

State workers' union agrees to pact

By D.J. ROSENBAUM

ALBANY, N.Y. (UPI) — The state and the Civil Service Employees Association reached tentative agreement Sunday on a three-year pact that sources said included a first-ever, cost-of-living increase and state contributions to a general benefits fund.

Union sources called the contract a "major breakthrough."

The agreement was outlined to union delegates at a 2 ½-hour meeting Sunday night. It is subject to a vote by the 100,000 clerical, institutional and blue-collar workers. Results of mail balloting are expected by April 15.

The contract provides for a 7 percent wage increase the first year and minimum 3.5 percent hikes in each of the next two years. A cost of living escala-

tor activated at 4.5 percent could bring the wage hike up to as much as 7 percent.

Under the escalator clause, for every percent the inflation rate climbs over 4.5, wages would go up 0.77 percent, sources said.

A news conference was scheduled for noon today at the Capitol for a formal announcement by Gov. Hugh Carey and CSEA President William McGowan.

If approved, the contract would expire in 1982, the next gubernatorial election year.

"We've got ourselves tied to inflation," said union sources close the talks. "We think it's a good deal."

A clause in the contract would implement "more meaningful performance ratings" of public employees, sources

said. Under the plan, an employee could reach top pay in a position in as little as 1 ½ years. In any event, the longest it could take to reach top pay is four years, down from five years in the old pact.

CSEA sources said the pact was "definitely a victory for the union. It includes 30 or 35 positive changes in workers' compensation, grievances and improved medical coverage."

The state reportedly would also contribute \$60 million to a general benefits fund over the life of the contract. In exchange, sources said, the union would take over dental and prescription drug insurance plans from the state.

State negotiators were in "hour-to-hour contact" with the White House toward the end of negotiations.