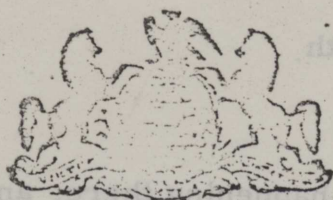


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## Washington County, Pennsylvania

FARRELL JACKSON  
CORONER  
TELEPHONE  
223-0100DR. ERNEST L. ASERNATHY  
PATHOLOGIST  
CHIEF DEPUTY CORONERCourt House  
Washington, Pennsylvania 15301

November 29, 1974

The Honorable Helene Wohlgemuth  
Secretary of Public Welfare  
Room 333, Health & Welfare Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Dear Mrs. Wohlgemuth:

I wish to register an official protest against the structure of the investigating personnel that you have sent to the Western State School and Hospital, Canonsburg, Pennsylvania at the request of the Governor's Office.

Very frankly, I do not believe that you or any of your co-workers should be given the authority to make this investigation, because I am doubtful that those who are involved can investigate themselves. You did not, as the Secretary of Welfare, nor your staff, have the courtesy to inform the Coroner of Washington County that an investigation was going on. The public and the parents of these unfortunate patients are not aware of an investigation and, therefore, I term it a 'secret commission' to more or less cover up the whole issue.

It is my personal opinion that you are a co-conspirator of the deplorable situations that exist at this institution. As the Secretary of Welfare, you have the full authority, and should have exercised this authority, to make sure that such tragic events that have occurred in this institution did not take place.

As the Secretary, and not recognizing the fact that the institution was overcrowded, is an error that is inexcusable on your part and not to provide the personnel needed to give the care and protection that each patient needs, and is entitled to, lies directly at your door.

My personal feeling is that the Coroner's Office of Washington County should not have been the one to bring these things to your attention; and if you allow people under your direction to run an institution who do not keep you fully informed, then you are not carrying out fully your duties as Secretary of Welfare.

The death of two at this institution, one of drowning and one of choking to death, and the recent rat-infested candy issue, leads this office to believe, and I am sure the public,



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that no one gives a damn what is happening there, and this includes you and your staff, and I am sure from what I have learned, there are many other issues in this institution that need immediate attention, and correction.

We in Washington County are quite surprised that you, being in control of the institution and its problems, allow it to be understaffed and overpopulated; yet in the same instance you demand from other people of the county government they eliminate these problems immediately in their hospitals and homes for the aged with the threat of prosecution if they don't. It is disgraceful you cannot carry out under the law what you demand others to do under the law.

As a public official I am tired of hearing of 'secret investigations' and 'secret meetings' and I know the public is of the same opinion in that respect. If you are not aware of the feelings of the public, it is time for you to come out of the glass tower of your office and see what is going on.

In conclusion, this is why I do not believe that your report by your staff is the proper thing for the public to accept under these circumstances and, upon the return of Governor Shapp, this office will make it very clear that we demand a non-partisan investigation into this institution.

Yours very truly

*Farrell Jackson*  
Farrell Jackson  
Coroner

FJ:jeh