

Editorial

Extravagant economy

When the economy ax is swung, all too often it chops down the wrong public service tree. That's especially so in the decision to shut down the Neuro-Endocrine Research Unit at Willowbrook State School as a result of drastic budget cuts forced by the Legislature.

Willowbrook State School is home for some 3,000 mentally retarded persons of all ages, and a vital facility. But the research unit is equally vital, because it has been revealed that 42 of 92 patients at Willowbrook treated there in eight years have been returned to normal life outside the institution.

Dr. Max Reiss, a dedicated scientist who died last October, was the prime mover in the research program, and pioneered the use of hormones as a means of upgrading retarded persons.

The research unit costs the state some \$200,000 annually. Some of the services it has been providing will have to be continued elsewhere, so a large portion of that money must still be expended.

But besides that, how can one determine how much those 42 recoveries, and others that would be sure to follow if the unit were continued in operation, mean in financial savings to the state?

Many of them might have been permanent charges at Willowbrook without this new therapy. Hundreds more in the future may continue to be wards of the state without the opportunity for these treatments.

This ruling isn't economy. It's ridiculous.