

The Herald

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McClelland dismissal an unjustified act

Welfare Secretary Helene Wohlgemuth's abrupt dismissal of Dr. James McClelland as superintendent of Polk State School was reprehensible and smacks of something cooked up in a Star Chamber proceedings. At the very least, his nearly 30 years of dedicated service at the institution warranted somewhat more consideration than summarily to be handed his hat and shown the door.

Except for having incurred the enmity of some powerful interests, Dr. McClelland, in our opinion, has done nothing either to deserve such treatment or to be dismissed. One wonders how the Commonwealth hopes to attract and keep people of his caliber in these difficult and demanding jobs with such a policy.

Secretary Wohlgemuth's explanation that she ordered the dismissal because of Dr. McClelland's failure to act promptly in eliminating the use of so-called re-

straining cages is less than convincing. The cages in reality are oversize playpens commonly used for infants but in this case for older individuals who unfortunately in many cases are little more than infants mentally.

The alternative to the devices to prevent such patients from doing injury either to themselves or to others is the straitjacket, and this hardly seems an acceptable alternative. At that, Dr. McClelland never made any effort to conceal the devices and when ordered by the Secretary to abandon their use promptly did so.

Dr. McClelland has announced that he intends to appeal his firing to the state Civil Service Commission, and we believe he should. His history of dedication to his work at Polk (even Mrs. Wohlgemuth could find no argument with supporters on this score) is such that to permit this unfair and unjustified stain upon his record to remain would be tragic.