

Letters to the Editor of The Times

Care of the Retarded

To the Editor: The Times is to be commended for its accurate and comprehensive coverage of Senator Robert Kennedy's forthright, emotionally charged report of conditions in New York State schools for the retarded. It should be noted that parents of children housed there, who are members of associations affiliated with the New York Association for the Handicapped of Retarded Children and the National Association for Retarded Children, presented similar testimony to the Joint Legislative Committee. Two of the authors of the survey made for the Joint Legislative Committee whose "secret" report substantiated Senator Kennedy's charges are the parents of youngsters housed at Willowbrook State School.

The administrators and their staffs working at these hospitals have done their best within the limitations of inadequate budget provisions. They should be recognized for the high level of staff morale and the love they give to these children.

Parents of retarded children have been requesting correction of staff and budget inadequacies for years. Administrators have been frustrated in having to accept reduced budgets. Although parents of retarded children and others serviced by the New York Department of Mental Hygiene must pay for their confinement at the institution, the services rendered compare unfavorably with those given by the Department of Social Welfare to the blind (whose parents are not required to pay).

We hope that Senator Kennedy's talk and your comprehensive reporting of this situation will precipitate the implementation of improved services worthy of the dignity of each human being and in keeping with the responsibility of the State to care for the handicapped.

SAMUEL STRIZHAK
Brooklyn, Sept. 12, 1965

N.Y. World Telegram

96 Retarded Patients Due at Sunmount

Special to World-Telegram
ALBANY, Sept. 16—The first 96 of 460 mentally retarded patients who will be transferred to Sunmount State School at Tupper Lake will arrive at the new institution Monday, it was announced today by Christopher F. Terrence, acting mental hygiene commissioner.

About 40 of the patients to be transferred will be children from Willowbrook State School on Staten Island. Conditions at Willowbrook have been criticized by Sen. Robert F. Kennedy (D., N. Y.).

The remaining 420 patients will come from the Rome, Wassaic and Newark State Schools and Letchworth Village.

The Improper Arena - Editorial

A sincere concern for improvement in the welfare of the 27,500 mentally retarded under treatment by the state is commendable at any time, but a special preoccupation with it just before election is suspect. One wonders at the timing of the dramatic call on Governor Rockefeller by the Democratic leaders of the Legislature for a "crash program" in the care for mentally disabled youngsters.

The Governor was told he has only to give the word for immediate additional spending in this area and the Democrats will approve it when they meet in January. State Senator Harry Kraf of the Bronx, chairman of the Joint Legislative Committee on Mental Retardation, says Mr. Rockefeller may have for the asking a "certificate of intent." The flimsiness in this play to the grandstand is evident from the fact that it was primarily the Democrats who cut \$3.5 million from the proposed mental hygiene budget at the last session. The funds were later restored, but only after a delay in recruitment of badly needed rehabilitation experts and ward personnel.

The problems of the retarded are depressing, complex and tragic beyond words; by their nature they lend themselves to exploitation by politicians who find it easy to contrive exposés of conditions which are readily dramatized to impress a compassionate public. Certainly the care and treatment of the retarded must be constantly open for review and improvement, but very little courage is involved in turning it into a political issue.