

Post Editorial 1/11/72

Spotlight on Willowbrook

Since many hospitals and related medical institutions rely regularly on the aid of volunteers from their communities, there is no reason why Willowbrook State School should lack the services of some willing "paraprofessionals"—parents and the press. The issue comes up amid a troublesome dispute at Willowbrook, the Staten Island facility for the mentally retarded.

There two staff members have been tagged for ouster—apparently because they met with an organization of patients' parents and also talked over Willowbrook's lamentable staff shortages and resulting wretchedness with a local newspaper.

It is absurd to suggest that parent concern and/or publicity are a menace.

In fact, a state freeze on some staff jobs has been thawed since some of the institution's critical needs—widely shared at mental health facilities throughout the state—were publicized.

Presumably parents, the press and the experienced professional heads at Willowbrook have the institution's best interest in mind. It is now crucial that this alliance engage the many talents and energies available as the State Legislature debates funding for mental hygiene in the new session.

The ghastly Willowbrook scenes unfolded on ABC's news broadcast last night should produce an outcry throughout the State. They offered a shattering glimpse of the human price of 'austerity' in Albany.