

# Willowbrook Split Grows Over Fired 2

By BARBARA YUNCKER

The crisis at Willowbrook State School escalated dangerously over the weekend after a rebellion by employees derailed the promised reinstatement of two ousted aides, at least temporarily.

By threats of violence, more than 200 employees at the Staten Island institution prevented a conference intended to bring about the rehiring of Dr. Michael Wilkins and Mrs. Elizabeth Lee, a social worker.

The protesters then took buses to carry their case directly to Dr. Alan D. Miller, Commissioner of Mental Hygiene, in Albany. Wilkins and Mrs. Lee, discharged by Willowbrook director Dr. Jack Hammond on Jan. 4, blamed their firings on their cooperation with parents and on contacts with reporters.

The plan to reinstate them came about as a result of demands in their behalf from the Beneficent Society for the Retarded Children of Willowbrook, a parents' organization.

After the employees' protest in Albany, rumors circulated that a countermatch of radical groups, including Black Panthers, would be staged to force immediate reinstatement of the two, but this did not materialize.

However, the danger of such a protest or a work stoppage will hang over the institution.

A new effort at reconciling the hostile groups was planned today by state officials. Although Wilkins and Mrs. Lee are the immediate focus of the crisis, the real issue is who will have policy control at the nation's biggest facility for the retarded.

Thomas Delaney, Willowbrook chapter president of the Civil Service Employees Assn. and a leader of the protest caravan to Albany, told The Post:

"As far as we are concerned, the Wilkins-Lee issue is resolved.

"Dr. Hammond told me personally that he would never reinstate Wilkins and Less unless overruled by higher authority. Dr. Miller told our group Friday that it is not his policy to override decisions of his directors.

"When I got back from Albany," Delaney went on, "Dr. Hammond told me he had had a call from Albany that he would not have to reinstate them. It wasn't clear whether that meant immediately or forever. But we have made it clear that the employees absolutely do not want them back.

"And if there is any action to reinstate them, the employees will probably walk out."

(Friday's demonstration, although disruptive, was not technically a work stoppage because the protesters took authorized leave-time to make the trip to Albany.)

A spokesman for the Commissioner said that Miller has not reversed the agreement he made with the parents group last Thursday night to bring about the reinstatements.

His goal at this point, the spokesman said, is "to try to decompress the situation and to bring face-to-face two groups which claim to have the best interests of the patients at heart, that the legitimate interests of all parties can be met."

Department officials conferred with Wilkins and Mrs. Lee over the weekend and urged them not to press for immediate reinstatement, pending conciliation meetings. "They seemed willing to do that," the spokesman said.

A variety of employees con-

cerned prompted the march on Albany, The Post learned.

One group accuses Wilkins and Mrs. Lee of conspiring toward a radical, New Left takeover of the institution. Another, larger group, accuses them of disruptive behavior bad for patients, and backs Hammond's stated reason for their discharge; that he found them "impossible to work with."

## A Major Factor

A third interested group is a black employees' organization, the International Union of Advancement, headed by Edgar Smith, which feels that long-standing concerns of black employees have been subordinated to the furor over those two ousted whites.

A major factor with all those groups is bitter resentment of parents' efforts to gain muscle in setting policy for the institution.

"Sure that's a large part of it," Delaney told The Post. "The employees out here have enough bosses. We want more Indians, not any more chiefs."

The employe spokesmen charged that the parents' militancy tends to make employees the villains of the overcrowded, understaffed conditions, when in fact, they say, they are overworked victims, along with their patients.

Willowbrook has approximately 5200 patients, two-thirds of them adults. In the last year, 650 jobs have been eliminated by Gov. Rockefeller and the Legislature. The current staff is approximately 2700, which is 900 below the level officially authorized. With the recent release of \$5 million for the department through March 31, 300 of the 900 vacancies are being filled.

The employe protest Friday began to gather at about 7:30 a.m., only five hours after Miller and the parents group had reached an understanding on the reinstatement.

Scores of angry employees thronged into the Administration Building where Wilkins and Mrs. Lee, with two supporters, had come for a 10 a.m. meeting with Hammond, to negotiate terms of their return.

Because his members were "so explosively angry," Delaney told The Post, "I told Dr. Hammond he could not

have the meeting, or there would be a work stoppage and violence might erupt. He agreed. Then I told Wilkins and Mrs. Lee there would be no meeting, and they left the grounds."

A couple of hours later, Willowbrook buses and a few private cars took off to carry the protestors to their four-hour confrontation with Miller.