

Rocky Pledges More Buildings At Willowbrook

By Don Ross

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Gov. Rockefeller went on a one-day pulse-feeling expedition into Staten Island yesterday and, while there, announced that temporary buildings to relieve overcrowded facilities will be built at Willowbrook State School, now jammed with about 6,000 mentally retarded children and adults.

The Governor also said that spot checks of trucks coming from New Jersey to Staten Island and other New York points will begin in six weeks to prevent the arrival of material that haven't paid the New York sales and city sales tax. The Governor said he has heard from a Staten Islander that "smuggling" of non-taxed goods was rampant.

Willowbrook is the largest institution for the mentally retarded in the U. S. Two months ago, Sen. Robert Kennedy severely criticized overcrowded and understaffed conditions there.

Gov. Rockefeller denied yesterday that the Senator's widely publicized charges had prompted the temporary building program. Those familiar with the situation confirmed that the Governor and the State Department of Mental Hygiene had been working for some time to alleviate conditions at the institution.

Mr. Rockefeller made his announcement at Willowbrook after a closed-door meeting with the school's board of visitors. Details of the buildings—number, type, size and cost—have not been worked out, the Governor said, adding that it was hoped they could be put into operation by next spring.

The Governor also said that the Board of Visitors would look into the feasibility of raising fees from some of the city's low-income areas direct to Willowbrook. The inconvenience resulting to Willowbrook has accentuated a personnel turnover problem.

The money for the Willowbrook improvement is available, the Governor said. The temporary facilities, he said, would be expected to tide the institution over only until permanent improvements can be built.

The state is beginning a \$138 million program for building seven 1,000-bed schools for the mentally retarded around the state.

When he took office as Governor in 1959, Mr. Rockefeller said, overcrowding in state mental institutions was 33 per cent; it is now 21 per cent, while patients have increased by 16 per cent and

budgets by 46 per cent, he said.

The announcement on the spot checks of trucks was made by State Commissioner of Taxation and finance Joseph H. Murphy who, along with other Rockefeller cabinet members, accompanied the Governor. It came after a complaint by a Staten Island merchant that great quantities of building and paving materials are coming from New Jersey without paying the New York City 5 per cent sales tax that local suppliers are subject to. Bills of lading of the trucks will be examined in the spot checks.

The Governor's Staten Island foray was said to be the first of 15 similar one-day stands he will make in other communities to find out what people are thinking, in preparation for his annual message to the Legislature which opens Jan. 5. On Friday, he will feel the pulse of Plattsburgh and Monday that of Manhattan. The trips will also give Mr. Rockefeller more public exposure for his announced re-election bid next year.