

CSEA to ask for new wage increase

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — The Civil Service Employees Association plans to ask the state formally this week for a wage increase, in a move which ignores Gov. Hugh Carey's plan to freeze most state workers' wages for a year.

The request signals the beginning of serious new contract negotiations between the Office of Employee Relations and the CSEA, which represents 147,000 state workers.

The two sides have achieved little since bargaining began Oct. 20 in an attempt to iron out an agreement by April 1. Both sides have accused the other of "foot dragging."

The wage-increase demand, the specifics of which have not been disclosed, follows Gov. Hugh Carey's request that the legislature freeze the wages of most state civil-service employees. Carey's proposal, presented to the legislature Monday, would also relieve state negotiators of responsibility of even discussing wage increases.

The Office of Employee Relations is now obligated to discuss wages or any other proposals placed on the bargaining table, under the Taylor Law, which governs

public-employee bargaining in the state.

The negotiations began under less than ideal conditions last fall, and relations have deteriorated since then. Spokesmen for both sides are already conceding that it may be necessary to go to fact-finding and mediation.

The CSEA delegates have voted to authorize a strike unless an agreement is reached before the April 1 deadline.

The delegates, meeting in a convention before bargaining began, also approved a resolution barring union leaders from rescinding the strike call.

In response, the state's chief negotiator, Donald Wollett, termed the CSEA's actions "reckless" and "irresponsible." In a later statement, Wollett said he wants to eliminate free lunches, which employees now can qualify for under certain circumstances, and free or subsidized parking.

Carey has also ordered the layoffs of an estimated 2,500 state workers and announced plans for further layoffs when he unveils the budget.

The CSEA was a party to a lawsuit which successfully blocked the legislature from dictating the use of public-employee pension funds to bail out New York City last year.

In another action, the union says it is charging the state with violating the Taylor Law by firing permanent civil-service workers before laying off provisional, temporary workers.

In addition to a wage freeze, the CSEA said it is seeking improved health and dental care; job security provisions

and grievance procedures.

Jack Carey, who heads the union's bargaining team, said the negotiators would present their wage demands during a series of meetings with OER officials this week. Demands affecting other areas of the contract were presented during earlier sessions, he said.

"We're still far apart on the major issues," said Carey, who is no relation to the governor. "It's probably likely we'll have to go to mediation and fact-finding."

Norm Brand, a spokesman for the Office of Employee Relations, said that the office had not received a complete set of proposals from the CSEA as of Tuesday.

"We would have hoped they would have provided us with a complete package of what they wanted by now," he said. "I don't know what they're waiting for."

Relations between the state and the CSEA have been strained since last spring, when Carey forced the union to accept a \$250 bonus for each state employee, instead of a wage increase.

The CSEA represents employees in four bargaining units covering institutional, administrative, operational and professional, scientific and technical services.

The most recent rounds of negotiations have been on a unit-by-unit basis, with 12 negotiators from each of the units sitting down with a team of state representatives at a variety of locations in Albany.

Talks affecting the estimated 40,000 employees in the professional, scientific and technical services unit, however, have been postponed pending the results of a representational challenge which has been mounted by a rival unit.