



Gov. Carey says hello to a resident at the Staten Island Developmental Center.

S.I. Advance Photo by Barry Schwartz

Politicking Carey promises 300 more jobs at center

By BRUCE ALPERT

Gov. Carey yesterday announced plans to hire 300 employees at the Staten Island Developmental Center to bring the institution for the retarded up to what he said are court-mandated staffing levels.

Capping off a morning of campaign appearances on Staten Island, Carey made the pledge during a speech to center employees in the Willowbrook institution's auditorium.

Earlier, the governor campaigned at the St. George ferry terminal, shaking the hands of hundreds of Manhattan-bound commuters and becoming involved in a squabble with Robert Gigante, Democratic candidate for state Senate.

Gigante, who has based a large portion of his campaign on his support for the death penalty, stood near Carey as he told a television reporter that State Sen. John J. Marchi is a man of "unusual courage" for his stand against capital

punishment.

Gigante's face paled as he listened to the remarks by the Democratic governor, who he said had his backing despite their differences on the death penalty. Later Gigante told Carey he was "hurt"

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that Carey praised his GOP opponent, while failing to mention his name.

In an interview, Carey, himself being criticized by GOP opponent Perry Duryea for his veto of a death penalty bill, said his praise for Marchi did not constitute an endorsement, "only admiration for his stand on the entire crime issue." Like Carey, Marchi says he is opposed to the death penalty on moral grounds.

"I am a Democrat and I support the Democratic candidate," said Carey, who quickly added that he has decided not to play a direct role in local legislative races.

During his two-hour appearance at the Staten Island Developmental Center, Carey pledged to allocate funds necessary for the state to conform with a 1975 court decree, which ordered improvements for current and former residents of the institution.

Carey said he agreed to hire 500 additional employees for state institutions in the metropolitan area, including 300 at the Island center, although he disagrees with a recent ruling by Brooklyn Federal Court Judge John R. Bartels.

Bartels, acting at the request of parents and others concerned with conditions at the institution, said the state had failed to provide minimum staffing levels required by the court decree.

"We will abide by that decision even while we realize that the overall staff-

ing ratio here is above the level required by the judgment," Carey said.

State Mental Retardation Commissioner Thomas A. Coughlin, who accompanied Carey on his tour, said that two-thirds of the new employees should be working by Nov. 15 and the remainder by Jan. 30. That is the date Bartels set for compliance with his order, in which he warns that Coughlin and Carey could be tried for contempt of court for failure to meet the staffing requirements.

During a tour of several residential buildings at the 382-acre institution, Carey praised the job being done by state employees and said he noticed "definite improvement" in the services being provided for the center's 2,200 retarded residents since his last visit two years ago.

Carey also praised the work of the United Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State, which last year began caring for 600 retarded residents in seven of the institution's buildings. But Carey said he backs Coughlin in his decision to regain state control over three of those buildings.

Coughlin said the retarded residents in the three buildings are not receiving "the type of quality care we all want" because state therapy aides employed in the living units have not worked well with UCP supervisors.

He reiterated yesterday his feeling that a switch to state control was the best way to correct the problem, but

said he would go along with any decision by Bartels, who must approve changes in the UCP operation.

Bartels will be asked to decide between Coughlin's proposal and a counterproposal by UCP and the Willowbrook Benevolent Society, a parent group, to replace the state employees at the three buildings with workers from the private organization.

At the request of several society members, who complained that Carey was only being shown the "good buildings," the governor visited two of the shared-staff living units.

When one parent told Carey that the floors were dirty, he bent down and placed his finger on the floor.

"There is some dirt on the floor, you're right," he said as he looked at his hand, now covered by a black smudge mark. Elin Howe, director of the institution, said the floors were more than 35 years old and difficult to keep clean.

Carey also complained that some of the buildings, including state-run living units, were poorly ventilated and "much too warm." Ms. Howe blamed the poor ventilation and heat on the institution's "antiquated" boiler system.

"Obviously, there is room for improvement," Carey said. "But we've made tremendous progress and I pledge to continue our efforts to provide humane care for the retarded."

During his visit to Willowbrook, Carey also said:

☐ The state will give employees who reported to work at the institution during the power blackout of July 1977 an extra day off for their "extraordinary devotion" to their jobs.

☐ The state will adjust a funding formula equalizing aid to mentally retarded and disabled persons who have not lived in state institutions. Currently, residents of state institutions for more than five years are entitled to 100 percent state funding at community facilities, while others receive 50 percent.



Mental Retardation Commissioner Thomas Coughlin, left, has Gov. Carey's attention as they tour the developmental center grounds in a bus.



Carey gets a gift — a balloon with the message "Hi Gov." — from a resident. Next to Carey is Assemblywoman Elizabeth Connelly.

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