

Probers Find a Mixed Bag at Willowbrook

By ROGER WETHERINGTON

A horde of congressmen, special federal probers and other officials made an inspection tour yesterday of the Willowbrook State School for the Retarded and reported finding a mixed bag of good and bad. They said that conditions ranged from the remarkably good to the deplorably depressing, depending primarily on where money was spent and where it was not.

Dr. Bertram S. Brown, director of the National Institute of Mental Health and chairman of a special federal panel who was called in to recommend improvements in the state's facilities for the retarded, said that Willowbrook was one of about a dozen institutions across the country that were failing to give a minimum, decent level of care to some residents.

He praised a plan by Sen. Jacob Javits (R-New York) to introduce legislation setting a fed-

eral standard of minimum care for the retarded.

Javits, who instigated the probe by Brown's panel and scheduled the inspection tour, said that some of the most severely retarded and handicapped of Willowbrook's residents may be beyond help and doomed to "vegetate," but he said that they must be given custodial care above the "abysmal, sub-human" level sometimes provided for them.

The tour uncovered some im-

provements in the Staten Island institution, Javits noted, suggesting that some improvements were due to a "cleanup" for the tour and others were because of new money recently provided by Gov Rockefeller to ease staff shortages.

Rep. Mario Biaggi (D-N.Y.) noted "a marked improvement at least in atmosphere." He reported that all the youngsters were clothed and the wards of the children who are not toilet-

trained had been fully cleaned. He said he hope that the improvements reflected a "sustained effort" rather than a mere "showcase effort."

Rep. Frank J. Brasco (D-N.Y.) said that he was "quite impressed" by some training programs for the less seriously retarded. Newly painted rooms and a cheery atmosphere reflected what money can do to provide new programs, he noted.

Assemblyman Joseph F. Lisa (D-Queens) said that the Legislature had been warned a year ago of the effects of its budget cuts on the institutions for the retarded. "We were told that we were going to have poor custodial care," he said, "and we did."