

# Strike set tomorrow at 8 state sites as union ends talks

By MARY FIESS

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Despite a fast-approaching strike deadline, the state and its civil servants' union were still not talking Saturday following a breakdown in negotiations over a wage increase for 140,000 employees.

Instead, both sides stepped up their preparations for a strike Monday. The union put the finishing touches on its picketing plans while state officials took steps to prepare the state's prisons and hospitals for a walkout. Meanwhile, State Supreme Court Justice Robert Williams refused to lift a court injunction prohibiting the state employees from striking. The Civil Service Employees Association sought to have the court order overturned on the ground that its threatened strike would not cause "irreparable harm" to the state.

"We're so well-organized we will clamp the state shut with our strike," said CSEA spokesman Roger Cole.

State-run institutions and offices on Staten Island that would be affected by a strike include the Willowbrook Developmental Center; the South Beach Psychiatric Center; the Institute for Basic Research in Willowbrook; the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility; Labor Department offices in St. George and West Brighton and Department of Motor Vehicle offices in Tompkinsville and St. George.

In the event of a strike, agency officials have said, supervisory personnel would be brought in to open and staff offices. At Willowbrook and South Beach, officials are attempting to temporarily discharge patients to their families.

Cole said local CSEA chapters across the state were setting up strike headquarters, making picket signs, and drawing up picketing schedules for "every single work location in the state."

At the same time, state prisons and hospitals stockpiled supplies for up to three weeks, and security was tightened

at the Capitol and other state buildings in Albany.

Robert Morgado, director of state operations, said other measures would also be taken to lessen the consequences of the strike, particularly in the state's hospitals and prisons. All corrections personnel, for instance, will be kept at work until relief shifts arrive, he said.

State prison guards are not represented by the CSEA, but most other prison employees are, and some officials have expressed fears that the guards might refuse to cross picket lines at the prisons.

On Saturday, the Public Employment Relations Board, powerless to order a return to the bargaining table, tried instead to persuade both sides to resume talks. But by early evening, the mediation board's efforts were still unsuccessful.

Negotiators for the state showed up at the site selected by PERB for new talks. But no representatives from the Civil Service Employees Association appeared at the State Police Academy here.

"It's pretty clear to everybody that we're going to strike," said CSEA spokesman Roger Cole.

"If the state shows it's willing to put a new offer on the table, then we'll sit down and talk. But unless we get that sign from the state, there's no point in resuming talks," he added.

There were no indications about whether the state would better its latest wage offer. But a spokesman for the Office of Employee Relations said "We're willing to be flexible."

The CSEA walked out on talks with the state after six hours Friday, declaring that Gov. Hugh Carey had delivered a new offer so bad it was an "insult" and that only a "miracle" would prevent a strike.

The union is threatening to walk out 6 a.m. Monday — a step that could cause

disruptions in mental institutions and prisons housing tens of thousands of persons, and eventually tie up state paperwork and finances.

Though some observers interpreted the maneuvering Saturday as "last-minute brinkmanship," the union stuck to its oft-repeated promise to strike Monday if there is no better wage offer from the state.

The state workers represented by the CSEA have had no regular increases in wages since Carey took office in 1975, although they got one-shot bonuses of \$250 each the last two years. And many say they are ready to strike this year because their wages are not keeping pace with their bills.

The average salary of state employees is usually listed as \$10,000. But Cole says that average salary is boosted largely by the 39,000 professional-level employees who average \$15,327.

"If you take out the professionals, the average salary is less than \$9,000," he says.

According to the state's salary and employment figures, the largest concentration of state employees, 28,447 statewide, is paid on the Grade 9 level, which starts at \$8,051. The second largest group, comprising 12,208 workers, is at the Grade 4 level, starting at \$6,148. Next in line are the 11,572 Grade 7 workers with a starting salary level of \$7,204.

One wage offer from the Carey administration, which the union rejected, would have given the 60,000 to 70,000 lower-paid employees a 5 per cent increase effective April 1 and another 3½ per cent Jan. 1. The higher-paid employees would have gotten 3½ per cent now and 5 per cent Jan. 1.

The union, now in the middle of a two-year contract, is negotiating under a wage reopener clause for the contract year beginning April. It is demanding a 12 per cent wage hike.