

Charge Willowbrook coverup

Federal Court Judge Orrin G. Judd yesterday ordered state Mental Hygiene Department officials to reply to charges that a hiring freeze has been imposed at institutions throughout the state to help Willowbrook State School meet a hiring quota and that management there is "covering up" severe problems.

The charges came in letters sent to Judd from the Legal Aid Society, representing the

plaintiffs in the Willowbrook case, and from workers at the school's crisis-wracked Building 23.

Judd ordered Dr. Miodrag Ristich, school director; Dr. Alan D. Miller, department commissioner, and Robert W. Hayes, deputy commissioner, to reply to statements in the letters by Aug. 20.

He postponed a ruling on a motion to cite Ristich for contempt of court until he has

returned from a vacation.

The Legal Aid Society statement demands that the state officials submit details about reported orders to freeze hiring and promotions at institutions throughout the state. The freeze allegedly began this month.

The letter links the freeze with the increased hiring quota ordered at Willowbrook by Judd.

The employees' statement contends that "things have never been so bad" at the in-

stitution and charges a "cover-up" of worsening conditions, including patients' acts of violence against fellow patients and attendants.

One patient has "split open" three residents' heads, according to the letter. The letter says the "team leader" system has prevented news of problems in Building 23 from reaching the outside world.

Contempt charges have already been dropped against Miller and Hayes.