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First-Hand Report

A learning activity for untutored members of the State Legislature was recommended this week: a trip to the Willowbrook State School, particularly educational for elected officials seriously interested in doing their homework.

Assemblyman Stein (D-Man.) and Assemblyman-elect Weprin (D-Queens) are proposing the idea to their colleagues after visiting Willowbrook, the Richmond institution where the human costs of state budget cuts are tragically simple to calculate. Over roughly the past 13 months, nearly 1000 of the school's staff members—25 per cent of the total—have been sacrificed to state job freezes and related austerities.

Overall, the state's Dept. of Mental Hygiene lost \$36 million in budget requests in the last Albany session and there is no comfort in the bleak fiscal program outlined for next year; on the contrary. As a result, a number of parents' organizations have just joined together in hopes of lobbying successfully against even more brutal cuts.

These citizens can doubtless look forward to the firm aid of Assemblymen Stein and Weprin. In Stein's view, the visit was "a lot more effective than reading statistics." Willowbrook is not the only stricken facility. There are many more for the senior legislative leaders and state officials to visit—if they choose.