

City CSEA unit spurns contract

By TERENCE J. KIVLAN

In a rebellious mood, state workers in New York City yesterday agreed to reject Gov. Carey's contract offer amid calls for a strike and accusations of a "sellout" by the top union leadership in Albany.

"I think we are being taken," declared Sol Bendet, president of the city chapter of the Civil Service Employees Association, as several hundred members registered their disapproval of the contract by voice vote during a sometimes raucous meeting in the World Trade Center.

But Bendet stopped short of endorsing a strike, explaining he was warned last week in Albany that any walkout in the city would not be backed by the statewide union leaders.

"I was taunted," Bendet informed the lunchtime crowd. "They told me, If you go out, you go out alone."

Some of the more disgruntled workers at the meeting nevertheless felt the situation called for more than a contract rejection. "When are you sending us out on strike so we can get a raise," one man shouted.

"Are there enough state workers who are going to be sick on Friday to indi-

cate just how sick we are," another cried.

The rank and file membership and the union officials in the city are upset because the 14 per cent wage increase provided for in the contract would not be applied to the civil service salary schedule. Thus, the workers contend, an employe could actually end up losing money if he is promoted.

In addition, the city workers and officials point out, the failure to roll the increases into the salary scale would put a cloud over future contract talks. "Two

(Continued on Page 4)



Several hundred Civil Service Employee Association members attend a meeting in Manhattan's World Trade Center before agreeing to reject a proposed contract.

S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

City CSEA unit spurns contract

(From Page 1)

years from now, are they (state officials) going to say we are negotiating on the basis of the 1974 scale?" Bendet asked.

Bendet blamed the contract on the statewide union leaders, including Theodore Wenzl, president. He charged that the top CSEA officials ignored the membership's recommendations to bargain for a one-year contract with a 12 per cent pay hike.

He said he first learned of the state's offer by telephone April 17, the deadline for the settlement, and later became suspicious of the proposed contract when he found out that two of the CSEA's eight negotiators in Albany had voted against the pact.

Just before word of the tentative settlement arrived in the city, Bendet declared: "We had a good strike ready and it would have been a successful one, too."

Other union officials at the meeting charged that the Albany leadership "sold out" the rank and file members and deliberately undermined the job action. "They knew we wanted to go on strike and they sabotaged it," one negotiator said.

State workers in the city have also charged that Carey and the statewide CSEA officials conspired to withhold information about the details the new contract April 17 to avert a walkout by 140,000 union members throughout New York.

The workers say they didn't know the 14 per cent increase would not be built into the salary schedule until they read reports on the contract published last week in an Albany newspaper.

The statewide union leaders, meanwhile, have announced that the rank and file referendum on the contract has



Sol Bendet, left, president of the city chapter of the CSEA, addresses the meeting as union official Gennaro Fischetti of Silver Lake looks on.

S.I. Advance Photo by Robert Parsons

been put off until next week while negotiations continue with Gov. Carey's representatives.

According to the leaders, an impasse has developed over how the 14 per cent increases would affect workers who are in line for normal longevity increments. The leaders say they disagree with the state over whether the contract hike should supplement the increments.

The New York City Chapter of the CSEA, which includes some 4,000 employees of South Beach Psychiatric and Willowbrook Developmental Centers and thousands of Manhattan office workers, is one of the smallest in the CSEA and could be easily outvoted in the referendum.

"In Albany, we're known as the downstate rebels," Bendet remarked.

Page 2 of 2 pages