

States fires 7,587; spends \$220,000 for 23 new computers

By BRUCE ALPERT

At the same time the state Division of the Budget completed plans to lay off 7,587 state workers, it paid \$160,000 for 23 new computers and another \$60,000 for an employee training program, the Advance has learned.

"This sort of thing is well and good in good times, but when you're laying people off, including 12 people in your own office, this can't be defended," said one budget official who asked not to be identified.

Another employee said that the \$220,000 spent for the training program and new computers could have been better used keeping the 12 budget workers on the payroll.

Like the other 7,575 workers given pink slips yesterday, they will be removed from the state payroll on April 7.

"Training and computers are all well and good, but we're going to be struggling to make up for the loss of the 12 employees," said the second budget official.

The training program will be conducted by Arthur Andersen Inc., a Manhattan accounting

firm. The \$60,000 contract was awarded without competitive bidding, according to budget officials.

The computers were purchased from IBM.

Peter Lynch, spokesman for the Division of the Budget, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Meanwhile, William McGowan, president of the Civil Service Employees Association, yesterday announced his support for a proposal to clamp a sales tax on the fees charged by lawyers and other professionals.

McGowan, who heads the state's largest union, will personally ask Gov. Mario M. Cuomo to support the proposal and launch a campaign by the union's 100,000 members to press legislators to back the plan, a spokesman said.

But the proposal, which Fink says will avert many of the layoffs included in Cuomo's \$31.52 billion budget, faces likely opposition by the GOP-led Senate.

Negotiations between Cuomo and legislative leaders are expected to resume on Monday. The state is supposed to have a budget in place by April 1.