

Willowbrook: Rest for the weary



Young volunteers supervise patients in a small playground.

By LAWRENCE DENANEY, Union, and Dr. Jack Hammond, director of the beleaguered institution. Delaney rushed from his spot on the picket line at the entrance to the school grounds to inform Dr. Hammond that the strike had been tentatively settled.

The haggard Delaney, who had gone since early Friday without much sleep, returned to his office in the school's administration building, only a few feet from where volunteer workers were still being processed to help out at Willowbrook.

The strike ended with a handshake and cups of coffee shared by Thomas Delaney, head of the Willowbrook Chapter of the striking Civil Service Employees

Delaney said he would stay at his post and try and get the in-

stitution back to normal. "We are attempting to notify as many employes as possible," he said when asked about the scheduled 11:15 p.m. shift.

Delaney would make no apologies about the strike as he commented:

"Everybody had to do his thing. Noboddy gains from a strike. We're short enough of employes, without striking against patients."

Of the more than 2,000 volunteers that had showed up at Willowbrook during the two-day strike Delaney said, "Hopefully, they have received a valuable education as to the importance re-

quired by Willowbrook employes, namely in ward service and food service and laundry service."

"There are probably hard feelings concerning the volunteers," he continued, "to the extent that the strike was delayed 24 hours longer than necessary, but I would hope that a mutual respect could be forthcoming. I would hope that many of the volunteers personally notified Gov. Rockefeller's office and their state legislators as to the working conditions that the regular employe has to go to."

Delaney had little to say

about union members who had stayed on their job, asked about possible retaliation against them, he said: "That will have to be a question to be answered at a future date." He also said that "my impression was that Dr. Hammond would not take retaliatory measures" against the workers who struck.

Delaney said he did not hold Dr. Hammond responsible for the strike. "The strike was against the vacationing Gov. Rockefeller, who purportedly told the union to go to hell."

Delaney said he did not expect to be prosecuted for violating the Taylor Law, which prohibits strikes by civil service employes. "The governor provoked employes into striking. And the governor must learn that not only employes but other groups have their dignity and will not tolerate undignified remarks," he said.

An equally haggard Dr. Hammond sat upstairs in his office saying goodbye to staff and volunteers who were headed home after sleepless or near sleepless nights. Discussing those volunteers, he said: "Without their help, we could never have gotten through the two days. We appreciate it very much. We are very grateful to the people of Staten Island and the rest of the city."

Hammond said that some of the volunteers were staying until everybody is bedded down and quiet."

Downstairs, tired volunteers were trooping in to report on their buildings before heading home. "They're all sleeping," said one young woman about her temporary charges in Building 16 — severely retarded toddlers.

Hammond showed no bitterness toward his striking employes, though he had said earlier that he disapproved of their action.

"After all, the employes work very hard," he said, "under, in some situations, very unpleasant conditions. They are not overpaid by any means."

He added, "We have a lot of very dedicated, hard working people. Their morale has been terribly devastated by all the unfavorable publicity we have received in the last couple of months."

At the start of the 11:45 p.m. shift about half the normal

work force reported but eventually, a spokesman said, this morning, the institution was fully staffed. During the strike there were fewer than 30 per cent of the workers on duty most of the time. Conditions were back to normal this morning.

Hammond expressed the hope that any rift between the strikers and non-strikers will "be healed" and "there will be harmony."

He also echoed Delaney's hope that the volunteers would leave with some understanding of the problems of caring for thousands of mentally retarded children and adults.

The day started at the night before had ended — with pickets revolving around police barricades as volunteers and Easter visitors streamed in. One group of visitors was a bit different. A contingent of state and city politicians who formed an ad hoc committee to investigate the situation arrived about 11 a.m. and took a brief tour of one of the buildings before issuing a statement.

The group consisted of State Sens. Nicholas J. Ferraro, Queens Democrat; Emmanuel Gold, Queens Democrat, and Albert Lewis, Brooklyn Democrat. State Assemblymen Leonard Silverman, Brooklyn Democrat; Arthur Hoenes, Queens Democrat; Allan Hevesi, Queens Democrat, and Saul Weprin, Queens Democrat.

City Councilmen Edward Curry, Staten Island Democrat; Matthew Troy, Queens Democrat; Howard Golden, Brooklyn Democrat; Leon Katz, Brooklyn Democrat; Kenneth Haber, Brooklyn Liberal, and Theodore Silverman, Brooklyn Democrat.

Borough President Connor also was on the scene, as was State Sen. John J. Marchi.

Hammond and Delaney both expressed their gratitude for the interest shown by the officials, but Hammond singled out Councilman Frank Biondolillo, who had been at Willowbrook for two days, and Marchi. He said that Marchi "always has been interested in our problems. He is very sincere. He puts his career on the line on these things."

Hammond was referring to a Marchi statement that the situation at Willowbrook was "a gold mine for political buckstering."

Marchi said he has "advocated substantial increases in taxes" to solve the state fiscal crisis that causes situations like Willowbrook but added: "You know how popular that is on Staten Island."

Marchi was full of praise for the volunteers. "It's easier to go to war than to do some of the work the folks around here have to do," he remarked.

As for the overall picture he said, "I don't expect the problem to get better. I expect more of this in every way."

The ad hoc committee had promised to return and chip in with the physical labor, but it didn't. Biondolillo, who was at Willowbrook all day Saturday and was up early Sunday, was the only visible political figure to actually soil his hands.

"He was mopping floors himself," Hammond said later. "Mrs. Biondolillo came in at 6 a.m. this morning and worked in the wards, feeding the children."

Saturday night Biondolillo had purchased more than \$200 worth of mops, pails and soap (the bill for which he said he was "sending to Rockefeller") and led 15 young people to a juvenile ward for a cleanup while his wife, Sally, and daughter, Lisa, 16, were feeding spastic children in Building 29. He later brought in 10,000 paper plates for use in feeding.

Hammond also credited Biondolillo with having the Willowbrook situation declared a health emergency so Sanitation Department trucks could cross picket lines to remove garbage. For his part, Biondolillo said that Joseph Margolis of the borough development office and Russell Tremaine, director of Waste Disposal for the Sanitation Department, helped him in that respect.

Biondolillo said his first inquiries to the Health Department were met by a response that the department did not operate on weekends.

Last night at Willowbrook was not much different from the two previous nights. Volunteers were coming in (as were more and more workers) and patients were put to bed. The institution was getting by.

The only thing revolving around police barricades was litter.