

State Hospital Staffs May Widen Strike

By JOSEPH MANCINI

The strike by office workers and switchboard operators at two state mental hospitals here threatened to spread today to mental institutions throughout the city and state.

Nurses and administrators were doubling up—manning emergency telephone lines and operating vital records departments—at Bronx and Brooklyn State Hospitals where about 175 workers walked out yesterday.

The walkout was in protest over what a union spokesman described as the failure last Friday by the State Civil Service Dept. to upgrade 45 lower job categories.

The spokesman for the Civil Service Employees Assn., a state-wide group with headquarters in Albany, said the state's action especially enraged some 11,000 lower-echelon workers since 180 other job titles were upgraded resulting in pay increases for 28,000 employees.

Some 200 civil service employees were planning to stage a rally today in front of Gov. Rockefeller's Manhattan office at 22 W. 55th St.

Workers at Willowbrook State School, on Victory Blvd. in Staten Island, were "on the verge" of striking, the union spokesman said. Willowbrook, with 5,400 patients of all ages, is the nation's largest institution for the mentally retarded.

2,000 Workers

But Dr. Jack Hammond, Willowbrook director, said he believed the 2,000 union workers there would decide not to strike, at least not until March 18, a date mentioned during earlier discussions for a statewide walkout.

The union spokesman said that workers at Manhattan State, 600 E. 125th St., were meeting today to consider a strike.

Hammond said a strike would strip Willowbrook of two thirds of its personnel and create "a very serious situation."

He added: "I am deeply concerned about the care and health and safety of the patients. I fully understand the employes' concern over what they consider underpayment for their services. I support their plea for more adequate compensation. I cannot support a walkout in support of that plea."

Another issue in the dispute was an 8 per cent pay increase described as "grossly inadequate" by the workers. The union had sought a 20 per cent raise. Some of the striking workers earn as little as \$3,600 a year, the union spokesman said.

A spokesman for Rockefeller warned the strikers might be in violation of the Taylor Law forbidding strikes by public employes and could result in their dismissal.

The state runs 19 mental hospitals and nine schools for the mentally retarded. Bronx State is at 1500 Waters Pl. and Brooklyn State at 681 Clarkson Av.

STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE
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Willowbrook unit votes strike OK

Some 200 members of the Willowbrook State School Chapter of the Civil Service Employees Association last night authorized their delegates to a special meeting next week in Albany to vote "yes" on a strike proposal.

The association of state employes has balked at Gov. Rockefeller's proposal for an eight per cent wage increase and has proposed a statewide walkout for March 18 if the offer is not sweetened. The Albany meeting is set for next Thursday.

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