

Parents have doubts too

By BRUCE ALPERT

When Salvatore Giordano heard about last night's meeting for parents of Willowbrook Developmental Center residents called by the union representing the institution's 4,000 employees, he figured he'd better attend.

Giordano, a resident of Howard Beach, Queens, and the father of a 17-year-old boy at Willowbrook, said that it

was important that the workers know that not all parents want the institution depopulated and care for the retarded switched from public to private care.

"If I thought my boy could make it in the community, I'd keep him in my house," Giordano said. "But he just can't make it in the community and I'm afraid if they take him out of here, he just won't make it."

Giordano, one of about 20 Willowbrook

parents to attend the meeting in Building 3 of the 384-acre institution for the retarded sponsored by the Civil Service Employees Association, said his son was too profoundly retarded and hyperactive to survive in the community.

"He'll see somebody with glasses and just knock them off because he doesn't

(Continued on Page A 2)

(From Page A 1)

know any better," Giordano said. "Someone in the community wouldn't understand and probably would beat him to a pulp."

Other parents, who heard CSEA President Felton King call for a new coalition of parents and workers to fight efforts to replace state care for the retarded with private programs operated by such groups as United Cerebral Palsy, said they shared Giordano's concerns.

"I wouldn't let them transfer my daughter out of Willowbrook when they proposed it," said Lois Duncan of Manhattan, whose 37-year-old daughter has lived at Willowbrook since 1950. "She can be self-abusive and abusive to others and at least at Willowbrook there's enough people watching out after her that she doesn't get hurt too bad."

King, who described last night's meeting as the first of what he hopes will be regular sessions between parents and workers, said that the union was willing to offer legal help to parents who don't want their children transferred out of the institution. According to a court

order, Willowbrook's resident population, once over 6,000, must be reduced to 250 by 1981.

"We think some kids should go into the community," King said. "But some simply are not able to adjust and they shouldn't be forced to go."

Those that are transferred to community facilities, should continued to be cared for by state workers instead of private groups, he said.

"We think the kids should have the benefit of people who know them and have worked with them, some for as long as 20 years," King said.

Susan Techky, who heads the union's education program, said that the CSEA and Willowbrook administrators have agreed to push for \$1.2 million in state funding for a program to retrain some 250 Willowbrook employees to work in the community.

But so far, she said, the employees have not been told whether the state will fund the program.

"I think you can call that a real test of their so called good faith," King said. "That will tell you something about their commitment to the state workers."

Willowbrook employees are concerned

about losing their jobs as the population of the institution is reduced, and care is transferred to private groups.

King said that he's sure layoffs of state workers will occur soon as a direct result of the takeover by United Cerebral Palsy in September of the care of 641 Willowbrook residents. "It's just a matter of time," he said.

State officials say that any layoffs will be a result of the continuing efforts to depopulate Willowbrook and not as a result of the UCP presence at the institution.