

# Probe started in Willowbrook payroll hassle

By FRANK HAGELBERG

A top aide to Gov. Rockefeller has notified dissident employes at Willowbrook State School that an investigation has been launched into "allegations of irregularities in the payroll procedures" at the state institution.

The action has been hailed by leaders of the protesting employes as the first "real result" of two weeks of meetings, picketing and trips to Albany.

In the letter, sent to Eager Smith, a Willowbrook employe who has led the current fight, John Hanna, chief counsel to the governor, confirmed that affidavits from employes containing specific charges of payroll mishandling have been received by the executive department.

Hanna noted that the offices of the state controller and attorney general are also looking into the problem.

Hanna added that the actions represented a move by the governor to handle the situation "in an appropriate manner." The letter was sent in response

to a telegram delivered to the governor's office more than a week ago by the workers, demanding a meeting with state officials to discuss payroll grievances.

Smith said the letter from the governor's office is proof that "our current problems are being understood for the first time." Smith explained that when workers had previously approached Hanna on similar problems, they were told to report to the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA) representative at Willowbrook, Thomas Delaney.

But Delaney, Smith said, is the payroll accountant at the school believed by many workers to be primarily responsible for the errors that have been committed recently, and therefore not the proper person to receive the complaints.

"The fact that we're not being shuffled off to see CSEA this time shows that someone finally has guts enough to come in here and investigate what these people are doing," Smith added.