

It's your opinion

Saturday, March 4, 1972

Talk alone won't aid them

The recent exposure of the deplorable and vomitous conditions at Willowbrook State School has created a great deal of public concern. Reporters have examined and made public these conditions. Rallies have been held, the networks have carried stories about Willowbrook and yet almost a month and a half later the conditions are still not improved.

Five million dollars were supposed to have been allocated to schools throughout the state, 300 attendants were to have been hired to care for these very needy people but only 140 have been hired and conditions have worsened.

Isn't it possible that outside the grounds of the state school people are not listening? Well, if you have any kind of care for humankind you're listening.

It's disgusting that people who through no fault of their own need special help cannot receive proper care. Are our politicians who can really do something to help the conditions at Willowbrook deaf to the desperate cry of the people? If they're not deaf to this important issue they should stop their talking and start really doing things for these people at Willowbrook State School.

CHARLES JOHN SIRACUSA,
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Thursday, March 9, 1972

Time for all to get involved

The results of a recent poll of Islanders concerning the conditions at Willowbrook State School were sickening. Two out of three people had no comment, with some adding that because they've never been to Willowbrook, they couldn't offer an opinion.

Well, dear people, you were probably not in the German concentration camps, but did that make them any less horrible? You did not see the great Chicago fire. Did that make it anything less than a terrible tragedy? You are not in West Virginia to witness first hand the havoc wrought by a burst dam, but does that make the loss of life and property less disastrous?

I'm sure if you were asked to comment on any of these, you would not be at a loss for words. Hopefully, this letter will stir you unconcerned citizens to the point of joining your voices with the many already trying so hard to bring about meaningful changes for the mentally retarded.

MRS. FRED R. MAGRI,
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Wednesday, March 15, 1972

Enlist volunteers to aid retarded

The Advance deserves praise for bringing to the attention of the public the understaffing and the lack of meaningful programs for the mentally retarded children who are consigned to Willowbrook as wards of the State of New York.

The articles in the Advance have set in motion a whole series of events such as an increase in the state budget for allocations to institutions like Willowbrook, bringing the broadcast media to focus on the problem, and more recently a visit to the Island by federal officials to look into the matter.

This is all praiseworthy and good and I am sure more things will follow. But, as Senator Jarvis pointed out, there can be no fast turn around of the

situation at Willowbrook. Money alone, he said, can not solve all the problems that exist at the institution. But until the problems that exist are solved some of the children, at least, will continue to be kept in locked wards and treated impersonally if not inhumanely.

If there exist volunteer groups that are organized to help the people at Willowbrook the names and addresses of the groups should be made known so that people can volunteer their help. If no organization with this purpose exists then it is high time we Staten Islanders organized one. It appears to be the only way that immediate aid can be brought to the inmates of Willowbrook. As neighbors of the people there it is our responsibility to take action and help them.

ROBERT B. BOND,
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Monday, March 20, 1972

Aid Willowbrook with more taxes?

The problems of Willowbrook are no longer front page news. In the beginning when people were made aware of the severe budget deficit everyone was sympathetic and anxious to help. I am sure that many have volunteered their services and will fulfill their pledges.

But what Willowbrook needs most is a larger staff with better training and supervision. Eventually it should be broken down into smaller schools which could better serve the needs of the patients. This costs money.

I have written to State Senator John J. Marchi to the effect that I and my husband would gladly accept an increase in state taxes if the proceeds were earmarked for Willowbrook and other similar state institutions. I am wondering whether others would write also for that cause. Let's not wait for it to be a forgotten issue.

A concerned citizen,
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