

It's your opinion

Tuesday, February 22, 1972

Mother grateful to Dr. Hammond

I have sent this letter to Dr. Jack Hammond, director of Willowbrook State School:

"As the mother of a retarded child, I had to sit down and write this letter. I want you to know that my family, friends and I are behind you 100 per cent.

"I feel that in recent weeks you have been under pressure, not only from the news media but also from "concerned" parents. I realize that you are only one man and can only do so much. The job you have done, with what facilities, personnel, and funds you have, is to be commended. Now that this situation has been brought to the attention of the public and legislators, perhaps the

money you sorely need will be forthcoming.

"Unfortunately, in situations like this, there must always be someone who must take the brunt of the blame, deserving or not. If these people took as much time and effort in doing something constructive for the children of Willowbrook, all their efforts would be put to much better advantage.

"My son is 29 years of age and with great patience, love and care he has grown into a fine man. I also believe that

The Advance welcomes your opinion. However, letters will not be used without the signature and address of the writer. It also would be appreciated if letters were kept as short as possible.

many parents (situations vary) bring their children to Willowbrook who need not be there. These people discard their problems onto the state and forget them. The parents of these retarded children are the ones who have committed the biggest crime of all. Where were all these parents before, when their outcries might have brought the money and help you so sorely needed?"

MRS. AMALIE LIEBLEIN,
Member of Staten Island
Aid for Retarded Children

113-9th St.
New Dorp

Thursday, February 24, 1972

Murphy report draws rebuke

Here is a copy of a letter I am sending to Congressman Murphy. I hope that you will print it in the Advance. I feel that the Advance did a great reporting job on the Willowbrook situation. Unfortunately, the changes that must be made in our system of handling the mentally retarded are not going to come about easily. What I heard Congressman Murphy say at Willowbrook Park and what I read in his "Report From Washington" are the old standard political moves. Pat yourself on the back and make the other guy look at fault. If we can't get some bipartisan constructive political action on a cause as noble as care for the mentally retarded, then God help America.

I write this as the concerned parent of a three and a half year old Downes Syndrome child. I watch this beautiful child progress here at home with all the love he receives from the rest of the family and I'm so grateful that we were never conned into institutionalizing this child. Please continue to fight for a better system for the mentally handicapped.

CARLO ANDERSEN,
76 Hunton St.,
Dongan Hills

This is Mr. Andersen's letter.
"Received your "Report From Washington" dated Feb. 11, in this morning's mail and after reading your remarks on Willowbrook State School I just had to write to you.

"Your remarks were the usual things that politicians say thinking they will impress people. Telling us about more is just so much meaningless rhetoric. We know what Willowbrook is. What is needed is another approach to the problems of the mentally retarded. Your investigators would be making better use of time and public funds by studying the California system. God knows its advantages, in both human dignity and monetary costs, are so obvious.

"Regarding your statement, I have been deeply concerned over the financial squeeze which has pressed Willowbrook in recent months," I am amazed. If, as you stated in your speech at Willowbrook Park on Feb. 5, that you have been associated with Willowbrook School for 10 years, how can you speak of the place as being hard-pressed in recent months? The much publicised conditions at the institution are not the results of the last few financial cutbacks.
"I feel, sir, that either you have been ill-informed by your aides and speech writers or that you really don't give a damn about those less fortunate human beings born into this world with mental handicaps. As the father of five wonderful children, the youngest of whom is a Downes Syndrome child, I am deeply concerned about this situation that is crying out for some progressive change. Please do something constructive. We are tired of partisan political speeches."