



Max Schneier, second from left, and radio personality Malachy Macort, center, meet resistance from a security guard as they try to break through the door of the administration building.

S.I. Advance Photos by Eric Aerts

Willowbrook protesters turn rally into bedlam

By JANE KURTIN

A rally at Willowbrook State School yesterday began on Victory Blvd. with the brief blocking of traffic and ended with the storming of the institution's administrative offices.

Parents, who met at noon,

marched up the long drive to the office of Dr. Jack Hammond, director, carrying placards demanding money for Willowbrook and the reinstatement of Dr. Michael Wilkins and Mrs. Elizabeth Lee, who were fired Jan. 5.

Along the way, the chant of

"Save our children" rang out and radio personality Malachy Macort bellowed directions to more than 100 persons who for a short while became his followers.

Moments after arriving at the administration building, several demonstrators, led by Macort,

attempted to gain entrance and demanded that they be allowed to see Dr. Hammond immediately.

Three security guards told Macort and the others that they couldn't enter the building. Macort tried to push through to the main door.

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Parents and other demonstrators, some in tears, stand outside one of the buildings of Willowbrook State School.

Several men and women protestors joined Macort in trying to force their way in, but what nearly turned into a brawl ended when one of the guards shouted that the door was locked.

With a brief pause in the shoving and shouting, a new throng of demonstrators pushed toward the locked door, this time led by Mr. and Mrs. Max Schneier. Schneier is president of the Federation of Parents Organizations for the New York State Mental Institutions.

Schneier and Macort teamed up for a combined effort at kicking down the front door, while Mrs. Schneier repeatedly hit a guard on the head and shoulders with the stick of a placard she was carrying as the man blocked the entrance.

OFFERED MEETING

Dr. Hammond had stated that he would meet with the parents, but this did not diminish the action by Mrs. Schneier, who divided her attention between the guard and the window to the telephone operator's office.

When efforts failed to kick down the door or break through the screen, someone produced a pair of scissors with which Schneier first punched holes in the screen and then tried in vain to pick the lock on the door.

The door was opened — from the inside — and the demonstrators moved in for a confrontation with Dr. Hammond.

Reporters attempted to question Macort, Schneier and Dr. Hammond, but virtually nothing was answered because of the steady onslaught of progressively louder demonstrators, each with something to inject.

Red-faced, Dr. Hammond's usually blustery manner was dwarfed by Schneier and Ma-

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cort, who posted themselves at each of the director's ears.

The people who stood around Dr. Hammond screaming for his resignation left the administration building moments after TV camera crews turned off their lights and stopped shooting film.

Once back outside, a small delegation of parents and newsmen was scheduled to take still another surprise tour of the wards.

Too many demonstrators, however, insisted on taking part in the ward tour, despite admonitions from Macort and Mrs. Murray Schnepps, who organized the rally, that a large group would frighten the patients.

"They don't know what's going on," one demonstrator said. "They don't get frightened."

A steady stream of people filtered through a building where adult male retardates live and, after getting a look at the situation, came outside to comment: "It was terrible" and "Oh, my God, the smell!"

By 2:30 p.m., the rally was over, and parents were discussing plans for a massive rally Feb. 5.



Max Schneider, left, and Dr. Jack Hammond, center, director at Willowbrook State School, attempt to respond to reporters' questions. Schneier is president of the Federation of Parents Organizations for the New York State Mental Institutions.

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