

Amann fears Willowbrook kids 'pawns'

Assemblyman Edward J. Amann fears that the children of Willowbrook State School are becoming "political pawns."

Responding to a statement made last week by Democratic County Chairman Dante Ferrari that a task force would soon be organized to conduct an investigation at the institution, Amann said:

"Mr. Ferrari no doubt means well, but I can see very little constructive coming out of a so-called task force appointed by Stanley Steingut, Assembly minority leader."

"In view of his position," Amann continued, "Steingut could only make appointments to this task force of people from his own party."

"I am sure that without even going to visit Willowbrook, Steingut knows of the conditions which exist there. The basic problem is lack of help, which is caused by a budget deficit."

"The only really constructive thing which could be done," Amann advised, "is to have a lifting of the job freeze at Willowbrook in order that adequate staff could be hired to meet patient needs."

Saying that Ferrari's fear that a state Department of Mental Hygiene investigation of the institution would "lead to another whitewash," is unfounded, Amann declared.

"There is no one in the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene who would not readily admit that the conditions at the school are bad. These are facts which they have publicly acknowledged.

"The only help which we can

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE, Tuesday, December 7, 1971

give immediately is to lift the freeze. The task force investigation couldn't accomplish much because the task force has no power to act on its findings.

"There is, of course, a major problem of overcrowding at Willowbrook," Amann acknowledged, "but it is the unfortunate circumstances that

there is no place else to put these people."

"I am trying," Amann concluded, "to take a constructive approach to Willowbrook's problems, without involving politics. The more that politics do become involved, the worse it will be for the children in the institution."