

Compromise may avert CSEA strike set for Monday

By PETER HARRIGAN

Leaders of the Legislature and the state Civil Service Employees Association have come up with a tentative compromise plan to avert a threatened strike next Monday by 145,000 state workers who are seeking higher wages.

Sources said that under the compromise, which was still not formally agreed to by late yesterday, a special 12-member legislative committee will meet in Albany later this week and recommend a proposed settlement to the wage dispute between the state and the CSEA.

The CSEA will then have to postpone a strike now set for Monday at 6 a.m., just eight hours before the legislative committee was originally scheduled to meet.

Aides to Senate Majority Leader Warren M. Anderson and CSEA president Theodore Wenzl yesterday confirmed details of the plan but indicated the proposal had not been presented either to union negotiators or to members of the legislative committee, which is headed by State Sen. John J. Marchi.

At the same time, however, the aides expressed optimism that the strike will be averted under the compromise plan.

In another development, Gov. Carey met yesterday with his cabinet to develop contingency plans for the continuation of essential state services in the event administrative, professional, operational and institutional employes do walk off their jobs Monday.

Details of the meeting could not immediately be learned, but spokesmen for state agencies with facilities on Staten Island said emergency plans have been developed for use if workers strike next week. State workers last struck in April 1972, when a pay dispute led to a two-day walkout one weekend.

The current dispute centers around the CSEA's demand for raises amounting to the higher of 12 per cent of current wages or \$1,200, and the state's final offer of simple 5 per cent raises this year and next year.

In addition to the basic money issue, the CSEA is angered over the state's demand that it be permitted to obtain some services from private contractors rather than from state employes. CSEA officials view the demand as an effort to weaken the union's power.

The special legislative impasse committee, which is expected to deal only with the question of pay raises, must recommend a proposed wage settlement for consideration by the full Legislature when it reconvenes in Albany one week from today.

Although Marchi said last week he had no plans to have the committee meet before next Monday, a spokesman for Anderson said yesterday the meeting might be held sometime this week.

Aides to Assembly Speaker Stanley Steingut, who would also have to approve such a change, could not be reached for comment yesterday. Sources said, however, that Steingut has indicated a willingness to move up the meeting in an effort to avert a strike.

"There has been no final decision, but there is a possibility of our moving it up," Anderson's press secretary, Richard J. Roth, said of the hearing. "That would have to be accompanied by a pledge by the CSEA not to strike on the 18th, since there would be no point in moving up the meeting otherwise."

CSEA spokesman Roger Cole said union negotiators might be willing to go along with the plan if the legislative committee develops "a firm, fair offer by the end of this week."

"Right now, we're set to go out on the 18th," Cole said. "But if the committee gives us a good offer by the weekend, then it's a whole new ballgame."

Cole said last week the CSEA might back off its demand for a 12 per cent raise and settle for a hike of about 10 per cent if it was proposed by the legislative committee. Any proposal would have to be adopted by the full Legislature before it could take effect.

The largest state-run Island facility that would be affected by a strike is the Willowbrook Developmental Center, which employs about 3,000 CSEA members.

A spokesman for the Department of

Mental Hygiene said the agency has contingency plans "to guarantee that our patients (at Willowbrook) are cared for," although he declined to provide specifics.

During previous strikes, the spokesman noted, some patients were temporarily sent home to their families while Island residents were asked to care for other patients who remained at the institution. Food preparation and laundry services were provided by supervisors and by some employes who did not join in the strike, the spokesman said.

It is expected such steps would be taken again in the event of a strike, both at Willowbrook and at the state-run South Beach Psychiatric Center.

A spokesman for the Department of Correctional Services said security guards at the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility are not CSEA members and would not be affected by a strike unless they refused to cross picket lines set up by other striking workers.

He said the department does have emergency plans in the event guards and kitchen workers, clerks, counselors and other CSEA employes do walk out, but he declined to reveal any details.

Other major Island facilities staffed by CSEA employes include the Department of Motor Vehicles issuing office in Tompkinsville and Administrative Adjudication Bureau in St. George, and the Labor Department's unemployment office in West Brighton and employment office in St. George.

Spokesmen for both agencies said that, in the event of a strike, officials would attempt to keep all four offices open by staffing them with administrative employes who are not CSEA members.

The CSEA estimates it has about 4,000 members who work on the Island and several thousand more who live here but work in other boroughs, primarily Manhattan.