

Bus Drivers Get A Tentative Pact In School Strike

By MARCIA CHAMBERS

The three-month strike by school-bus drivers, which has kept 16,000 handicapped children away from classes, was tentatively settled yesterday with an agreement that would preserve job security for at least some of the striking bus drivers and matrons.

A tentative agreement was also reached yesterday between the state and 7,000 prison guards after more than 40 hours of negotiations on the remaining issue, possible retaliation by the state against the officers. [Page 25.]

Union to Vote Monday

The president of the Board of Education and the leaders of the Amalgamated Transit Union issued an "agreement in principle" that would govern new bus contracts for transporting 132,000 public-school students next fall. Yesterday's announcement came after four days of closed-door negotiations led by Justice Milton Mollen, the presiding justice of the Appellate Division in Brooklyn.

Even if the 3,000-member union approves the agreement at a meeting that is set for Monday, a spokesman for the largest bus company said it would be 10 days or more before its buses could return to operation.

Details of the accord, announced jointly by Stephen R. Aiello, the president of the Board of Education, and John Ambrosio, the acting president of the union, were withheld pending Monday's meeting. Mr. Aiello said he would recommend

that the full Board of Education give the required approval.

Lawyers for both sides will meet this weekend to put the oral agreement into writing, and Mr. Aiello said he hoped to have the buses operating "as soon as possible." Burton Cooper, the lawyer for the Varsity Transit Company, the school system's largest bus carrier, said yesterday his buses would probably roll in 10 days to two weeks. He said Varsity's 1,500 buses and vans would first have to undergo inspection by the state Department of Transportation.

Varsity employs most of the striking drivers and matrons. Its contract with the Board of Education expires at the end of June.

The walkout was spurred by a plan of Frank J. Macchiarola, the Schools Chancellor, to call for new bus contracts that eliminated job-security provisions for the workers. Wage and parity provisions with bus drivers employed by the Transit Authority were also deleted from new contracts. The resolution of the parity issue was not disclosed yesterday.

Status of Bids Uncertain

And it was unclear yesterday whether bus companies — many of them not unionized — that submitted bids for contracts in February would let those bids stand in light of possible new pension and job-security requirements.

The walkout, which at the outset erupted in violence and prompted Mayor Koch to call the bus drivers "goons" and

"bastards," was the first major crisis for Mr. Macchiarola since he took office in July.

The Chancellor, calling the bus contracts a "rip-off," made the overhaul of the \$92-million-a-year bus system one of his major priorities. He said he could save \$10 million a year by employing real competitive bidding. That way, he said, part-time, nonunion drivers could be employed.

Over the last three months, 132,000 children were stranded and, while most found other ways to get to schools, thousands of handicapped children were forced to stay at home.

'Kiddie-Lift Began

Parents of handicapped children rallied outside City Hall and complained bitterly that their children had lost so much instruction that they had been set back for years. In some instances, parents of the handicapped lost their jobs because they were required to stay at home to care for their children.

On the other side, was the plight of the drivers whose jobs were disappearing.

After the violence began, the Mayor, saying the city would never "give in to extortion," had his top commissioners and executives drive handicapped chil-

dren to schools throughout the city. "Operation Kiddie-Lift," as the mayor's transportation caravan was called, lasted two weeks before it was taken over by the Board of Education.

Although the board was not paying the bus companies during the walkout, it estimates that it has spent nearly \$10 million for private taxis, car service, salaries and overtime for police assigned to guard the vehicles since the program began.

In the last month of the strike, the Chancellor sought to have bus companies under contract with the school system but not involved in the dispute transport children to school. But strikers massed outside garages where vans were stored and repeatedly clashed with police, forcing a suspension of some of the service.

Many of those bus companies were not unionized and many were successful low bidders for new bus contracts.

The new bus bids — the result of competitive bidding — have been described by the union and Varsity as excessively high.