

Editorial

Not enough, governor

It's something, but it isn't enough. That's the only way to characterize Gov. Rockefeller's announcement, in the wake of revelations in the Advance about conditions in Willowbrook State School, that money has been released to provide for 300 more employes at the institution.

In November, 1970, when the state first started cutting back on money, there were 3,349 persons on the Willowbrook payroll, to care for the more than 5,000 patients there. It's questionable whether even that number of workers provided totally adequate care.

By last November, Willowbrook had only 2,844 employes, and the job freeze was continued until the number on the payroll has declined to 1,805.

Late in December, after the Advance articles and photos indicated the seriousness of the problem, the state did announce that if anyone left a job at Willowbrook, a replacement was authorized. That was the first thaw in the freeze.

But even to restore 300 jobs when there are more than 1,500 which need filling, based on 1970 standards, is a gesture, rather than a solution.

The inconsistency in this move is further evidenced by the fact that conditions at Willowbrook and similar institutions don't meet the state's own requirements for institutional care, and the state is in danger of losing Medicaid funds from the federal government on that ground.

The governor's act is a small beginning, but he and the Legislature have to achieve far more, very soon.

The patients at Willowbrook can't help themselves. Someone has to do the job.