

Civil Service union optimistic on talks

ALBANY (UPI) — Representatives of the state and the Civil Service Employees Association resumed bargaining at noon yesterday in an effort to reach an agreement before the midnight contract deadline.

Progress has been reported in the talks, and spokesmen for both sides said they expected the contract would be extended to avoid a strike.

A spokesman for the 140,000-member union said optimistically there was "a possibility things could be wrapped up" in the talks.

One stumbling block involves whether existing pension benefits should be carried over to the new contract. The state, faced with skyrocketing public employe pension costs, was examining recommendations of a commission calling for a state-wide pension plan. The CSEA wants their present benefits extended to the new pact.

The legislature has not yet taken final action on the pension situation, and Gov. Rockefeller reportedly wants the pension issue left open in any agreement dealing with new state workers hired after July 1.

The union is opposed to such a delay concerning new employes.

The question of a pay raise, if any, was not expected to be much of a problem this year, with the state in a better financial position than when it negotiated its last contract, during a period of austerity and tight budget controls.