

CSEA wins 32% wage hikes

By MARK LIFT

The state's largest civil service union, representing 107,000 workers, yesterday won three-year wage increases of at least 32%, and as much as 50% in some cases, in a contract that could set a pattern for other forthcoming negotiations.

Civil Service Employee Association President William McGowan called the deal "the best contract every negotiated by any union with New York State."

The agreement, ending negotiations that began last December, guarantees a 32% minimum wage increase for CSEA members, who include clericals, workers in state institutions and maintenance employees. They averaged \$11,395 under a contract expiring at the end of March.

Longevity and incremental wage payments and other benefits could boost the increases to 50%, a union official said. The deal will cost the state \$60 million in the first year of the contract, a state official said.

This public-sector agreement comes at a time when many unions representing private-sector workers—including those in the auto industry—are being asked to make major concessions to save their jobs.

"This is the first contract that gives state workers back what they gave up in the 1970s to help New York State meet its fiscal responsibilities," said Richard Chernela, a spokesman for the CSEA metropolitan area region. There are about 50,000 CSEA members in the metropolitan area.

A key to the new agreement is the state's ability to delay by one day the payment date of 10 consecutive checks. This would result in withholding one check in the first year, which would be payable when the employee retires.

The state will drop its controversial performance evaluation program for salary increases.

A sick-leave monitoring unit will be established, and state agencies themselves will be responsible for investigating time and attendance abuses, a state official said. The state will undertake a study of employee "burnout"—loss of interest in the job—as well, the official said. Additional day-care centers for state workers will be funded, the official added.

The CSEA and the state agreed to reopen talks on increased health care costs after July 1 if necessary ■