

Judge blasts rampant abuses at scandal-plagued Willowbrook...



'A CHAMBER OF HORRORS'

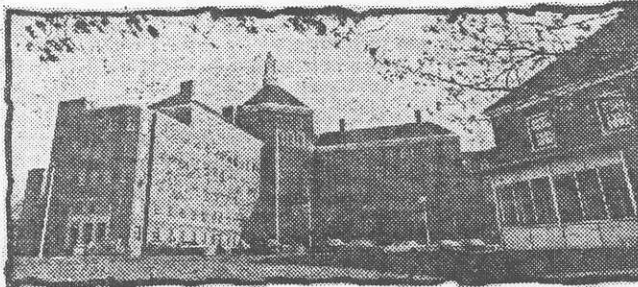
By JERRY CAPECI

A FEDERAL judge yesterday described the scandal-plagued Willowbrook center for the mentally retarded as a chamber of horrors which has gotten worse since conditions were first exposed a decade ago.

Brooklyn Judge John R. Bartels described virtually every area of patient care as inadequate — or worse — at the Staten Island Developmental Center.

In a wide-ranging and scathing opinion, Bartels ordered the state to correct rampant abuses "with all deliberate speed," and said he would appoint a special master . . . as the eyes and ears of the court."

"The fact that a job is difficult does not excuse its nonperformance," wrote



ABC News Photo

Willowbrook center: things have gotten worse.

Bartels.

The judge ruled that the state, which had agreed to correct living conditions and reduce patient population to 250 residents by April 1, 1981, had violated a 1975 order by a federal judge. The population now is 1300.

In April 1975, three years

after the New York Assn. for Retarded Children had sued on behalf of some 5343 residents, the state agreed to "make extensive reforms at Willowbrook with regard to environment, staffing, programming and various types of therapies."

Bartels acknowledged

that "some efforts" were undertaken, but stressed, "Clearly, [the] defendants have not done enough.

"The evidence shows that during the last two years at Willowbrook, sanitation in the remaining buildings, rather than improving, has steadily deteriorated."

The judge found that conditions at other facilities in all the boroughs to which Willowbrook patients were sometimes sent "were not markedly better" and directed state officials to correct conditions in those facilities.

In his decision, Judge Bartels covered the areas of sanitation, maintenance, clothing, programming, special therapies, recreation, nutrition and staffing ratios.

Dossier of shame

HERE is a summary of the judge's report, which runs to 70 pages and amounts to a dossier of shame:

SANITATION:

"Sanitation at Willowbrook is totally unsatisfactory and presents a serious health hazard to the resident population. Of particular concern is the filthy condition of the kitchens and bathrooms.

"Both the main kitchen, where the residents' food is prepared, and the satellite kitchens, where

the residents' food is served, are filthy and infested with rodents and cockroaches.

"Cups, bowls, silverware and pots and pans are improperly cleaned and often caked with food from past meals.

"Food is served to residents at inappropriate temperatures that encourage food spoilage and the growth of microorganisms, and food storage areas are dirty and foul-smelling.

"Sanitation of the bathrooms in virtually

every residential building at Willowbrook is grossly inadequate.

"Human feces and urine commonly soil bathroom floors, walls, toilets and shower stalls. Non-operational and unflushed toilets filled with human excrement are frequent occurrences, as are cracked and missing toilet seats, and bathrooms without toilet tissue, towels and soap.

"Mold and mildew, in-

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