

# Willowbrook conditions worse

## Director cites perils for patients

By LAWRENCE DeMARIA and FRANK HAGELBERG

Willowbrook State School struggled through the first day of a statewide strike by civil service employes yesterday amid fears a prolonged work stoppage would endanger the lives of the 5,000 patients at the Island facility.

By midday, with 80 per cent of the work force out, and several hundred volunteers on duty in the kitchens and wards, Dr. Jack Hammond painted a dim picture of the remainder of the Easter weekend.

"If the strike continues for another 24 to 48 hours," the school's director said, "there is a great possibility patients will be dying of neglect or starvation because of the lack of care."

Hammond and other officials of the State Department of Mental Hygiene repeated their appeal for volunteers to help in the care and feeding of patients at the school.

"I ask any parent who is capable of taking a child home, come take the child," Hammond said.

Early yesterday afternoon, Dr. Milton Jacobs, assistant director at Willowbrook, toured a complex of five buildings with reporters. The buildings house 450 children, most of them infants and toddlers. At the time, only 19 of the children had been taken home by their parents. Dr. Jacobs termed the number "meager."

Dr. Jacobs said he was encouraged by the number of vol-

unteers that had arrived at the school during the day, but commented that "we can never have enough volunteers."

"These kids need slow feeding and plenty of fluids," Jacobs said, noting that dehydration was one of the major threats facing the patients.

Dr. Hammond also expressed concern over the danger of dehydration, and expressed alarm over the fact that most of the volunteers are not trained to deal with the patients.

"A patient could gag or could develop a fever," Dr. Hammond said, "and it could go unnoticed. We can't expect volunteers to recognize these conditions although our regular employes could."

Approximately 150 employes on the night shift which ended at 7 a.m. yesterday remained on duty throughout most of the day, joined by 195 out of 466 day shift workers. School officials said that more than 400 volunteers had arrived at the school by mid-afternoon.

According to officials in Albany, Willowbrook was one of two state institutions particularly hard hit by the walkout.

A spokesman for Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Allan D. Miler said the crisis at Willowbrook was caused by the fact that "the entire food service staff did not show up." The spokesman emphasized, however, that "basic physical and medical needs are being met" at all state facilities, including Willowbrook.

Breakfast yesterday morning for the patients at Willowbrook consisted of milk and cookies. Luncheon foods included spaghetti, milk, cold cuts, cheese, hardboiled eggs, and graham crackers. A nurse at the school was quick to admit that the meals "weren't as balanced as they usually get."

Plans for last night's dinner called for hot meat, mashed potatoes, and canned fruit, the spokesman said. Previous plans to serve TV dinners stored at the school for emergency purposes were cancelled, and the spokesman said there was a good chance the staff and volunteers would be able to produce "at least two hot meals" today.

A nutritionist with the Mental Hygiene Department was flown to Willowbrook shortly after noon by helicopter from Albany. Three other nutritionists were also scheduled to arrive from upstate during the day. "Their role will be to keep a close watch on the situation, manage the kitchens, and even cook if necessary," a state spokesman said.

A mental hygiene spokesman in Albany said this afternoon the "item of primary consideration" at Willowbrook was food. "The kitchens are in operation, and food is being prepared," he said.

"But," he added, "cooking is one thing, and serving the food is another."

Picketing employes of the Civil Service Employees Association remained outside Willowbrook throughout the day, attempting to persuade workers to stay away from the school. The sign on the brick wall at the entrance to the school was festooned with placards and a dead rat with a sign reading "scab" underneath.

Police reported no further disturbance after four persons were arrested early yesterday as the day shift reported to work. Tyrone Daniels, 31, of Manhattan, Allen Iverson, 42, of 86 Coale Ave., Castleton Corners, and Thomas Delaney, 44, who gave an address at the school, were charged with dis-

orderly conduct and obstructing governmental administration when they allegedly threw themselves in front of cars attempting to enter the Willowbrook grounds.

A fourth person, identified as Gladys Holmes, 37, of the Bronx, was charged with obstructing governmental administration and resisting arrest when she allegedly had to be moved from the roadway and broke away from police. She was treated at St. Vincent's Medical Center for minor injuries before being booked at the New Dorp precinct.

All four are scheduled to appear in Criminal Court April 17 to answer the charges.

#### ASSAULT CHARGES

Delaney, the CSEA chapter president at Willowbrook, returned to the picket lines shortly after noon, some five hours after his arrest. Labelling the charges against him "stupid," Delaney said he was "conducting an orderly thing" when he "tripped in front of an auto.

Scattered reports of harassment of volunteers and employees attempting to enter the school continued throughout the day, but no further arrests were reported.

Officials at Willowbrook reported that only 62 out of 319 evening shift employees reported for work yesterday, working with 144 employees who remained at work after serving during earlier shifts.

In Albany, the spokesman for the mental hygiene commissioner said the volunteers assisting in the wards and kitchens "could make the difference" between adequate and inadequate care.

Richard Sacks, an employe of the Chase Manhattan Bank in Manhattan, said he came to help out at Willowbrook with three other friends after hearing news reports about the situation. "This proves that we can do good things besides making tax shelters," he said.

"The people on strike definitely deserve more money, but the people here need care. We'll do what their job should be, so they can go out and get

more money," Sacks added.

Jerry Isaacs, of Martin Ave., Willowbrook, father of 7-year-old Lowell Isaacs, a resident of the school, said he thought "the whole thing is the governor's fault." He said the employees were getting a "raw deal."

"We understand them," Isaacs said. "We just wish they would come back and negotiate at the same time. We feel we have to man the school as long as they are out." Isaacs spent most of the day working in the school's administration building, assigning volunteers to jobs throughout the facility.

#### PICKETS FAIL

Elsewhere in the state, picket lines failed significantly to deter employes at Hudson River State Hospital in Poughkeepsie or at Letchworth Village in Rockland County, according to the directors of those institutions.

On Long Island, however, Dr. Henry Brill, director of Pilgrim State Hospital in Brentwood, said his normally small weekend staff was reduced by 20 per cent.

"We can function," he said, adding that the hospital was not "catastrophically" affected.

At Central Islip State Hospital, half of the employees were absent without causing a reduction in services, said Dr. Anthony Correoso, director.

Only a third of the employees were reported working at St. Lawrence State Hospital.

As the walkout continued, Edgar Smith, executive director of the International Union for Advancement, charged that Saturday's demonstrators were white workers not officially working on the weekend, when he said many blacks work. He ordered the 500 blacks he said his organization represented back to work.

Willowbrook's Jason Tabor said most weekend personnel were black or Puerto Rican, adding he was "grateful" to hear about the back-to-work order.

Smith said, "I am telling my members to go back on the job because the CSEA is only going to look out for themselves."