

# Willowbrook

## Our children



Some patients, fortunate enough to be chosen for special training programs, respond to painstaking efforts of their teachers. When they're too big or too old for the "baby-buildings," many will end up in barren wards.

Primarily, these photographs depict the conditions in which children at Willowbrook State School live. But the children are not the whole story of the institution.

Much of what might have been photographed was out of bounds for our photographer. Those shots which were permissible were taken under the watchful eyes of a New York State Department of Mental Hygiene public relations director, the director of photography and the director of Willowbrook, Dr. Jack Hammond.

Rules prohibit the use of photographs in which patients' faces are clearly recognizable. Other, unwritten rules, encourage many employees to try and make a dismal situation look better than it is for the benefit of the camera.

During the day of shooting, Dr. Hammond was approached in the corridor by a delegation of female attendants who had a gripe. They wanted to know why their supervisor had been told to "get the kids dressed" for the pictures.

How come we have to get special

clothes on them now," an attendant said, "when we don't have the clothes any other times."

Although he said that no warning was issued to staff supervisors, Dr. Hammond acknowledged an "institution grapevine," which quickly spreads the word that an outside observer is approaching.

Compared to what kind of living conditions are prevalent at Willowbrook, these are photos of what one attendant referred to as "the nice places inside."

—JANE KURTIN



Existence is reduced to eating and sleeping for these girls. Could they be helped? Maybe. But the New York State budget doesn't provide for taking chances on a maybe.

