

'Misuse of Funds'

SEE
4 MAR 75

From a Pardon To 3-Year Term

New York

Black self-help advocate Dr. Thomas Matthew, whose jail term on income tax charges was commuted by President Nixon four years ago, was sentenced yesterday to up to three years in jail for alleged misuse of Medicaid funds.

The 49-year old neurosurgeon said he would appeal the sentence handed down by Queens Supreme Court Judge Thomas Agresta, and was released on \$25,000 bail. Matthew took the sentence impassively but later charged the testimony against him was fabricated.

Matthew gained national fame as a strong supporter of Mr. Nixon and the head of NEGRO, the National Economic Growth and Reconstruction Organization.

He was charged with 71 counts of grand larceny stemming from alleged diversion of Medicaid funds from one NEGRO project, Interfaith Hospital in Queens, to other NEGRO enterprises, many of which failed. He was also accused of spending hospital money for trips to the Soviet Union.

Dr. Leon Lezar of the State Health Department testified that "the general hygiene and the sanitation of the facility were indescribably so bad as to render the facility unfit for human occupancy for any purpose."

He said he found one patient "obviously malnourished," and a second patient suffering from "severe undernutrition." Interfaith, he said, "Has no resemblance to a hospital, nursing home or health-related facility."

At a news conference after sentencing, Matthew charged that he was the victim of "character assassination because I will not be silent, I will not be contrite."

Matthew was imprisoned at the federal penitentiary at Danbury, Conn., from Nov. 10, 1969, to Jan. 5, 1970, before Mr. Nixon commuted his six-month jail term for



AP Wirephoto

DR. MATTHEW
'Self-help' leader

failing to file an income tax return for 1963.

Presidential press secretary Ronald Ziegler at the time called NEGRO "America's first and largest self-help program," and said that Matthew for several years "did not pay taxes in order to finance his program."

United Press