

# Editorial Page

## It's your opinion

### Much lacking at Willowbrook

As one walks into the buildings of Willowbrook one can almost hear the sighs of the parents as they enter the day-rooms, kitchens, halls, offices and dormitories of the mentally retarded. It's a pleasing sound to hear because one thinks that those sighs are coming from the enjoyment of parents meeting their loved ones. One thinks that those sighs are meant for happiness. But they're not. Those sighs are an outward acknowledgement of still yet another hypocritical happening that they must accept in order to have their offspring stay alive in a world in which both they, the parents, and their "old yet young" children must live.

These parents who do visit love their children very much but due to the immense care and time requirements for these children, the parents have found that they need outside help in order to help themselves as well as their children.

As most people are not doctors, therapists, program creators, politicians or workers in this field, neither are they parents, even though they have practical experience as their school learning. The parents, as most of us do, put their faith and trust in those who are considered authorities in their fields even though we feel anxious and fearful about such a trust and rather wish that we, the very much concerned people, would be self-sufficient enough to do all ourselves . . .

Without realizing it, over a period of time, we the seekers of outside help, lose our

practical experience to a great degree and begin to accept without questioning, nearly anything that these authorities tell us or do for us. Yet even though we lose our voices to a great degree we have built into us a past practical experience or conscience that isn't fully eradicated and every now and then crops up to let us know of its existence.

This is called doubt: Doubt of the authorities . . .

The parent sighs because today, for one day only, Willowbrook has enough outer clothes. For the first time in months beds have been painted, mattresses replaced, toilet seats fixed, sheets supplied, tables, chairs, toys, games, porters, aides, doctors, nurses, psychologists and therapists in quantity have suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

What is the sense of showing

off in a large auditorium and a newly built pre-fabricated school classroom, programs designed for only a few of the 3,300 residents? Where are the programs for the profoundly retarded; the severely retarded and the crippled spastic old men and women, boys and girls, children and babies?

There are the programs for the blind, deaf and dumb?

Where are the programs for those who aren't severely mentally retarded yet still live with the severely retarded?

"But then I can't take on the entire world. I haven't the time. I must support myself, a wife and family. I must do the thousand and one small but necessary things of daily living. I don't really know where to begin. There's so much to do and there's so little time that in a sense there is really no where to go i.e. there's nothing

I can do. I'm lost I'm confused. And I'm internally hurt."

So say the parents. So say any people in any role or profession when a simple common sense request or question such as "I don't see sheets on the beds and most of the kids are nude. Why? What can be done?" is met with . . . "Things like this are not your worry. We have college trained people who are specialists in this field and will work it out!" Why does one need a school education to be able to see the lack of so many things? I thought the mere fact of having eyes, ears, a nose and a tongue was enough.

So the sighs go on

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(Editor's note: Mr. Olson says he is an attendant at Willowbrook State School.)