

"On my first tour of the buildings with Dr. Ristich," Natarajan said, "The feces and urine were ankle deep in some buildings. People were naked. I said that must be halted."

The firing of Dr. Natarajan, a popular figure at Willowbrook called "Nat" by his associates, completes the sweep out of office of the three top-level administrators who had run Willowbrook for almost three years:

¶ Dr. Miodrag Ristich, the former director who was transferred under pressure Oct. 10, 1974, for what was termed "poor administration," a charge he denied emphatically.

¶ Donald E. Fleming, the former deputy director of administration who was demoted to personnel director last Sept. 16, taking a \$14,000 cut in pay. Fleming was demoted because he did not meet qualifications for the post.

¶ And Dr. Natarajan, who was hired by Ristich in 1972, served during the turbulent years when Willowbrook was the focus of massive press and public scrutiny and was the man in charge of all clinical programs. "He was as much director as was Ristich," said one source.

Dr. Natarajan's sweeping control over operations at Willowbrook began to decline shortly after Piepenbrink took over as director in March. The new director appointed five deputy directors—one for each borough—and the team leaders and unit chiefs of Willowbrook buildings began to report to those deputies, not to Natarajan.

Shortly after Piepenbrink came to Willowbrook, Dr. Na-

tarajan says, Regional Director Keill told him to talk "about your status" with Piepenbrink.

"We sat down and I said I had no problem with him and could work with him. I asked him then about permanent status. He said he would let me know. I wondered about my status at that point, Natarajan said."

Dr. Natarajan was hired by Ristich Jan. 18, 1973, as a provisional or temporary deputy director of clinical matters. In October 1974 Natarajan took—and passed—a civil service examination that made him eligible for a permanent appointment.

No appointment was forthcoming, however, a fact underscored by yesterday's letter from Commissioner MacArthur. "They waited a year to give this position," Natarajan said yesterday.

Dr. Natarajan and his attorney contend that, according to civil service law, if nine months pass without a canvass of the civil service rolls the provisional deputy director, if he has passed the state exam, becomes a permanent deputy director.

Under that reasoning, Natarajan would be permanent. The elimination of the post of deputy director, clinical, at Willowbrook, however, may throw a kink in Natarajan's legal plans.

"I would expect justice in America," Natarajan said, adding he intends to press the legal action. "I feel the courts will right this wrong."

Natarajan came to the U.S. in 1958 for a one-year fellowship at Harvard University, but ended up in private practice in the Midwest and even-

tually in the state mental hygiene system.

Dr. Natarajan said he fears now that many of the Willowbrook doctors who he has hired and who have worked closely with him will walk out or leave if he is terminated—a contention discounted by other Willowbrook observers.

Dr. Natarajan further feels that if he leaves, the medical care at Willowbrook will deteriorate. "He's entitled to his opinion," Piepenbrink commented. "I don't share it."