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# Experts at Trial Decry Neglect at Willowbrook

By MORRIS KAPLAN

Two expert witnesses said yesterday that the care and treatment of residents at the Willowbrook State School for the Mentally Retarded was "thoroughly inadequate" and led to mental and physical deterioration.

The evaluations, given before Judge Orrin G. Judd at a Federal District Court trial in Brooklyn, were based on recent visits to the Staten Island institution by a Wisconsin nurse and a Georgia physician.

Both criticized the school as a desolate reservoir of widespread filth, neglect and inadequate food and staff.

They testified in behalf of parents and the New York Association for Retarded Children, which are seeking a temporary injunction to compel Governor Rockefeller, the State Department of Mental Hygiene and Dr. Jack Hammond, the school's director, "to provide just minimally adequate care."

### More Funds Planned

Governor Rockefeller conferred earlier yesterday at his offices here with leaders of 20 statewide organizations on the budgetary and educational needs of the handicapped. The Governor indicated that he would introduce in his annual message to the Legislature provisions for the allocation of additional funds for the mentally handicapped.

According to Max Schneier, chairman of the Federation of Parents Organizations, a group concerned with the care of patients in state mental institutions, the Governor said he would seek \$10-million to be spent in the next three months as well as an enlarged budget in the next fiscal year. The funds would be allocated from an anticipated state surplus, Mr. Schneier reported.

The Governor also indicated, Mr. Schneier reported, that some of the recent adverse publicity about Willowbrook was not justified and had been "sensationalized." He contended, moreover, that positive steps were being taken to alleviate conditions.

### 'Tragic Situation' Described

The court, meanwhile, heard testimony deploring as "inhuman" the conditions for most of Willowbrook's 4,900 residents. Qualifying as an expert witness without challenge by the State Attorney General's office, Dr. James Clements, president-elect of the American Association on Mental Deficiency, said he had spent three days last month

and last Sunday visiting 16 of the institution's 27 buildings.

Dr. Clements, who is also director of the Retardation Center in Atlanta, and a former consultant to the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene, declared that Willowbrook did not provide a minimum level of custodial or treatment care.

He said it was his belief that patients there "deteriorated both mentally and physically." Describing his last visit to Building 16, a so-called "baby building" for children under 10 years of age, he recalled "one very tragic situation."

A young Roman Catholic priest paced in circles about one of the four enclosed "pens," with youngsters clutching his arms and legs, "eager to make verbal contact," he said. The children, he went on, were "being dragged through their own feces."

No attendant entered any of the four pens, which measure 10 feet by 20 feet and contain about 25 children each, he reported. Rather, he continued, attendants on the perimeter of a four-foot wall "pushed back" those children who tried to climb over it.

### 'Employees Watch TV'

Dr. Clements said he saw a child "covered with vomit." The inmates' only entertainment, he contended, was a television set for each pen, "but the children did not watch... the employees did."

Dr. Clements said he did not inspect the other "baby buildings," because the nurse in charge of the other units had told him that Building 16 "was the best of the baby buildings."

Mrs. Patricia C. McNelly, director of nursing at Central Wisconsin Colony and Training School in Madison and a consultant to several mental retardation programs in the nation, called Willowbrook "one of the worst I have ever seen." She spent three days there last month.

"There's no use of new techniques or approaches," she said. "There's not enough staff. There's not enough food or supplies. It's filthy."

Mrs. McNelly, who also evaluates institutions for the Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation, found that residents were "just allowed to deteriorate."

The New York Civil Liberties Union and the Legal Aid Society are pressing the case. The trial will continue today.