

Union leader raps Cuomo on \$\$ plans

By GEOFFREY TAYLOR

ALBANY (AP) — A state employee union leader said yesterday that new prison cells planned by Gov. Mario Cuomo might be needed to house some of the thousands of state workers he wants to lay off.

Testifying before a joint state Assembly and Senate public hearing on the governor's proposed \$31.52 billion spending plan for 1983-84, Elizabeth Hoke urged legislators to consider tax increases and more voluntary retirement inducements to pare the state's workforce instead of layoffs.

Cuomo wants to reduce New York's workforce by 14,000 full-time positions, mainly through layoffs.

Ms. Hoke, president of the Public Employee Federation, said it was not fair to spend millions of dollars on added cells for the state's overcrowded prison system at the same time state workers are being laid off during a recession.

"How can anyone justify proposing an increase of \$60 million in operating funds and \$60 million in new capital moneys to immediately meet the critical needs of our corrections system?" she asked.

"Perhaps," she suggested, "he is creating beds for laid-off employees who become desperate enough to commit a crime."

An estimated 3,000 professional, scientific and technical employees represented by her union would get pink slips under Cuomo's budget proposal, Ms. Hoke said.

There were also other groups testifying against Cuomo's prison spending plans yesterday as the joint legislative panel continued to take testimony on the governor's proposed budget.

Joan Vermeulen of the Correctional Association of New York, urged legislators to "establish rational sentencing and release policies that provide for more efficient management of the prison population."

The group's suggestions included the repeal of provisions requiring prison sentences for all non-violent repeat offenders, expansion of probation supervision services, parole release for inmates with good prison records and non-prison punishment for technical parole violators.

Representatives of state university students, mental health advocates, librarians and others also took their turns yesterday warning the panel about hardships ahead if the governor's proposed cuts in his budget are approved.

"The governor's budget did not cut, it mauled. It did not bruise, it crushed," said Steve Cox, a paid lobbyist for the Student Association of the State University.

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