

By JANE KURTIN

A 21-year-old resident of Willowbrook State School was interrogated last week by two assistant directors of the institution.

Bernard Carabello, who suffers from cerebral palsy and is considered legally retarded, was called for questioning by Drs. Milton Jacobs and Manny Sternlicht Dec. 17.

Although he has severe motor difficulties, Carabello converses intelligently and lucidly and has become the friend of Dr. Mike Wilkins, a ward physician at Willowbrook.

It is this friendship, Carabello feels, which prompted Drs. Jacob and Sternlicht to question him in a manner which he claims was threatening and offensive.

In an affidavit signed by Carabello, and notarized by Robert Felt, an attorney for the Legal Aid Society, Carabello stated that he has been a resident of Willowbrook since 1953.

"Early Friday morning (Dec. 17)," the affidavit reads, "I received the message that Dr. Sternlicht wanted to speak to me in Dr. Jacobs' office.

"I went to Dr. Jacobs' office, where I met him and Dr. Sternlicht. Dr. Sternlicht began to question me about my association with Dr. Wilkins. When I told him that I would not answer any personal question about Dr. Wilkins, Dr. Jacobs began to yell at me and said: 'I am going to lock you up if you don't answer my questions.' After he threatened to lock me up several more times, I agreed to answer his questions.

"Dr. Jacobs asked me where Dr. Wilkins lived, who lived with him, and whether I had been in his home. When I again refused to answer these personal questions, Dr. Jacobs said that I had to answer these

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Subjected to quiz, resident declares

questions. I answered the question under protest.

Dr. Jacobs then asked me if I had any sexual relationship with Dr. Wilkins, which I denied.

"I was asked if Dr. Wilkins ever took me to Dr. Bronston's house (William Bronston, another ward physician) and whether I had ever heard Dr. Bronston mention anything about Dr. Hammond (director of the institution).

"Then Dr. Sternlicht questioned me about the letter I had written and sent to the Staten Island Advance. He refused to accept my statement that I had written it. When I persisted in my reply, Dr. Jacobs threatened: 'I will lock you up where no one can see you and you can't see anyone.'

"I was asked where I got to use the word 'worker' (Carabello's letter to the Editor referred to workers at Willowbrook) in my letter. He tried to get me to say that I learned to use that word from Dr. Wilkins.

"At the conclusion of the in-

terrogation, I was told not to tell anyone what had happened as it was 'confidential.'"

Dr. Jacobs has admitted that Carabello was questioned, but claims that the interrogation was initiated because "Carabello left the grounds of the institution without permission."

'NO NEED TO BLAB'

Denying that he questioned Carabello about any sexual relationship with Dr. Wilkins or that he threatened to lock him up, Dr. Jacobs maintained that he asked Carabello to keep the incident confidential because "there was no need for him to go blabbing it around.

"After all," Dr. Jacobs said, "Dr. Wilkins is a member of the staff. We wanted it confidential because a retarded person often does not repeat things as they are told to them in the true sense."

This fact, Dr. Jacobs said, did not influence his acceptance of statements made by Carabello during the questioning by him and Dr. Sternlicht.

"He's not a profoundly retarded boy," Dr. Jacobs said,

"he's mildly retarded and verbal and we had no reason to disbelieve the statements he made."

Dr. Jacobs conceded that Carabello was warned that he "would not be able to float around the way he does," if he did not answer questions during the interrogation.

Because he functions at a high level in comparison to the great majority of patients at Willowbrook, Carabello works at the institution during the day and socializes with other normal employees.

"For Bernard to be locked in a building," a social worker offered, "would be the end of him. Just imagine him being confined in a ward with patients who function at levels 30 to 40 levels below his."

Dr. Jacobs claimed that Carabello was not asked about Dr. Wilkins for any reason but to determine where he was when he was off grounds without permission, and who he was with.

"After all," Dr. Jacobs said, "he is our responsibility."

Dr. Sternlicht was not available for comment on his part in the questioning.