

# 200 Willowbrook employes face possibility of losing jobs

By SYDNEY FREEDBERG

A deputy commissioner of the Department of Mental Hygiene revealed yesterday that as many as 200 state workers at the Willowbrook Developmental Center stand to lose their jobs within the next year and a half.

In a concession that the unionized employes said added fuel to their strike threat, Thomas A. Coughlin, the commissioner, admitted layoffs at the institution for the retarded are "bound to occur" as Willowbrook decreases its population.

Although it is impossible, Coughlin said, to disclose an exact timetable for the firings, he indicated that the state might begin to lay off civil servants this year, and that the reductions in Willowbrook's work force will continue to in-

crease with time.

Saying he wanted to "clear up" earlier statements in which he vowed there would be no layoffs as a result of the United Cerebral Palsy Association takeover of a portion of Willowbrook, Coughlin maintained the workers instead will lose their jobs because of a court-mandated plan to reduce the number of Willowbrook residents.

Under the plan, the institution has until 1981 to get the population, now at 2,400 residents, down to 250 by discharging patients to smaller community facilities.

Care for 640 of those residents has already been transferred to UCP.

"In 1975," according to Coughlin, "we projected there would be 1,500 residents at Willowbrook by March 31, 1978.

That's what the spending plan budgets for."

He added that with the phasedown of patient load, there will be a commensurate reduction in staff, with 1,130 of the institution's 4,300 workers lost by March 31, 1978.

"We'd like the whole thing to take care of itself by attrition," Coughlin said, "but there's a very good possibility that won't happen.

"They (the union) kept pressing me for a number," insisted Coughlin, following a meeting over the takeover dispute in Brooklyn Federal Court. "People kept asking me when and how many and when you get in front of a federal

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