

Willowbrook's POST 090221972 Chief Testifies

By JONATHAN HEDMAN

The recently appointed director of Willowbrook State School testified in Brooklyn Federal Court today that overcrowding, staff turnover and "inefficient" administration have resulted in inadequate services.

A program was under way, he said, to make patients' needs the prime aim.

Dr. Miodrag Ristic, who was appointed Willowbrook director Oct. 5, told the court that more than half the attendants had quit in their first year, and that there were too many residents to receive "adequate service."

"Our major problem is that there are nearly 5000 residents and we don't have enough space, staff or services for them," he said.

Being Broken Up

Ristic, educated in Yugoslavia and England, said that Willowbrook administration was being broken up into 10 units to make it more responsive to residents' needs.

"An organization of this size tends to do its work in the most efficient way, and that is not always the best thing for the residents," he said.

Parents of some residents and two mental health organizations are suing before federal judge Orrin

Judd to force the state to provide "minimally adequate care" at Willowbrook.

Dr. John R. Browne, director of the State Health Dept.'s Bureau of Nutrition testified for the defense that he visited Willowbrook for two hours last Friday and found "no serious malnutrition."

But when attorneys for the Willowbrook children's parents showed him recent photographs of the facility he picked out five residents "who appear to be malnourished."

"It reminds me of a concentration camp," he remarked as he looked at a picture of a resident with spindly arms and legs lying listlessly on the floor.

Two-Hour Visit

Browne said that during his visit he had squeezed skin-folds under the arms of many residents to determine the amount of fatty tissue under the skin, normally an indication of the nutritional status of a person. He said he had drawn no conclusions about possible vitamin deficiency among the residents.

"I only touched one who had no subcutaneous fat and less than 10 who had a minimal amount," he said.

Browne was asked to take the tour by the State Mental Hygiene Dept.

