

Mental hospitals under union fire

State mental hospitals, including Willowbrook State School, are faced with a succession of strikes beginning Nov. 18 by a union seeking to represent 50,000 mental hygiene employees at the institutions.

Council 50 of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, is seeking to force Gov. Rockefeller to permit health employees to elect a bargaining representative.

Last year Rockefeller designated the rival Civil Service Employees Assn. as the bargaining agent for state employees for a one-year interim period.

Recently he renewed recognition of the CSEA while a state Public Employment Relations Board recommendation for a collective bargaining procedure is under review.

The PERB recommended that the 150,000 state employees be divided into six groups for bargaining purposes, one of the groups to be health employees such as mental hygiene workers.

The strike threat was made public Thursday by Lillian Roberts, organization director for council 50's mental hospital lo-

cals, who charged that the governor had failed to live up to a pledge to allow representation elections.

"The primary issues are the right to mental hygiene employees to be represented by a union of their choice in collective bargaining and to have their needs—such as Council 50's demand for a \$6,000 salary—brought to the bargaining table," said Mrs. Roberts.

Mrs. Roberts said hospitals to be struck will be notified in advance and Rockefeller and other officials will be asked to evacuate those hospitals.

She said the institutions to be struck Nov. 18 will be announced next week. Plans are to follow the initial strike at one or more hospitals by striking another institution every few days.

The organization director claimed that a number of emergency meetings have called in the state mental hospitals following a mass demonstration Oct. 18 in Albany by 1,400 mental hygiene employees affiliated with Council 50.

At that time, according to Mrs. Roberts, the union presented its program, including demands for a \$1,500 across-the-board increase.