



Venango County, Pennsylvania

Court House

Franklin, Pennsylvania 16323

COMMISSIONERS:

Joseph Levi II
Henry Mackey
Lewis A. Judson

COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE

April 24, 1973

F. Earle Magee, Jr.
Solicitor

Paul W. Flinchbaugh
Chief Clerk

Honorable Milton J. Shapp
Governor's Office
State Capitol Building
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

RECEIVED IN
SECRETARY'S OFFICE

APR 25 1973

DEPT. OF PUBLIC WELFARE

Ref. to _____

Dear Governor Shapp:

The Venango County Commissioners are very displeased by the discharge of Dr. James McClelland and disturbed by the manner in which it was conducted. We feel Dr. McClelland, the employees of Polk State School and Hospital and the Department of Welfare were victims on an immature inspection conducted by pseudo professional investigators. A two hour review of the premises could hardly be termed sufficient time for anyone to accurately and impartially evaluate possible irregularities at an institution the size of Polk let alone assess responsibility of acts of such magnitude that immediate dismissal would be recommended.

It seems to us after talking to Psychiatrists, Psychiatric Nurses and reading an article written by Dr. F. L. Bartlett of Haverford State Hospital who works with hyperactive individuals who are also retarded that there are only four ways, presently, to protect them or to prevent them from hurting others and they are: First, the use of a straight jacket; secondly, the use of heavy sedation; thirdly, the use of a padded cell, and finally the use of a protective crib. Let us review the methods as laymen, parents and concerned individuals see them.

1. The straightjacket immobilizes the upper portion of the body and constrains the normal use of the extremities, may cause skin irritation, the strap could cause strangulation, and the individual must be attended so he or she can be fed or have help doing other normal body functions.
2. Large doses of drugs make the individual a mere vegetable and unable to function as a human being.

3. Locking the individual in a padded room where there is no supervision of any kind and the confined person is all but forgotten and is subject to social sensory deprivation.
4. The last method is the crib where a person is still protected but able to move about and has the ability to see others but cannot be injured or injure others and with the ability of visual contact the person is not isolated completely from his society.

Of the four methods listed we, as County Commissioners, feel the last to be the most human.

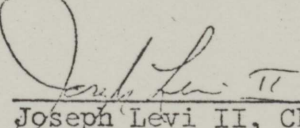
It appears that Dr. McClelland has become a victim of doing the best possible job under the most adverse conditions. If there is any fault to be laid it rests with the State, not only the Legislature but with this Administration and previous ones who have permitted understaffing and over population of a facility.

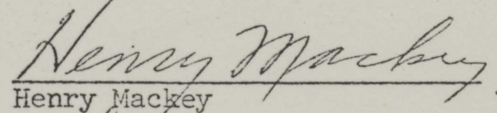
If this error of dismissal is not corrected immediately and with grace it can only create havoc with any progress this Administration has done in the area of Mental Health and Mental Retardation and all the Counties in Western Pennsylvania will look with great disfavor with those who let this travesty happen.

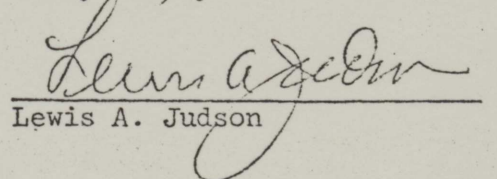
We, the Venango County Commissioners, hope the Secretary and the Department will reconsider the impulsive action and restore Dr. McClelland to his position and give him tools to work with.

Sincerely,

VENANGO COUNTY COMMISSIONERS


Joseph Levi II, Chairman


Henry Mackey


Lewis A. Judson

VCC:no

cc: Secretary Helene Wohlgemuth
Senator Richard Frame
Rep. Alvin Kahle