

Willowbrook talks at stalemate

Formal negotiations for an out-of-court settlement in the three-year-old civil suit against Willowbrook Developmental Center have apparently ended in a stalemate, it was learned yesterday.

Lawyers for the two sides — the residents of Willowbrook and the state — ended two days of talks late Tuesday night without reaching an agreement. "There are several very important issues that still have to be resolved," said

Bruce Ennis, a staff attorney for the New York Civil Liberties Union, which is representing the residents.

"From now on," he added, "all the negotiations will have to be done by telephone."

Ennis said that he and other lawyers for Willowbrook residents were holding an open meeting with their clients to discuss the situation today in

the Civil Liberties Union Manhattan offices.

Ennis emphasized that, although time for an agreement was growing short, it was not yet out of the question. "It looks like we're going right down to the wire on this," he said.

Hearings in the case concluded in January. Judge Orrin G. Judd's opinion, which would preempt any unfinished settlement, could come by the end of the month, according to Ennis.

A coalition of civil rights

groups brought the class action in 1972, charging that the level of treatment at Willowbrook violates the constitutional rights of the residents. The defendants in the case are the state Department of Mental Hygiene and former Gov. Rockefeller.

Negotiators for the defendants have included Peter Goldmark, the state budget director; Robert Hayes, a deputy Commissioner for the Department of Mental Hygiene, and lawyers from the office of the governor.