

More Willowbrook cuts feared

By ELAINE BOIES

Front-page articles in the Advance depicting conditions at Willowbrook State School were not denounced last night by Mrs. Hannah Glasser, administrative director of the school's education department.

To the contrary, she began her talk to the Business and Professional Woman's Club by saying, "If they help to awaken the public and the legislators to the need at Willowbrook, they will have helped us."

Mrs. Glasser cited the loss of approximately 500 employes at the school as a direct result of the cuts in the state budget. Hardest hit are the areas of nursing personnel and ward services which, she said, "have seriously affected the patients' conditions at Willowbrook."

Mrs. Glasser said Willowbrook's practical nursing school and its research foundation are now closed, and added, "we are waiting with fear."

In view of the state's fiscal plight, she said, further cuts might be forthcoming.

Focusing on her own education department, the administrator noted that she has 115 teachers, "and 22 vacancies at present which we cannot fill."

She then presented an illustrated slide lecture on the numerous aspects of the education program, which range from teaching the most elementary personal care techniques to "trainable" patients, to an impressive work-study program for the moderately retarded.

Between the extremes lie the educables, and they are given individual instruction in language arts, social studies and science, along with intensive vocational training which helps reinforce the newly

acquired academic skills. The education department also has a large number of multi-handicapped patients suffering from cerebral palsy, blindness, deafness and emotional disturbances, often in combination with each other, and always superimposed on their mental retardation problem.

The blind patients are being trained in sewing skills, and Mrs. Glasser was proud to announce that "three boys and one girl have now learned the Braille alphabet."

With the aid of a \$100,000 annual grant from the federal government, the school has been able to institute new programs like the Hospital Improvement Program, Mobilization of Abilities and Potential, and Training Adults for Community Living.

The latter emphasizes a self-government program for the participants, who elect their own leaders and draw up their own rules. Mrs. Glasser pointed out that those in the TACL program have been observed to develop a healthy pride and a greatly enhanced self-esteem.

Willowbrook's role in treating the retarded has changed considerably in recent years, the administrator noted. For one thing, people are not as ashamed as they used to be about keeping a retarded child at home. For another, the city now has facilities and CRMD classes operating to teach the educable retarded.

The result is that Willowbrook's population has changed, so that now 70 per cent of the patients are "severely and profoundly" retarded, placing a tremendously increased burden on the staff at a time when that staff is being diminished.

Mrs. Glasser concluded by

inviting the Business and Professional Women's Club and the public to Building 3 on Dec. 17. "It'll be quite a treat for you to hear the glee club and the band," she said, "of the largest facility of its kind in the state, and, I would venture to say, in the world."

Before Mrs. Glasser's talk, Mrs. Jeanne Klingman, president of the club, asked the membership to write letters to Sens. Javits and Buckley, urging them to support the Equal Rights Amendment without the added provisions regarding the draft exempt status for women and "other protective measures."

The bill, passed by the House last month, is up for Senate vote Friday. "If this bill does not get passed on the 19th, said Mrs. Klingman, "you might as well forget it; it'll be many moons before you see it again." The meeting was in the Staaten, West Brighton.