

# Grand Jury Inspecting Willowbrook Wards

A Richmond County grand jury probing conditions at Willowbrook State School carried its investigation to the institution for the retarded today. In a separate development affecting the school, Gov. Rockefeller yesterday set a Dec. 1 deadline for relieving the massive overcrowding at the institution.

Members of the jury boarded a bus at 10 a.m. in front of Supreme Court to take them to Willowbrook for an on-the-spot inspection.

Officials at Willowbrook were not informed of the impending visit until shortly before the jury's departure, although Justice James C. Crane signed an order authorizing the trip last Wednesday.

District Attorney John M. Braisted Jr. accompanied the panel. Three accidental deaths at Willowbrook prompted the grand jury in-

quiry into conditions which recently have come under severe criticism.

**GOV. ROCKEFELLER'S** action involved giving the State Mental Hygiene Department a deadline to find additional facilities to relieve overcrowding.

The governor also reported on the progress of plans to increase the Willowbrook staff and to improve existing facilities.

Funds were provided in the

current state budget, which was adopted during the Legislative session.

One phase involves an allocation of \$430,000 to recruit a total of 84 additional education and therapy specialists. Rockefeller said this recruitment would begin immediately.

He said also that 60 students from the New York City area have begun training as practical nurses at Willowbrook and would help ease the shortage of personnel.

The training school previously had 40 students, he said, and \$40,000 had been allocated to expand the program.

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NEARLY \$1 million in improvement projects are under way at the school, the governor reported, with more than \$1 million more to be spent in this fiscal year on modernization and improvement.

Rockefeller said the Mental Hygiene Department had been requested to submit by Dec. 1 its recommendations for obtaining facilities in the New York City area that could be adapted for care of the retarded at a reasonable cost.

He said the department had begun searching more than a year ago for such facilities.

The governor said the opening of the Suffolk State School on Friday would help relieve overcrowding at Willowbrook. The Suffolk institution will have a capacity of 2,800. Rockefeller also commented that the needs of Willowbrook would receive "every consideration" in the 1966-67 state budget, which now is being prepared.

## The Point Is, It's Old

By all accounts, the care given retarded children housed at Gouverneur Hospital is good.

But this is not the point, which is that the building is superannuated and obsolete. It was in fact once abandoned, then reopened "temporarily" a few years ago when the state leased it from the city.

"Temporarily" has already been much

too long.

Relatives who visit children there describe the place as depressing. A specialist intimately familiar with conditions at Gouverneur goes further. He says:

"It's an old, rotten building. It should be torn down."

That's the central point. It can no longer be ignored.

*Editorial (20)*