

City warns it can't take state patients

By GAEL HUMMEL

If an organization representing state mental hygiene employes strikes state hospitals beginning Monday, as it has threatened, "there will be no room for state mental hospital patients in city hospitals," Hospital Commissioner Joseph V. Terencio said yesterday.

Council 50, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employes, AFL-CIO, has announced plans to begin striking metropolitan area hospitals and schools caring for mentally ill and retarded patients, with Creedmoor State Hospital in Queens Village, L.I., slated to be struck first. Willowbrook State School has not yet been scheduled for strike action.

There are about 6,000 patients at Creedmoor, according to State Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Alan Miller. Of these, 1,000 adult patients, ranging in age from 17 to 65, have been sent home on leave, in preparation for the strike.

A spokesman said 200 children, aged 6 to 16, had been sent home in anticipation of the strike and another 200 children and 500 adults have been transferred to other state hospitals. About 3,300 patients remain.

He said that of the 2,800 employes at the hospital, about 1,000 are members of Council 50.

"Every effort is being made to avert a strike," said a spokesman of the Public Employment Relations Board's mediation panel, which began meeting yesterday in Albany. "They are prepared to meet round the clock until a settlement is reached," he said.

Members of the panel, appointed yesterday, met with

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union officials and later with representatives of the governor's office.

There are about 100,000 patients in state mental hospitals and schools, who are cared for by some 142,000 state employes, 50,000 of whom are mental hygiene workers.

The AFL-CIO unit has been working to represent the 50,000 state mental hygiene employes as their bargaining agent. Last year Gov. Rockefeller named the rival Civil Service Employees Association as bargaining agent for the employes for a one-year period.

He recently renewed CSEA recognition pending recommendations from the state's current review of the collective bargaining procedures.

The association, according to its Albany headquarters spokesman, is currently negotiating for a \$1,200 increase for all state employes, while the AFL-CIO is demanding a minimum wage of \$6,000. The CSEA, also, has threatened to strike if its demands are not met. These cover, retirement, vacations, insurance and overtime and resemble closely AFL-CIO demands.

Willowbrook State School, with 5,000 patients, will be struck at a later date, "if necessary," according to a Council 50 spokesman.

"However," he said, "there will be no strike if the governor keeps his word and allows an election for a bargaining agent to represent his state employes."

CSEA officials at Willowbrook say that in the event of a strike most employes, who are members of that organization, will stay on the job.