

reclassification process continues, the school program at the institution will be in serious trouble.

The state Mental Hygiene Educators Association has come out against the move.

"The extension of their (the teachers') day to eight hours, which no teacher in any public school system works, would be such a drastic regression in employment conditions that the state would lose many of their teachers and would be able to attract only the least qualified, professionally, in the future," a MHEA statement read.

"This tactic would not serve to improve the living conditions of the residents of our institutions but would actually decrease the quality of services being rendered."

The MHEA proposes that the emphasis be placed on quality, not quantity, in the restructuring of state services to the mentally retarded.

The threatened job action on the part of Willowbrook teachers only acerbates the problems at the institution. It is another instance of the employe-administrator conflict.

Critics claim that Willowbrook administrators are negatively interpreting the federal court order and ignoring the positive approach that the court order was meant to produce.

"Lautha Gray is a victim of the manipulation of the court order," McNamara stated.

In Gray's case, financial issues arise in addition to interpretation of the order.

As a grade 7 attendant, he made a bi-weekly net salary of \$242.28. As a grade 10 teacher assistant, he netted \$267.72. If he were to be hired as a teacher, his salary would increase.

Since the job is unavailable, he must return to a grade 7 salary, lower than the salary he made before getting his elementary education degree from Wagner College.

Gray has not yet accepted the job as ward attendant; he is "thinking it over." Although he was told that if he accepted the job, "there's a possibility" that he would be hired as a teacher in September, he claims that his "knowledge of Willowbrook State School indicates that the administrators have reneged on word-of-mouth before."

His plans are not yet definite, but he is hoping and working for the teaching job. If this does not work out, he claims he would like to run a foster home for mentally retarded children.

"I've given most of my life to mentally retarded children," he says.