

By JACK HAMMOND

In their efforts to stir the conscience of society and to call attention to the need to improve the care of the institutionalized retarded and to expand community-based programs, the media have rendered a great public service.

However, one must bear in mind that Willowbrook State School, which has been the focus of the recent publicity concerning the mentally retarded,

serves a very severely and profoundly handicapped population. Seventy-seven per cent of our patients are severely or profoundly mentally retarded; 39.1 per cent are nonambulatory with severe spasticity due to cerebral palsy or other neurological conditions; 30 per cent have histories of convulsive seizures; 52.8 per cent have no speech; 60 per cent are incapable of adequately attending to their own personal hygiene; many are hyperactive or disturbed.

The sight of one individual with a combination of such afflictions would

cause great distress and anguish to anyone with any compassion at all. The sight of large numbers of such individuals gathered in one location such as Willowbrook is even more distressing.

The reader or viewer should realize that with 5,000 patients at Willowbrook, of whom about 4,000 are as described above, there are numerous buildings housing these individuals which replicate themselves.

Some of the media repeatedly zeroed in on this target population, frequently at the most inopportune times such

