

Editorial page _____

Our opinion

They're far too understaffed

The news that neither Willowbrook Developmental Center nor the South Beach Psychiatric Center will experience any layoffs in the state's new cutback of 1,425 jobs was anything but surprising. Both are operating with far fewer employees than they should have.

A federal court has ordered Willowbrook to increase its staff by 800. Last year the State Legislature directed the South Beach center to add 315 staff positions, but few if any of those posts have been filled.

The retarded and the mentally disturbed aren't getting the care they need, so talk about not making any staff cuts by spokesmen for the governor is ironic. There are many other areas where it's possible to pare down the bureaucracy without seriously affecting service to the taxpayers.

Our city has had to make big slashes in its payrolls, with considerable effect on essential services, including police and fire protection and sanitation. In the police force alone there have been several times the total cutback the governor's office just announced.

The state's situation is nowhere nearly as desperate as the city's continues to be, and these two centers are providing very essential services which must be augmented, not diminished. One possible place to look for additional economies could be at the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan, where the State of New York is the prime tenant of the Port Authority, occupying many floors of those towers.