

Willowbrook protest at Liberty Isle

By MARIO BOCCABELLA

Parents of children in Willowbrook and Gouverneur State Schools and the American Poor People's Youth Congress were scheduled to leave this morning from Battery Park, Manhattan, for a five-hour sit-in demonstration at the Statue of Liberty.

The sit-in, the first of a series of demonstrations planned by the Youth Congress, is to draw attention to the condition of children in state institutions throughout the nation, according to David Harris, president of the group.

The Youth Congress, formed in 1971 by Harris, held hearings in June on conditions at Willowbrook at which parents charged that children were beaten and brutally treated.

As a result of the hearings, the Youth Congress, which is primarily a consumer-advocate organization, received assistance from the Legal Aid Society and the American Civil Liberties Union. Presently there is a class-action lawsuit filed

on behalf of 11 patients at Willowbrook pending in Brooklyn Federal Court against the state Department of Mental Hygiene.

"The American Poor People's Youth Congress will be an aggressive organization," Harris said. "There will be follow-ups in those areas within which we have concerned ourselves."

Members of the Youth Congress are for the most part college students who believe in the principles exemplified by the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

According to Harris, the congress was established to revitalize the principle of civil rights for everyone, in addition to helping people organize formally to protest their grievances.

Next Saturday a sit-in demonstration is scheduled to take place at Willowbrook State School. A third demonstration is scheduled for Election Day to begin in Columbus Circle, Manhattan, proceeding to the Nixon and McGovern headquarters and terminating at Washington Square Park.