

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Polk Editorial Lauded

We have been watching with dismay all the heat, controversy, charges and threats being made by some of the supporters of the Superintendent of Polk State School and Hospital for the retarded. Until the publication of your editorial of April 24 in the Times not very much has been said about the residents of this institution and the conditions under which they are living. As the parents of a daughter who is a resident of Polk, my wife and I want to congratulate you on this excellent editorial. The facts set forth in the editorial are all too true and society as a whole and more especially the parents of the retarded must accept the responsibility for conditions as they exist there.

We are acquainted with Dr. McClelland and have on various occasions consulted with him on problems concerning our daughter. We have always found him friendly, considerate and easy to talk to. But we also know that the administration of Governor Shapp has been making more headway in reducing the population of our institutions for the mentally ill and mentally retarded than has occurred heretofore. We also believe that Dr. McClelland is entitled to a hearing and that he will get one. In the meantime, what about the crowded conditions at Polk and other state institutions for the retarded?

United Cerebral Palsy of Northwestern Pennsylvania has taken a positive stand on

the question of overcrowding in our institutions for the retarded and handicapped. On the advice of our State and National organization we have submitted a proposal for a Community Residence for the substantially handicapped. We were informed that there is money available from HUD for construction of such a facility. We submitted a proposal in two parts: for construction to MOCA; and for funding for the operation of the residence — to the Office of Mental Health-Mental Retardation. We plan a two-unit residence consisting of 12 residents to each unit. We feel that this is a good start in cutting down the population of state schools for the retarded because we are required to take one-third of our residents from Polk. We would like to point out that if every county which Polk serves would do this it would be a big help in reducing the population. United Cerebral Palsy of Northwestern Pennsylvania has received approval of their proposal for a Community Residence from Mr. Dan Hatton, MH-MR Administrator Erie County and also from Mr. Robert Vogt of the Meadville Office of the Department of Welfare, Western Region. However, the Citizen's Advisory Committee of Planned Variation has recommended to MOCA that our proposal be turned down on the grounds that the cost is too high for the number to be served.

United Cerebral Palsy has to

adhere to the guidelines required by the Department of Labor and Industry for the type of facility we are planning. It will be a nursing home type building with all safety features included such as smoke detection devices, sprinkler protection, etc. UCP feels that it is money well spent to provide adequate living arrangements for our more unfortunate citizens. Here then is a problem that your paper and the concerned citizens of this community can address themselves to — the establishment of priorities which will permit the establishment of such a residence. This too is one of Polk's problems — not enough money. Until society takes a good look and decides to do something really constructive for our handicapped and retarded more upsetting incidents such as happen at Polk will occur. This concern is long overdue.

Holmes H. J. Raudenbush,
Chairman
Long-Term Care Committee
United Cerebral Palsy
of Northwestern Pa.

cc: Secretary
Carskadon
Klein
Hockendoner

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