

# Senator Kennedy Joins Willowbrook Parents

**B**ECAUSE of his position as a United States Senator, Robert F. Kennedy was able to impress upon the conscience of the community all of the abuses in the care of the mentally retarded which the Benevolent Society For Retarded Children, The Parents Organization of Willowbrook State School, has been attempting to have the Department of Mental Hygiene correct for 16 long, hard years.

**F**OR THE last ten years, we have met annually with the Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, various members of his staff and directors of the state schools for the mentally retarded. At every one of those meetings the very conditions enumerated by Senator Kennedy, in his testimony before the New York State Joint Legislative Committee on Mental Retardation and Physical Handicap on Sept. 9, 1965, were pointed out by the parent representatives of our organization. We were told that we were unrealistic, too demanding and too emotionally involved. Strange to relate, not only Senator Kennedy, but the most recent report to the Governor, by the New York State Planning Committee on Mental Disorders (mental retardation section of vol. 1) substantiates every claim we have made concerning the inadequacies, overcrowding, lack of trained personnel and programs in the state schools for the mentally retarded, revealing the total lack of proper planning and total bankruptcy in regard to the retarded.

**T**HE CURRENT furor places Dr. Jack Hammond, Director of Willowbrook State School for a little over a year, in what appears to be a position of some responsibility for the creation of these conditions. The contrary is true. The conditions did not happen overnight, nor in the last year, but have been allowed to exist and intensify and multiply over the years. Upon assuming the directorship, Dr. Hammond took courageous steps to rectify the deplorable con-