

# SYNANON TO CEASE OPERATIONS HERE

## Antinarcotics Center Needs \$500,000 to Stay in City

By LACEY FOSBURGH

The Synanon Foundation has sold its four-story brownstone at 35 Riverside Drive and plans to cease all operations here within 60 days unless it receives \$500,000 in contributions and a building large enough to house 100 people.

The decision to leave follows what the directors of Synanon describe as an eight-year unsuccessful attempt to establish the kind of rehabilitation program for drug addicts and other socially disoriented people here that they have developed in five other places elsewhere in the country.

Thirty-three-year-old James O'Brien, a former addict and an officer of Synanon, explained why the organization was planning to leave New York. "There's more drug addiction in New York than any place else in the country, and Synanon's here to help," he said, "But this city has consistently failed to take any positive action to show us we're wanted."

"We can't thrive in the middle of this kind of apathy," he said during a recent interview in the 12-room house, which was sold for more than \$100,000.

### Nationwide Organization

In its 12-year history, the Synanon Foundation has grown from a small storefront in Ocean Park, Calif., to a nationwide, multimillion-dollar non-profit organization.

Today its five therapeutic communities care for 7,500 former drug addicts and others. In addition, its owns property worth more than \$9-million in Santa Monica, Calif, making it the largest real estate owner there, and it is currently building its own city in Tomales Bay in northern California.

During its eight years in New York, however, Synanon has functioned on a modest scale, never establishing a self-contained community such as those formed successfully elsewhere. Two attempts to open such full-fledged centers in mansions in Westport, Conn., and Tannersville, N.Y., failed.

Primarily a recruiting center, the small, wood-paneled rooms on Riverside Drive are used to interview addicts who are subsequently sent to large treatment facilities in California. To date, more than 4,000 people have been sent to the West Coast from here.

In addition, seven former addicts, or residents, live on the top two floors and weekly about 200 people known as friends, who have never been addicts, come at night to drink coffee, paint and participate in "games," or lengthy group encounter sessions.

Although the friends are making last-minute attempts to solicit aid from public and private groups, Mr. O'Brien said that "unless there's a miracle," Synanon will leave in 60 days.

Unlike many other well-known treatment centers, such as Odyssey House and Phoenix House, Synanon receives no city, state or Federal financial assistance, Mr. O'Brien said. Consequently, the \$3,000 needed monthly to provide food, maintenance and supplies for the center comes exclusively from the friends' contributions, he said. Last year, the foundation nationally received about \$5,200,000 in contributions.

Mr. O'Brien said that the modest performance in New York no longer interested Synanon. "We'd like to see a true facility here and not just go on draining off all the dope fiends and doing the city a big favor," he said.

Although the friends recognize the apparent finality of Synanon's decision to leave New York, they have mounted a campaign to raise money and support during the last few weeks. At a recent meeting, for example, they donated \$71,033 among themselves and have spoken to political leaders, businessmen, real estate agents and addiction agencies, urging them to help.