

State budget

\$\$ for retarded care

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The State Mental Hygiene Department had orders today to relieve understaffing and overcrowding in state schools for the mentally retarded — subject of critical publicity earlier this year.

The state legislature provided the department with \$12.4-million in additional funds for the next fiscal year with instructions to use the money for the care of the retarded. The action raised the department's budget from \$600 million to \$613 million.

The legislature's fiscal committees said the money will enable the implementation of a three-stage plan:

Phase 1 — Close admissions at Willowbrook, Letchworth Village and Wassauville state schools and provide new staff at Williamsburg, Kings County State School, Sheridan unit of Manhattan State School, and Bernard Fineson unit of Queens State School.

Phase 2 — Transfer between 1,000 and 1,500 retarded adults and geriatric patients from Willowbrook, Wassauville and Letchworth Village to available space in several state hospitals, where mental retardation units will be created.

Phase 3 — Provide additional patient care staff at Willowbrook, Wassauville, Letchworth Village, Newark and Rome state schools. In addition, staff will be hired to open the Oswald D. Heck school in Schenectady.

Altogether, the extra money is expected to permit the creation of 2,000 more jobs within the department.

Staten Island Advance, Wed, March 29, 1972

CSEA strike threatens Willowbrook

The state Civil Service Employees Association yesterday threatened a "no contract, no work" action for midnight Friday which would leave patients at Willowbrook State School, and other state institutions without attendants and close state office buildings.

The CSEA said at a news conference at the Warwick Hotel, Manhattan, that its 140,000 members would not report for work after midnight Friday unless the state came up with a "meaningful contract offer."

Negotiations between the two sides continued at an undisclosed location. The state's contract with the union expires at midnight Friday.

Solomon Bendet, president of the CSEA New York City Chapter, said union delegates voted overwhelmingly one week ago "to adopt a no contract, no work position unless our negotiators receive an offer from the state which they deem worthy of presenting to our members."

Bendet said that during the five months of talks the state "has treated our negotiators with practical contempt." He said that in the midst of the talks, the state's chief negotiator, Abe Lavine, took a Caribbean vacation.

Bendet said the union has placed 500 demands on the bargaining table, but he said the key issues were salaries, pensions, health benefits and job security. The CSEA is seeking 15 per cent wage hike on a two-year contract.

CSEA members currently average between \$6,000 and \$8,000 a year.

Robert Gudd, CSEA negotiator, said there have been "no counter offers" from the state. "They refused to talk about salaries, retirements and other benefits," claiming the state has "no money," he said.

Neither Lavine nor members of his staff in Albany could be reached for comment.

In the event of a strike, patients at Willowbrook State School and other institutions for the mentally ill and the retarded would be hit the hardest. There would be no attendants to care for the patients in a system that Gov. Rockefeller has admitted is grossly understaffed.

Also affected by a strike would be all state office buildings which provide, among other things, unemployment checks and tax returns.

Bendet said, "A strike is avoidable. We always want to avoid a strike."

But following the news conference, a participant in the negotiations admitted that "at this point, a strike appears inevitable."