



Dr. Jack Hammond, left, director of Willowbrook State School, and Assemblyman Saul Weprin of Queens discuss conditions at the school, while Assemblyman Andrew Stein of Manhattan observes young patients.

## Visit Willowbrook, legislators urged

By JANE KURTIN

Assemblyman Andrew Stein of Manhattan was prompted yesterday to suggest that "all legislators should visit Willowbrook State School before they vote on budget cuts" after he toured several buildings at the institution.

"Certainly," Stein said, "I didn't have a feeling for the problems of Willowbrook before this visit. Seeing the conditions here is a lot more effective than reading statistics."

Stein and Assemblyman Saul Weprin of Jamaica, Queens, were the only two members of a newly appointed five-man task force who showed up yesterday for their first visit to Willowbrook.

Two of the other members,

Brian Sharoff and Stanley Fink, both of Brooklyn, were tied up with court cases, and Assemblyman Allen Hevesi of Queens was reportedly hospitalized.

The task force was requested by Dante Ferrari, Staten Island Democratic county chairman and appointed by Stanley Stein, Democratic Minority Leader of the Assembly.

Noticably stunned by the sight of profoundly retarded patients jammed into overcrowded ward rooms, Stein and Weprin promised they would soon request a meeting with Alan D. Miller, director of the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene, and Gov. Rockefeller.

Joined after their tour by Assemblyman Louis DeSalvio of Manhattan, Stein, Weprin and Dr. Jack Hammond, director of

Willowbrook, heard impassioned pleas for help made by three members of the Benevolent Society of the institution.

Murray Schneps, whose 3½-year-old daughter has been at Willowbrook for about half her life, reminded the legislators that "children are dying while the budget is being discussed."

Mrs. Shirley Epstein, institutional chairman of the New York State Association of Retarded Children, called herself "one of the lucky parents — my child is dead."

Although her child died 19 years ago, Mrs. Epstein continues her work for Willowbrook and retarded youngsters throughout the state.

"When you see how few people care," she said, "you stick with it."