

April 21, 1975

Conditions within W.S.S.H. have become intolerable and life - threatening for both the employee and resident!

Due to a most recent beating by a resident, occurring Saturday, April 19, 1975, and other numerous internal problems at W.S.S.H. have come abruptly to a head!

This Union Local 2324 - A.F.S.C.M.E. will no longer tolerate it's members or the residents to suffer these atrocities!

It is our position that Immediate Action be taken to house these abusive residents in a secure facility in order to protect the lives of their fellow residents, those employees responsible for their care, and to protect the residents themselves from self-inflicted injury!

Numerous programs are being implemented to prepare residents to live in the community. But are these residents ready for this step toward normalization? In most instances they are definitely not!! The very residents who are inflicting injury upon fellow residents and employees have been, or are being considered for placement in the community!!

Our residents and employees are quite frequently being assaulted, beaten and threatened by these more aggressive residents. These same residents have been allowed free reign throughout the institution, to come and go as they please on grounds. (They habitually frequent the office of the Acting Superintendent with the purpose of "tattling" on employees, and knowingly place these employees under suspicion by their tales. The residents are encouraged to report to the Acting Superintendent and their falsehoods are supported by the administration.)

2

(The residents involved are higher functioning and quite aware of the havoc they are permitted to create. It is their purpose to get the "employee suspended or fired" knowing full well they can accomplish this injustice.)

The employees of W.S.S.H. are working in a volatile atmosphere of assaults, beatings and accusations where no methods of restraint and/or physical protection exists. In this situation, the employee is virtually at the mercy of the resident.

To compound matters; contrary to any published material, W.S.S.H. suffers from a critical shortage of staff in all areas. Staggering amounts of overtime are being paid to augment the minimum coverage of staff in all departments. Child Care Aides work 7 - 8 days straight without days off, and then are asked to work overtime and/or on their scheduled days off. Long suffering Dietary employees are working at times, 14 hours a day and also on their days off to feed our residents, due to a lack of staff! Laundry employees can't keep up with the overwhelming amounts of soiled articles, which is also due to a lack of staff! Custodial employees are vainly trying to cope with just meeting minimum standards of custodial service, which again is due to a lack of staff.

The Governor has created a "Crash Program" of bringing in outside help in the Maintenance Department to clear up work that hasn't been done, due to a loss of Maintenance Department positions, which is attributed to abolishment of positions to save money.

Safety of the residents has long been the concern of the employees at W.S.S.H., but little or no attempt has been made to alleviate congested overcrowded units. Wheel chair, hyper-active, and total care residents have been placed above ground-level floors in the Clinic Building creating another problem. Can these residents be safely evacuated in case

of emergency or fire, by the limited amount of staff present on these units.

The very lives of the resident and the employee are in jeopardy. Quantity and Quality of services rendered are being jeopardized by the callous actions of Governor Milton Shapp. Governor Shapp is the man who mandated an Austerity Program some months back in which 2300 positions are to be abolished. This man is guilty of perpetrating a hoax upon the people of this state if he continues to espouse the "cover up" of the pressing needs of the residents and also those of the employees. It would seem that the recent deaths of two residents would dictate enlarging the staff so that situations like those never could occur again. By reducing the staff, its efficiency and by placing greater burdens upon these dedicated people it becomes quite clear that the Governor is not in the least interested in serving the people of this state who are not in a position to "do anything" for him.

Who, aside from the patient, client, and the resident, and public, are going to lose by the irresponsible and imprudent acts of Governor Shapp. Governor Shapp and his "legislative buddies" will continue this sort of action throughout our system of state government unless we, the people put an end to it.

The members of this Union implore you, the public, to become concerned and more aware, and to give additional support to us in our quest to adequately maintain human life with the dignity and the rights as guaranteed by the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, as amended.

Virginia R. Chopak President
Virginia R. Chopak, President A.F.S.C.M.E.
Local 2324
Western State School and Hospital