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MONOPOLY

Burton Blatt
Syracuse University

March 15, 1976

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Special Education is big business. The Rand Corporation reported recently that government agencies expend 2.8 billion dollars annually to serve mentally retarded youth (Kakalik, 1973). Mental health is big business. Governor Carey has recommended a 924 million dollar Department of Mental Hygiene budget for the 1977 fiscal year, "part of the Governor's 10.7 billion austerity budget. . . ." (Mental Hygiene News, January 30, 1976, page 1). For those interested in the slope of data--the trend--the recommended Mental Hygiene budget may be contrasted with the 640.2 million dollars appropriated in New York State for fiscal year 1973. Institutionalization is big business. The 1975 appropriation for the Willowbrook Developmental Center is approximately 62 million dollars, more than a 20,000 dollar expenditure at Willowbrook and at virtually every other state institution for the mentally retarded was less than 4,000 dollars a year. Even deinstitutionalization is big business, from those who are engaged in trust busting and monolith wrecking to others who create and manage community alternatives. There is no way to avoid the plain fact that special education-mental health-mental retardation is big business. On a typical day, on almost any day, one can find in the New York Times front page stories, Sunday features, Sunday magazine section cover stories, items in the news section, and items in the business section, each in some fundamental way related to the big business that is the Handicapped Industry (Blatt, 1976).

And it is sacred business too! How many people noticed that candidate Reagan's ill-fated 90 billion dollar federal budget cut proposal avoided assault on allocations for the handicapped. The Untouchables, our pariahs, have become holy Untouchables, for the most part segregated and without normal context and opportunities but surrounded by government and philanthropic agents committed to protect to the last their right to be different, with that right to be backed by the dollars. In this modern era we insist on creating certain problems and

also expend whatever outrageous resources are necessary to support those problems. Shades of John D. Rockefeller, Standard Oil, and his Foundation. Welcome, this new super philanthropy.

The handicapped are big business, but more like the game of Monopoly than the work of people who sell or buy or grow or invent. Like monopoly, the Handicap Business appears unreal, the money seems more like paper, the promises aren't really meant and few take them seriously; the monopolies are easily constructed and almost as easily destroyed, and this moment's idea is the next moment's joke; today's victory may well be tomorrow's embarrassment as it was yesterday's bit of pornographic imagination. When Rockefeller, Carnegie, Mellon, and the other boys invented the Philanthropy business--an industry that came to be almost as powerful, more influential, and much more beloved by the people than Standard Oil and U. S. Steel--their efforts led not only to significant changes in the curricula of our schools and universities but in the extent and manner that government aids those in need. Prior to the turn of this century, most of the schools and all of the universities were uniformly devoted to the classics, the sciences, and the learned professions. Big business taught us that they could also be used to teach people how to do a job, how to earn a living, how to contribute to business, which one former President was wont to tell us is America's business. Big business has also taught us how to organize our philanthropies to serve the people and, furthermore, how to organize the people--the State--to serve both business and philanthropy.

This is America. There is enough for everyone, for the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick, the sound and the unsound, the philanthropic person and the business person. What difference does anything make? This is America. We're all alike, philanthropist and business man. Some data:

Item In 1965 Governor Rockefeller embarked upon a five year 500 to 600 million dollar mental hygiene construction program, part of a master plan for the mentally disabled (Legislative Commission on Expenditure Review, 1973). Forty major projects were approved at a construction cost of 320.3 million dollars. Furthermore, the program included an additional 188 million dollars for modernization of existing facilities, plus 100 million dollars to help construct community mental health facilities. As of 1972, 23 of the original 40 major projects had been completed or were under construction; these exceeded cost estimates by 50%, 94 million dollars, a discrepancy that construction inflation is unable to account for. When the revised total plan is implemented, 28 projects will have been completed at a cost of 343.5 million dollars, 23 million dollars over the original estimate for all 40 projects, and with but 48% of the original number of beds planned (not an unmixed curse, if you know what I mean). When everything is said, constructed, and explained---and if there are no further delays, inflations, union demands, or bright new ideas---the 7,500 beds that will be the basic products of Governor Rockefeller's master plan will cost the taxpayers of New York State approximately \$45,000 per bed for construction and approximately 1-1/2 to 2 times that amount additionally (\$65,000 to \$90,000) to meet fund obligations, to pay off the banks and the foundations and the other bond holders who "own" those facilities. But that is another story.

