

THE AREA

Mental Health—Rocky And Bobby Chided

An upstate Republican senator had impartially critical words to say yesterday about the public actions on mental health taken by Democratic U. S. Sen. Robert Kennedy and Republican Gov. Rockefeller.

The critic, Sen. George Metcalf of Auburn, had just been accredited to speak out on the subject by receiving the Adolf Meyer Award for "outstanding contributions in the field of mental health." He was one of five such recipients at the Alexander Krinsky Memorial Luncheon of the Association for Improvement of Mental Health at the New York University Loeb Student Center.

Sen. Metcalf said generally that neither Sen. Kennedy's recent publicized tours and criticism of New York's mental health institutions nor the Governor's announced five-year construction program had helped in solving the mental health problem.

Specifically, he called the Senator's visits to the state school at Rome and the Willowbrook school in Staten Island as a "fishing expedition," which provided an "emotional outburst" but no helpful information "which must precede real progress in the field."

As for Gov. Rockefeller's description of his projected program for 37 new installations as "the most comprehensive and extensive in the nation," Sen. Metcalf said it would be more impressive if accompanied by some action.

So far, he noted, ground has been broken for only one of 11 proposed 1,000-bed hospitals for the mentally ill and mentally retarded.

Willowbrook School

Commack—I, too, have visited the Willowbrook State School many times—not as a senator or congressman, or as a member of a committee to improve the evils of the world. I have seen it through the eyes of a mother, whose son now calls it his home. I am not blinded, however, to the conditions others have seen and reported. I know full well that the school is overcrowded and understaffed, and I am grateful others have alerted the public to these facts and hope they will be remedied.

But I also have seen something else that perhaps only a mother can see and I feel this, too, should be known. I have seen love and compassion in the eyes of the nurses and aides caring for my son. I have seen this love returned to them in my little boy's eyes, and no child, anywhere, can conjure up love just for visitors' day.

I think, perhaps, it is also time to praise—time to express a mother's gratitude to the staff now at Willowbrook. My son now has many mothers of many races and creeds but with the same common denominator—love.

—P.M. Hanlon

The County Irritant will print letters only from those willing to have their names appear in print. Street address and phone numbers must also be furnished for verification, but will not be printed. Newsday reserves the right to shorten letters for space.

—Editor

November 21, 1965 Newsday