

Mills says the anger of the parents is motivated by concern for their children, disgust at the state's refusal to act and the fear that the process of Willowbrook coming to Woodbridge already has begun.

Willowbrook is the name of a New York facility for severely retarded persons that received national attention for poor conditions about a decade ago. At the time, Wurf was in charge of the employe union there and Mills charges the union leaders' actions resulted in the conditions.

"Willowbrook happens when the employes begin to look at their union leaders as their bosses and the leaders care only about protecting their members," said Mills. "Wurf wants the same power at Woodbridge he had at Willowbrook — but the parents will stop him."

Wurf, who says his actions led to improvements at the New York school, bristles at the charge.

"That's the crassest thing I've ever heard," he said. "As long as they say things like that, there will be no peace between me and the Woodbridge parents."

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The labor-management peace at Woodbridge began to come apart last June when an AFSCME shop steward was brought up on disciplinary charges and dismissed by the school. Wurf vowed then he would topple Pirone. In July, Wurf accused Pirone of being a partner in a corporation that owned and operated a number of stores, some of which advertised in the parent-subsidized school newspaper.

In August, Wurf called the school an animal farm — a remark he later

publicly retracted — and charged that supervisors were "beating up" workers and generally being disrespectful. He set a strike date for Sept. 12.

The union leader called off the walk-out after state officials agreed to listen to employe grievances. Nearly 50 workers testified at the hearing and, while they complained about the distastefulness of the job and the disrespectful attitude of supervisors, only one worker claimed she had been physically abused by a supervisor.

Later that month, Wurf and the state reached an agreement which promised continuing reviews of personnel practices, training programs — and the attorney general's probe into Pirone's personal business affairs.

In March and April, AFSCME conducted two statewide strikes — the first, for five hours, the second for two. Mills' group obtained the restraining order after submitting affidavits to the court warning the health of the retarded residents would be endangered. They subsequently filed affidavits contending that at least two children were injured during the walkouts.

The parent association also has won a promise from the Assembly Institutions Committee to conduct a public hearing into Wurf's conduct. The hearings, Mills said, will give his group "the forum we need to show exactly what happens when a power-hungry labor leader tries to take over a state school."

Wurf, meanwhile, warned that conditions will worsen unless the parents cease their attacks on him.

"The attitudes of the workers toward the children are bound to be affected if they know their union is under attack and their leader might be imprisoned. That doesn't mean retribution — it just means the nuances of care might be changed."