

Panel bids Willowbrook action

By DAN DOLGIN

Leaders of the American Poor People's Youth Congress ended four days of open hearings today with an appeal for immediate health aid and funds for Willowbrook State School. The group also asked that the 5,200-patient home for the mentally retarded be closed in the near future.

Congress president and founder David Harris Jr. pleaded in his preliminary report that "the . . . Red Cross be activated immediately to care for the state of emergency at Willowbrook . . . and that the governor declare the area a state of emergency, in order to obtain federal funds."

The organization officially endorsed a proposal to replace all state mental hospitals with smaller, community-located and controlled units, under the auspices of a single, federal department of mental retardation.

"Youth, student and civil rights groups must pressure the Democratic Platform Committee to consider the plight of the mentally retarded as one of

their top priorities for the nomination of the presidential candidate," Harris also urged.

He said the group has invited a series of political dignitaries to join them in a tour of Willowbrook July 22.

The leaders invited include Sens. Ted Kennedy, Jacob Javits and George McGovern, as well as Congressman Shirley Chisolm, Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton and Elliot Richardson, secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

The congress plans to have the recorded hearings tran-

scribed and sent to Bruce Innis of the New York Civil Liberties Union, assorted Willowbrook parents' groups, Allan Miller, State chairman of the State Mental Hygiene Department, and Gov. Rockefeller.

The CLU is proceeding with a civil court suit against the state, the governor, former Willowbrook director Dr. Jack Hammond and other officials with or formerly with the school.

The suit names about a dozen Willowbrook residents and parents as plaintiffs.

CLU lawyer Bruce Innis will

present a 100-page brief in Federal District Court, Manhattan, today, with a motion that the state provide emergency relief for residents of the school.

Innis said yesterday that the testimony and evidence collected by the congress would be useful both as evidence in court and as information for investigation in the lawsuit.

The suit details alleged cruel and illegal treatment of patients.

Harris said he personally will defray the costs of the investigation, amounting to some \$450, but will have to seek public funds for further work.