the street, in the Beth Israel out-patient clinic which was part of Gouverneur when it was a city hospital.

The State Department of Mental Hygiene leased Gouverneur in August, 1961, and pays a \$13,000-a-year-rental to the city. Under the lease the state is required to maintain the building and, to such purpose, spent \$6000 to repair the elevators and \$17,000 repaint and refurbish the building.

"The elevators are not good," the specialist said. "They are old, rotten elevators. They're always getting

stuck and there's always something wrong."

Furthermore, he said, paint is peeling off the walls.

"It holds for a while, but then it peels off," he said. "You can't paint old walls."

Not Fire-Proof

He also questioned the assertion that Gouverneur is a "fire resistant" building.

"I'm surprised at the Fire Department that they agree to these conditions," he said. "Doors are not safe. In case of fire, doors should be closed. But these doors cannot be shut tight enough."

"In the past, fireman just walked through Gouverneur quickly and that's it. Now, with all these articles, I understand they went and inspected the place again just the other day."

And the building gives off an odor of old age, he said. "When you walk into the building, you immediately

smell the thick walls. They are moist, because they are so old."

Despite these glaring deficiencies in Gouverneur's physical plant, he said, "children get no better care anywhere."

"The building is rotten," he said, "but the care is so good that you're in a dilemma."

He expressed the fear that, if the building were razed, another would not be built to replace it. He suggested that the state take over a nursing home or another hospital building in better condition to house Gouverneur's 208 mentally retarded children.

There was also praise for Dr. Jack Hammond, Willowbrook's director, for both his work and attitude toward caring for the retarded.

"If a child should die," he said, "Hammond wants a diagnosis immediately — and this is something that never happened before."

Hammond cracked down on the previous frequent practice of falsifying death records after becoming director, the specialist said.

"And there is an amazing thing," he added. "In four years, only 12 or 13 children have died at Gouverneur — one of the best possible records."

Saving Grace

From a medical standpoint, he said, "Willowbrook sends over the worst children — and they live at Gouverneur."

One of the saving graces at Gouverneur, he said, was the building's compactness. "If you have only 200 or 400 children, you can do a job," he said. "But how can they take care of children at a place where there are thousands of patients?"

"At some places, children are always being found dead in the morning. Not at Gouverneur."

"It is a difficult situation," he concluded. "Children get good medical care, attention, food — they gain weight — but the building is no good. If they were just to tear down the building and not replace it, then I say we must keep Gouverneur."

But when asked why the building should not be replaced, he replied reflectively:

"It's not necessary to have that building. It won't save the thousands who cannot get into Willowbrook. These children, you know, are entitled to the same air we breathe."

New York
World-Telegram

September 16, 1965