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SECRETARY'S OFFICE

MAY 30 1973

DEPT. OF PUBLIC WELFARE

131128. Scribner Ave  
Harrisburg, Pa. 17101

May 28, 1973

Ret. to ~~Director~~

cc Rep.

Dear Secretary Wohlgemuth:

I wish to thank you for what you are doing for the retarded in Pennsylvania. We have waited for years for some one to come to the aid of these unfortunate ones and try to get our Harrisburg Assembly and the public over the apathy about the conditions in the institutions where these people live.

I visited Polk in 1969 or 1970 and would like to call your attention to a condition that existed at that time which I felt was more important than the pens (which were bad enough). And that was mentioned by you. Fire traps. But the media have not mentioned it too often



We were taken on a tour of one of the old buildings at Polk. Built in the late 18 hundreds. We were taken up three flights of stairs (open stair wells) which were condemned in our public schools years ago. On the third floor we were shown a ward with 100 beds - and filled all the patients were in the adjoining recreation room. Many were severely retarded and completely helpless. There were two attendants for each 8 hour shift.

How could they possibly get these one hundred people out of the building if there should be a fire. They would have to be taken through a hall to the fire escape. The kind you slide down what if one become "stuck". How would anyone trying to rescue them reach them? the stairwells would



to literally a furnace of flames.  
blocking any help reaching them  
or taking them down the stairs.

Please continue your battle  
for these helpless people in  
spite of the criticism heaped on  
your head. Many of us will be  
forever in your debt.

I am a member of P. A. R. C., which  
has also done much to better the conditions  
for the retarded.

I am also a mother of a retarded  
adult who is with us at home. Too  
old for Special Education and she needs  
an activity center which someday room  
will be available - we hope.

Sincerely yours

Ruth E. McClure