

Willowbrook Chief to Testify About Deaths of 3 Patients

By MARK WIESNER

Willowbrook State School's director, Dr. Jack Hammond, tomorrow goes before the Richmond County grand jury investigating conditions at the institution.

The 49-year-old psychiatrist will testify before the panel investigating the circumstances of three accidental deaths in the facility for the retarded.

District Attorney John M. Braisted, Jr. said the investigation is expected to continue until the end of the year.

Despite the focus of atten-

tion on Willowbrook following Sen. Robert Kennedy's scathing denunciation of conditions there and Gov. Rockefeller's announcement of measures to aid the overcrowded institution, any significant easing of the situation is months away.

Dr. Hammond, who has been praised by Braisted for cooperating fully and for his efforts to raise standards at the institution, said that the opening of Suffolk State School last Friday will not aid Willowbrook materially for six months.

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ALTHOUGH Gov. Rockefeller

has set a Dec. 1 deadline for finding additional facilities for Willowbrook's overflow population of 5,900, it would probably take months to renovate them.

Even the proposal to provide portable facilities—on the order of portable classrooms—would take months to effect.

Hammond said that he was hopeful of filling half the additional teaching and therapy jobs approved by the governor within a year.

The grand jurors had a firsthand view of the complexities involved in seeking an answer

to Willowbrook's problems in their surprise visit last Wednesday.

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VISITING the scenes of the accidental deaths, they encountered conditions reminiscent of those Sen. Kennedy described.

But they also saw many positive things in Willowbrook's teaching program and the efforts made despite lack of personnel on all levels.

They came away with increased awareness of Willowbrook's problems, which will be reflected in its report when the investigation is at its end.

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HAMMOND was the one official who escaped criticism last night at the annual dinner of the State Association for the Retarded Children.

The organization presented a proposal to have a separate agency created for the care of the retarded and urged the abolition of fees families pay. It was claimed that the State Department of Mental Hygiene focused on mental illness over the years to the neglect of the retarded.

Hammond, who was credited with being an official striving to improve the condition of patients in his care, received a standing ovation.

The director gave a \$50 award from the association to Clarence Stevens as its outstanding employe. Stevens is a maintenance foreman there.

the controversy.

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