Item A recently completed study by the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene, unpublished but documented, disclosed that residents in group homes for the so-called mentally retarded incurred expenditures of \$6,700 per annum, while institutionalized residents required \$34,000. The data are difficult to believe, especially after visiting Camp Hill, or L'Arche, or any number of normalized communities or homes, and then contrasting those visits

with observations in Willowbrook, Belchertown, or even the spanking new Syracuse Developmental Center. "Segregation" isn't the only issue. Willowbrook is segregated. So too is Camp Hill. But so are Austria and Switzerland.

Item A recent report issued by the New York State Assembly Joint Committee to Study the Department of Mental Hygiene (1976) revealed that family care requires \$7 a day and residential services for the mentally ill or mentally retarded costs from \$50 to almost \$90 a day. And, although family care and other community placements may incur additional educational and other treatment services, just as frequently such services may be available from existing city, county, or state programs.

There are fixed costs, some of gigantic dimensions, not accounted for in the above discussion: pension costs, government and other grants, various kinds of interest rates, costs that are so hidden that even the most penetrating search has yet to uncover them. The question that returns to us again and again is: Why does New York State--other states--continue to construct and support segregated places? We commend you to think about the following: unions, for example, the 64,000 union employees of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene, an increase of 10,000 in little more than three years; contractors, builders, architects, real estate entrepreneurs, many people anxious to be business associates of the most affluent--"best"--purchasers of construction in any state, the state itself; merchants, manufacturers, contractors, the folks in business and commerce who would rather sell carloads of merchandise than run corner five and dime stores; and who wouldn't?

In 1963, also at the behest of Governor Rockefeller, our legislature created the Health and Mental Hygiene Facilities and Improvement Fund, an organization that has had several name changes during the ensuing years but has remained steadfast in its mission to execute the construction program of

the Department of Mental Hygiene (Legislative Commission on Expenditure Review, 1973). Its beginning responsibilities involved the Fund in completing work on a \$350,000,000 Mental Hygiene bond issue. However, since its January 1964 take-over date, HMHFIC (or you may use its new name, the Facilities Development Corporation), has spent over one billion dollars on mental hygiene construction. Financing is arranged through the State Housing Finance Agency, who issues bonds that are converted to the dollars necessary to construct our state schools and mental hospitals. Eventually, institutional and individual investors purchase these bonds because they are tax free and also because they provide the lender with a virtually fail-safe method to earn anywhere from 3-1/2 to 7% interest on his money. You must remember that these bonds are tax free (an important benefit to those in high tax brackets) and are very safe. The bonds are so safe that Standard and Poor and Moody have consistently rated them quite safe, even in the face of New York City's and New York State's various fiscal crises. One reason these bonds are rated highly is that all income to mental hygiene facilities---income directly from patients or their families and income from federal or third party sources, such as income from Title 19 of the Social Security Act---IS PLEDGED FIRST TO THE MENTAL HYGIENE FACILITIES IMPROVEMENT FUND; the bond holders must be paid first, as in any good business.

We have a problem. How do we convert segregated facilities for the handicapped and the elderly to useful purposes? How can these thousands of people return to normal community life without the state bankrupting itself in attempts to meet bond obligations and other commitments to the business community? First, we must recognize the depth and extent of involvement in the world of commerce of supposedly non-profit, philanthropic, and helping agencies. Secondly, we must seek to interest other clientele in segregated

facilities and programs we have erroneously created for the handicapped and the aged. A modest beginning may be to solicit discussion with penal officials and advocates for the reform of our penal system. The possibility exists that in the conversion of segregated facilities for the handicapped and the aged to open community opportunities there may be hope for the utilization of such facilities by individuals who are required by law to be segregated. Great strides may be made through such exchanges, both for current occupants and the new tenants. To complete the conversion plan, as each facility is evacuated by so-called mental patients, state school residents, and the aged, institutional operating budgets would follow the clients to the community as new agencies pick up program costs for the new tenants, then advocates for the prisoners would meet bonding obligations, and satisfy the unions, the merchants, the builders, and all the others who play the big business and monopoly game. It's simple justice.

In the beginning, the people created the state. Then the state did foolish things. Now the voice of the people must be heard.

Vox populi. Time is running out.

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