



NEWS

from

NANCY ZIRNGIBL
Public Relations Coordinator

ALLEGHENY COUNTY CHAPTER
of the
Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children
1001 Brighton Road - Pittsburgh, Pa. 15233

Phone: 322-6008

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Allegheny County Chapter of the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children has expressed its wholehearted support of PARC's President, Mrs. Patricia Clapp, in response to recent criticism of her actions by Reverend John A. Kirk. Reverend Kirk serves as Chaplain of both the Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children and Polk State School and Hospital whose Superintendent, James H. McClelland, was fired this week by Secretary of Public Welfare Helene Wohlgemuth.

Dr. Norman W. Mulgrave, President of the local unit, declared, "Reverend Kirk's attack on Mrs. Clapp is absolutely incomprehensible to us. Mrs. Clapp's efforts over the last 15 years in behalf of the mentally retarded have been recognized and honored by both professionals in the field and by the citizenry. Her leadership capabilities have strengthened the State Association to the point where it is a powerful force for positive change in behalf of the retarded citizens of Pennsylvania. To infer now that her advice to Mrs. Wohlgemuth was not substantiated with factual data and was not motivated by a sincere desire to improve conditions for the residents at Polk, is totally unfounded and unjust."

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Mulgrave continued, "It is difficult for us to understand Reverend Kirk's attitude since he has never been an active member of the State Association. According to PARC's records, he has not attended one meeting of the Board of Directors or Executive Committee since he became Chaplain last June."

Films taken at Polk depicting residents in witches' costumes, labelled with names of PARC officials, evoked censure by ACC-PARC spokesman, Dr. Mulgrave. "The bizarre costuming of residents for propaganda purposes is indicative of the low esteem in which some of the staff apparently regard these mentally retarded citizens. We regard this as a device to divert attention from the real issue which is the appropriate and humane care, treatment, and education of Polk residents."

President Mulgrave emphasized that the "cages" were not solely responsible for Dr. McClelland's removal as Superintendent. He explained, "We who have observed Polk over the years realize that it is not simply this latest incident that caused Dr. McClelland's removal, but rather a long history of resistance to new ideas, new programs, even a resistance to re-arranging the institutional population so that it meets Federal medical standards that

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would result in cash payments to the Commonwealth. For these and a multitude of other reasons, we have been convinced for some years that significant change could not be made under the present Polk administration. We applaud the courageous action of Mrs. Clapp and Mrs. Wohlgemuth."

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