

Group warned some responsible for 'massive human abuse' Big institutions for retarded kept going by vested interests, U.S. doctor says

By KATHLEEN REX

Charges were made at the American Association on Mental Deficiency conference yesterday that big institutions for the mentally retarded aren't being phased out because too many people have vested interests in keeping them going.

William Bronston, a physician on education leave from Willowbrook State School on Staten Island, warned that the time has come to stop talking and take action to help the retarded in the institutions throughout North America. He called for alliances with the women's liberation movement, and others seeking equal rights "for the future of our society."

He said at a panel discussion that he had been in Willowbank 10 days ago and that the situation there was worse than when he left it despite an increase in the budget.

After the meeting he said that if the 98-year-old AAMD doesn't expel "those members responsible for massive human abuse and found in court hearings to be guilty of those abuses, it (the association) will explode in three years."

Delegates packed a rather small meeting room for one of several sessions being held concurrently. After the chairs had been filled, people sat on the floors and lined the walls and pushed out into the hall.

"How did a panel like this get into the AAMD?" someone in the audience called out good-naturedly at the beginning of the question period.

D. P. Biklen of the Centre on Human Policy in Syracuse, listed some of the problems that come to his attention in a single week: A mother, after

trying unsuccessfully to get her retarded child enrolled in an education program, sent a letter to the education authorities with a carbon copy to her attorney pointing out the child had a right to education.

"Other parents are challenging authorities for not providing their children with schooling," he said. "People who make the policies are at the top of the power triangle and the retarded children and their parents are at the bottom." The situation must be reversed.

"There can be no community experience for the severely impaired person unless we provide community services," Wolf Wolfenberger of Syracuse University told the meeting. "And it is not enough to include them in the services" Nor does integra-

tion mean putting too many retarded people among normal people, he said. "The most painstaking efforts must be made to provide supports for integration. Public attitudinal change is the only way to make integration succeed."

He had some specific suggestions. Many of the retarded are obese and clumsy in their movements. These are things that can be improved. There should be much more emphasis on grooming, and on clothing, and weight control.

Put seven people in a home on an ordinary street and the community will probably accept them, Dr. Wolfenberger said. However, don't call the community prejudiced if it objects when you try to set up a residence for three times that many on the same street.

Dr. Wolfenberger said "we've only scratched the surface in what we can do developmentally with the retarded." People once thought to be profoundly retarded may come to be considered only moderately retarded. "In time the entire curve may be changed," he said.

Stephen Newroth of Daybreak in Richmond Hill, said the mentally retarded person finds more fulfilment in his affections than intellectually. He leads a deeply sensitive life: "He is born for relationships and is never submerged in pursuit of sophistication and ambition."

Mr. Newroth said there now are about 40 Daybreak homes in the world.

Burton Blatt, of Syracuse University, was chairman of the meeting.



Wolf Wolfenberger