

Duryea to aid mentally ill, group head says after talks

Representatives of the Federation of Parents Organizations for the New York State Mental Institutions met with Assembly Speaker Perry Duryea Jr. yesterday in Albany.

Max Schneier, chairman of the federation, described the meeting as "highly encouraging" and quoted Duryea as saying that "he would do everything possible to help the state's institutions."

Schneier said that the presentation by the federation dwelled upon an evaluation of New York State's \$600 million appropriation for the Department of Mental Hygiene during the 1972-73 fiscal year.

"We explained to the speaker," Schneier continued, "that the information we solicited from Charles Palmer, deputy director of the budget, indicated that the state's financing of the Department of Mental Hygiene amounts only to \$414 million — not \$600 million as it commonly accepted."

"We found that parents and

relatives pay an estimated \$51.3 million of the budget and that Medicaid pays an additional \$177 million, leaving the state with the \$414 million figure."

"If, as Rockefeller announced," Schneier went on "the budget for the 1972-73 fiscal year for the Department of Mental Hygiene remains at \$616 million, it will wind up being \$25 million less to work with than the department spent this year."

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"This is basically because of the increase in salaries mandated by the Civil Service Commission and the increase in the cost of supplies."

"We told the speaker," Schneier said, "that the \$25 million would buy still more inhuman conditions and needless deaths for mental patients."

Schneier said the federation told Duryea that it would request a "line budget" for the Department of Mental Hygiene that would be allotted for "the employes working directly with

the patients and not for the excessive administration at the Department of Mental Hygiene."

Also discussed at yesterday's meeting, Schneier claimed, was a plan for the formation of a commission comprised of national and international experts in the field of mental retardation — "exclusive of employes of the Department of Mental Hygiene" — who would come up with plans for the complete restructuring of existing programs in order to allow greater parent control of the state schools and hospitals.

"The final thing we took up with Mr. Duryea," Schneier said, "was the firing of Dr. Michael Wilkins and Mrs. Elizabeth Lee, a social worker at Willowbrook."

"We presented the speaker with 16 exhibits which make up the first completely documented evidence supporting our claim that these two loyal employes were fired without justification by Dr. Jack Hammond, director of Willowbrook."

"The speaker promised us that there would be a full investigation and that the issue would be discussed with Dr. Alan D. Miller, commissioner of the Department of Mental Hygiene."

Following the early evening meeting with Duryea, Schneier and the delegation met with T. Norman Hurd, operational executive for the governor, to discuss the reinstatement of Dr. Wilkins and Mrs. Lee.

"We made it clear," Schneier said, "that the parents want these two people back, the community wants these people back and that the federation insists that they be permitted to return to work at Willowbrook. Hurd promised us that the case would be brought before the governor."

Schneier said he was told that Dr. Miller will meet Thursday with Anthony Pinto, president of the Benevolent Society of Willowbrook State School, at which time he will give an answer about the reinstatement of Dr. Wilkins and Mrs. Lee.