

It's your opinion

Choice was disappointment

I have sent this letter to Phillip J. Fitzpatrick:

"The purpose of this letter is to express my disappointment in the recent appointment of Mrs. Emma Coleman to the Board of Visitors of Willowbrook State School.

"Once again you have, in my opinion, failed to let yourself be guided by what I believe was the true intent of our Legislators when they wrote:

97.19 'In making appointments to the Board of Visitors, the governor endeavors to insure that the membership of each such board shall adequately reflect the composition of the community or communities served by the facility and that the membership of each such board includes some representation of the patients served by such facility, through nomination of relatives of patients or former patients or otherwise. At least one member of each board of a state school shall be a parent of a mentally retarded person.'

"The governor of this great state is isolated from the problems of Richmond County and must depend on you for assistance in choosing people who meet the criteria set down for appointment. The governor has also made it known to the Department of Mental Hygiene that he desires parent participation in the decision making processes involving

state schools.

"Emma Coleman's credentials and past work on behalf of the retarded are unquestioned. She, however, in the opinion of many young Staten Islanders with retarded children, represents the past and not the future for which they are striving.

"Emma Coleman in no way represents the patients serviced by Willowbrook.

"Emma Coleman has never received the endorsement of the Benevolent Society for Retarded of the New York State Association for Retarded Children, the recognized parent organization of this facility.

"While Mrs. Coleman is the parent of a community child who attends a special class it is questionable if her child is mentally retarded in the true sense of the word.

"You have in the past received the names of two persons for appointment who carry the endorsement of the parents. One of these, my wife, is in fact the parent of a Willowbrook child.

"It was interpreted by both of these individuals that your endorsement for them was forthcoming. Your endorsement of Mrs. Coleman is viewed by me as a failure to properly advise the governor and a clear

unappreciation of the problems of Willowbrook or the children serviced by it.

"I am truly hurt and disappointed by this decision and view it as a move made in favor of local politics and not in favor of the residents of Willowbrook.

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Willowbrook