

# THALER SAYS POOR IN CITY HOSPITALS ARE 'GUINEA PIGS'

## In State Senate Speech He Tells of Experiments on Patients Without Consent

By RONALD MAIORANA  
Special to The New York Times

ALBANY, Jan. 10—Senator

Seymour R. Thaler charged on the floor of the Senate today that municipal and state hospitals in New York City were performing medical experiments on indigent patients without their consent.

Senator Thaler, who said he had "searched his soul and conscience," made the following charges in an angry hour-long speech:

¶ Willowbrook State Hospital on Staten Island "took 500 mentally retarded children, 3 to 9 years old, and injected them with a live hepatitis virus because officials wanted to start a hepatitis research program."

¶ A 23-year-old woman at Harlem Hospital recently underwent a hysterectomy without her consent to demonstrate the operative procedure to internes and residents.

¶ Harlem Hospital provides therapy for youngsters with congenitally deformed limbs "except when internes and residents are being taught surgical procedure — then the children are sent to surgery for removal of the limbs."

¶ Five out of 1,000 alcoholics and derelicts taken to Bellevue Hospital died after the hospital took liver biopsies for its research program.

### Doctors React Swiftly

Mr. Thaler told his colleagues: "What I'm telling you is what responsible people are telling me. I'm not a doctor, but the reaction to Senator Thaler's charges was swift."

Dr. Anthony Shaw, chief of pediatric surgery at Harlem Hospital, when informed of the Senator's charges about removing children's limbs, declared: "It's the most incredible statement I've ever heard, it's beyond belief. It's not true."

Dr. Donald P. Swartz, director of obstetrics and gynecology at Harlem, said that "no surgery is performed at Harlem without the patient's signed consent." He added: "secondly, surgery is done for

THE NEW YORK TIMES, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 1967.

## Thaler Charges City's Hospitals Experiment on Indigent Patients

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

the patient's benefit and is not done to demonstrate techniques to internes or residents."

The administrator of Willowbrook State Hospital, Dr. Jack Hammond, said that no child had ever been put into a research program without parental consent. An experimental hepatitis program is now underway at Willowbrook under a grant from the Army.

"Hepatitis is a highly infectious disease in an institution like Willowbrook," Dr. Hammond said. "It is not as serious in children as in adults. None of the children inoculated have died. As a matter of fact, they have developed an immunity to hepatitis."

"We're not using the youngsters because they are mentally retarded, but because hepatitis is a particular problem at Willowbrook. We have the consent of the parents of every child enrolled in the program."

Mr. Thaler, in his speech, declared:

"The medical establishment has presumed to act as God over the health and lives of the medically indigent. I have the documentary proof. I have undergone a terrible inner conflict on whether to bring to the attention of the public that thousands of patients are being used daily as medical guinea pigs."

"How often are people used as guinea pigs without their knowledge and consent. The data suggest that the practice is widespread. Experiments are being conducted that are unrelated to the patient's condition. All of us [in the Legislature] have a problem: to determine whether our consciences ought to let this continue."

### Resolution Introduced

The Senator spoke from the Senate floor after introducing a resolution calling on the State Investigation Commission to "examine into the conduct, practices and procedures of the medical establishment."

Senator Thaler said that he was preparing to release documentation of his charges soon and to continue to do so "until society acts to impose restrictions on the actions of the medical establishment."

In the case of the young woman who underwent a hysterectomy at Harlem Hospital, the Senator said that he had been given the information by Dr. Clarence Hogans, whom he said was on the hospital's staff. Dr. Hogans could not be reached for comment.



United Press International Telephoto.  
State Senator Seymour R. Thaler as he entered the Senate chamber in Albany.

Mr. Thaler acknowledged that the injection of live hepatitis virus into mentally retarded children at Willowbrook reportedly was done with the consent of the parents. But he added: "I doubt whether the parents of 500 children gave their consent."

Most of the Senators sat quietly during Mr. Thaler's presentation. There was the usual chatting among some Senators, but often it was cut short when Mr. Thaler made an unusual charge or raised his voice to the breaking point in anger.

He said later that he had introduced the resolution simply to provide him with a platform to air his charges against New York City's municipal hospitals. "What do we do now," he said in an interview later. "Do we sit back and forget or do we do something?"

Senator Norman Lent, Republican of Nassau County, objected to the resolution on the ground it was a "blanket indictment" of all physicians in New York City's hospitals.

Senate Majority Leader Earl W. Brydges sent the resolution to committee. He said he did not expect it to be adopted because of other investigations into the municipal hospitals.