

# Urge Albany act on Willowbrook

By JANE KURTIN

Manhattan Assemblyman Andrew Stein yesterday promised to seek legislative support for the newly formed Staten Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Stein made the commitment during a press conference at Willowbrook State School. He was the only legislator who attended.

The SPCC, Stein said, "is the proper organization to be conducting an investigation at Willowbrook State School."

"I feel," the assemblyman continued, "that this is not a liberal issue or a conservative issue; it's an issue of people. It will be best handled by a non-partisan citizens' group."

Stein promised William Katz, chairman of the SPCC, that he would meet Monday with

Assembly Speaker Perry Duryea in Albany to request that the society be given full subpoena power.

Katz, who said the SPCC has been conducting daily investigations at Willowbrook since it received its charter last week, described conditions as "unimaginable" and "deplorable."

Stein observed that Dr. Jack Hammond, director of Willowbrook, "did not create the situation at the institution," was optimistic about the Legislature's attitude toward Willowbrook.

"I've spoken to a number of assemblymen — even some Republicans — and they tell me that their constituents are screaming for them to do something about this," Stein said. "I think the climate is right for some real change to be realized."

Prior to the Willowbrook press conference, District Attorney John M. Braisted Jr. was asked whether action would be taken to convene a grand jury to investigate inadequate health care for patients.

Braisted, who said he had a grand jury probe six years ago after two residents were scalded severely due to faulty plumbing, maintained that "the situation is the same now and doesn't call for another grand jury."

"No one has approached me," Braisted continued. "with any evidence that such a hearing is necessary. Should anyone feel that this would accomplish something, I would be happy to hear what the justifications are."

"Frankly, it seems pointless to have a grand jury hearing when the answers about Willowbrook are so obvious. There's just no money."