

Willowbrook parents relate tales of beatings

By DAN DOLGIN

Parents of Willowbrook State School patients and a physician at the institution presented angry and emotional indictments of the hospital administration yesterday for failing to provide "decent" health care. It was the third day of hearings before the American Poor People's Youth Congress at 135 W. 14th St., Manhattan.

"What it spawns in the way of disease and misery make it a medical disaster zone . . . (it) is the exact opposite of human growth and development," stressed Dr. William Bronston, a doctor in charge of hundreds of Willowbrook residents.

Dr. Bronston echoed the developing theme of the open hearings by the independent panel when he said, "Any monies that are provided to Willowbrook in the face of incalculable suffering which now exist there must be accompanied by a plan that will guarantee a complete replacement of the state school system in the community with quality control, planning and thorough-going accountability in the hands of parents and consumers."

Bronston cautioned against condemning the school staff and employees.

"The entire administration" must be removed from Willowbrook, in order to free the staff and allow them to work creatively and humanely," he cried.

The young, brown-bearded, California-trained physician referred to the hepatitis research done at Willowbrook as an example of administrative coercion in an area of patient and parent concern.

"The issue of informed consent was invalid, because the families were forced to

submit if they were to get the child in the home. In addition, the hepatitis problem was caused by the conditions at Willowbrook."

Bronston explained that research was conducted by Dr. Saul Krugman of the New York University Medical Center, by innoculating new patients with strains of hepatitis.

"They light onto the very good idea to offer parents a chance to jump a waiting list of 1,800 to 2,000 to have new patients to experiment with," he said.

Three parents said their children received "no educational training, no speech or physical therapy and no progress" since entering Willowbrook.

Each parent stated that on numerous occasions — he visited his child and found him badly bruised or hurt, but school authorities would never say how he was injured.

Mrs. Eleanor Janoven broke into tears as she told of finding her son badly beaten on her last visit to the school.

"I was going to take him to a private dentist, so I called the hospital and Mrs. Randall, the ward supervisor, told me my son Mark had a cold and was in sick bay," Mrs. Janoven explained.

"I said I'd take him anyway, so Randall said the rain was so bad he thought they were going to close the bridges. But I went anyway. When I got there, Miss Kelly, the attendant took me aside to tell me something was the matter.

COVERED WITH WELTS

"I had that feeling I couldn't take a deep breath as they took me into the infirmary and took the sheet off Mike. Then I saw a sight that, please God, I hope I never see again. His back was so covered with welts that you couldn't see the color of his skin; he was so badly beaten."

Mrs. Janoven joined the other parent witnesses in urging the closing of Willowbrook and the formation of several smaller community-run programs instead.

She reiterated the cry that the parent "cannot devote all (her) time to one child when there is a whole family to care for."

The congress will present its preliminary findings today at 11 a.m.