

Willowbrook proposals

fail to end protest

By FRANK HAGELBERG

Proposals for rotating week-end work schedules, revised credit union procedures and a modified payroll stub were announced yesterday by the director of Willowbrook State School and an official of the state Civil Service Employees Association in answer to demands of dissident workers at the institution.

However, the leader of the protesting employes branded the announcement as a "half-way measure" not aimed at solving the primary grievances raised recently.

The proposals, some of which can be instituted locally and some which would require state and union action, were reportedly developed in a meeting between school and CSEA officials held at the school Monday.

Dr. Jack Hammond, director of the school, which administers care to more than 5,000 mentally retarded patients, said the change in the weekend work assignments will be considered in order to relieve a high rate of absenteeism among employes, particularly those working in patient wards.

"We have frequently considered the possibility of setting up a schedule which would enable service employes to get some weekends off, but up to now it has been very difficult to do this," Dr. Hammond said.

"We have to operate seven days a week and, among other things, on Sundays we have on the average 1,000 or more families visiting patients here at the school.

"The patients have to be fed and cleaned up and so on preparatory to the family visit," and the need for a full staff of employes has made it "just not possible to give Sunday off on a regularly scheduled basis.

"I just can't let everyone off on Sunday. I have human be-

ings to take care of," Hammond explained.

Mrs. Adele West, field representative for the CSEA, said the proposal would have to be initiated gradually following consultation with administration officials. She indicated the new program of work schedules would be a bootstrap operation, since the provision for free weekends would lower absenteeism, which would in turn provide more flexibility in employe scheduling.

"As it is now," Mrs. West said, "there are many cases of workers assigned to work every weekend calling in sick once in a while so that they can be with their families."

The CSEA official also said agreement had been reached on "divorcing" all operations of the federally-chartered credit union at the school from payroll operations.

All credit union business will now be conducted at a separate office outside the administration building, Mrs. West said. Employes of the union will administer business on their own time, she added.

The protesting workers have cited as one of the examples of conflict of interest at the institution the fact that Ernest Palcic, chief business officer

at the school, is also president of the credit union, and have charged that the proximity with which the credit union and payroll operations are conducted is unfair to the workers.

Eager Smith, leader of the protesting workers and president of the 300-member International Union for Advancement, said yesterday that moving the credit union's operations elsewhere did not satisfy a basic grievance of the workers.

"The employes are still being forced to join the credit union and pay interest on money they've already earned," Smith said.

He said the situation arose

whenever an incorrect check was received from Albany. Payroll officers withhold the check and "force" employes into joining the credit union, Smith said, in order to receive money for work already completed.

Dr. Hammond refused to comment on the credit union controversy, but indicated indirectly that he was in agreement with Smith's complaint.

Since 1967, he said, "I've been requesting that some mechanism be established so that the local agency can issue a check to employes when the state checks are incorrect, but to no avail."

Dr. Hammond said the establishment of a contingency fund would eliminate the need for use of the credit union on a regular basis.

Mrs. West said CSEA, also opposed to forcing employes using credit union services, would try and ease the burden by pushing for incorporation of credit union payments into payroll deductions.

Dr. Hammond also reported that officials of the state controller's office had told him new payroll stubs will be incorporated into all checks by the end of the year. The new check will indicate the hours being paid for, the pay scale, and will itemize all deductions, Dr. Hammond said.

In the meantime, Smith said his group is awaiting the issuance of paychecks tomorrow or Friday in order to see "whether anything's changed."