

Willowbrook Aides Skirt Rocky-RFK Tiff

By MARK WIESNER

Almost steering clear of the controversy between Gov. Rockefeller and Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, Willowbrook State School yesterday honored the citizens on its Board of Visitors.

The only reference to the wrangle was an indirect one by Dr. Hammond, Willowbrook's director.

After recounting the programs and improvements slated for Willowbrook and the "strong support" the institution for the retarded had re-

ceived from the governor, Hammond said:

"The federal program for the mentally retarded for all 50 states is less than this year's operating budget for the New York State Department of Hygiene, less its capital projects.

"Other than that I have no comment on the federal business" he added.

Kennedy visited Willowbrook and Rome State Schools earlier in the year and reported scathingly on the inadequacy of care for the retarded. He is present-

ly embroiled in a dispute with Rockefeller because of his charges that the state failed to seek out money for the retarded that is available through the federal government.

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FOLLOWING yesterday's luncheon in Building 4 at the institution, Mrs. Shirley Epstein, president of school's Benevolent Society For Retarded Children, sided with the senator.

She maintained that the state had failed to tap available funds during the last two years.

Hammond, who has been praised from all sides for his administration of a much-overcrowded institution, said the Board of Visitors had supported his efforts to bring about improvements.

The board, which represents the community and is composed of unpaid appointees of the governor, backed his campaign at every turn, Hammond said.

The result has been additional staff, new programs and at least a beginning in the easing of overcrowding.

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THE DIRECTOR went on to say that the board had endorsed his request for pre-fabricated buildings on the school grounds and 10 of these, accommodating 300, were approved last week.

"They will be for wards of 30—not 90," he added.

Their cost will be approximately \$1 million, Hammond said later. The first five buildings are slated for completion next August and the remainder the following month.

A scroll was presented to former Municipal Court Judge C. Ernest Smith, who served until recently as president of the board.

Smith was praised as a man who "has done so much in so many ways for the community" in his more than 15 years on the board.

The presentation was made by William N. Braybrooks, his successor as president of the board.