

# Weekend talks avert state strike; 14% raise won

By PHILIP H. DIXON

ALBANY, N.Y. (UPI) — A contract agreement worked out in secret weekend talks has averted a strike by 141,000 state employees which union leaders said would have closed down most government functions today.

Gov. Hugh Carey and Theodore Wenzl, president of the Civil Service Employees Association, announced the tentative settlement Sunday morning after a secret all-night bargaining session.

The agreement on a two-year pact averted a walkout threatened for 6 a.m. today which would have been the first statewide strike in the CSEA's history. Union leaders had predicted a strike would "paralyze" state government.

Wenzl said he was confident the rank and file would ratify the contract, which gives workers a minimum 14 per cent raise over the two years. He said ratification would take two to three weeks by mail ballot.

Carey, flanked at a hastily called Capitol news conference by Wenzl and Donald Wollett, the state's chief negotiator, said the pact would provide a 5 per cent or \$500 raise, whichever is larger, retroactive to April 1.

On Oct. 1 employees would receive another 4 per cent or \$400 raise, whichever is greater. They would receive another 5 per cent or \$500 hike on April 1, 1978, Carey said.

A CSEA spokesman said while employees at the top of the salary scale would thus get a total 14 per cent raise, excluding longevity increments, many workers at the bottom of the scale would receive raises of about 24 per cent.

The package also includes about \$2 million in increased travel allowances, a plan under which workers may trade five vacation days a year for cash and other improved fringe benefits.

Noting that the workers had not received a wage increase in two years, Carey said the "morale and effectiveness of our civil service employees could well be impaired" without "a fair and equitable settlement."

A CSEA spokesman said the two-year cost of the raises would total \$225 million.



Gov. Carey announces that the state and Civil Service Employees Association have reached a tentative agreement averting a strike that was set for 6 a.m. today. Listening are Donald Wollett, left, the state's chief negotiator; Theodore Wenzl, behind Carey, president of the CSEA, and William McGowan, right, CSEA executive director. Associated Press Laserphoto

Although that figure was well above the \$170 million contained in the state's last publicized two-year contract offer, Carey said the settlement was "well within the limits" of the state's financial plan.

Carey said lower interest rates on this year's annual spring borrowing netted some savings that the state would apply towards the contract, which would run until April 1, 1979.

Formal talks in the contract dispute broke off Friday with the CSEA announcing that unless a major improvement was made in the state's offer, a strike was inevitable.

A State Supreme Court justice had issued an order barring the strike but the CSEA had said it would ignore the order. Violation of the order could have subjected Wenzl and other CSEA leaders to 30-day jail sentences and fines.

A special committee of the legislature, which would have been required to impose a settlement if the agreement had not been reached, was to have held a hearing today to discuss the deadlock.