

## Editorial Page

### Our opinion

# It hasn't been easy

Undoubtedly, Dr. Jack Hammond is glad to be leaving the post he has held for eight years as director of Willowbrook State School. The job must be a grave spiritual as well as physical strain. He's becoming director of a similar institution for the retarded in up-state Rome, where he had served as assistant director for five years until assigned to Willowbrook.

Dr. Hammond can't be blamed for the mess that has resulted in so much criticism of the care the state gives its charges at Willowbrook. That existed before his arrival, but he walked into a situation of which the general public was just then becoming cognizant, and public and official indignation has increased ever since.

He did seek in a variety of ways to bring about improvement. One way was to put a ceiling on admissions, which may have made things a little better for the institution's charges but created problems for hundreds of families whose retarded members were placed on waiting lists.

If there is one prime way in which he can be criticized, it is because

through all the storm of charges he has been so firmly loyal to his superiors and to the state bureaucracy.

He stood up personally against a torrent of criticism when others should have been blamed for not providing the money, the staff, the equipment and the imagination to create a better world for the mentally retarded.

He could have become a folk hero by flailing out against all those who had denied him and the institution the right to provide more capable and considerate service. But he plodded on within the system with steady courage.

Dr. Hammond will undoubtedly be happier in his new home. We wish him well.

But we feel that the state has to do much better at Willowbrook and similar institutions. Certainly, money is tight. But the voiceless can't be shunted aside. Very many of our people are determined to serve as their voice henceforth.

Dr. Hammond's successor hasn't yet been named. We wish him well, too. Because the campaign has really just begun.