

State wage pact doesn't hike base pay

ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — Annual salary increments may be a thing of the past for most state workers, thanks to their tentative new wage contract.

The proposed new pact between the Civil Service Employees Association and Gov. Hugh Carey's administration was reached Sunday morning, under threat of a Monday morning strike deadline. It would increase current worker wages by 14 per cent over two years, 9 per cent this year and 5 per cent next year.

But the pact would not increase the basic state salary schedule at all. Leaving the schedule unchanged means that new workers will not benefit from the raise.

The new contract is estimated to be worth \$220 million over its two-year life, but by not increasing the three-year-old salary schedule, the state saves millions of dollars.

The failure to boost the salary schedule means the 14 per cent raises will put many state employees at or beyond the top scale for their grade, thus ruling out increments. Employees get increments in each of their first five years in a Civil Service grade and again after 10 and 15 years. The increments range from close to 5 per cent of annual salary in the lower grades to around 3 per cent at the higher grades.

The increments have been part of the state salary structure for decades.

A grade 20 employe in his or her third year, for instance, currently makes \$16,064. The 9 per cent of the raise payable this year will give that worker a raise of \$1,445, putting him or her immediately above the top minimum of \$17,248 for that grade. That means no \$592 increment next year, and no \$592 increment for six more years if the worker stays in the same salary grade.

In addition, the wage package makes

certain promotions much less financially attractive. A grade 15, step three worker, could jump four grades after the 14 per cent raise and only gain \$149 in the promotion process.

A union spokesman said Wednesday, "We were aware of this."

"However you want to look at it,"

said spokesman Roger Cole, "these people are getting a lot of money now. That was our main objective."

He noted that the automatic \$1,400 raises for persons on the low end of the scale would put them at salary levels they would not otherwise reach for more than a decade. For instance, a

first-year grade five worker goes from \$6,450 to \$7,850 in two years with the new contract. That worker would not go over \$7,670 for 10 years without the contract.

The proposed contract must still be ratified by the CSEA membership.