Beet Impact Is Big

The impact of the sugar beet industry has again been brought home to the Thompson Valley with the announced payment of more than $2.3 million to raisers in the Loveland Factory district. The payment is the first of four which sugar beet raisers will receive for producing 1,875,832 tons of beets in 1971. Other payments will come from the U.S. Sugar Act and from the sugar company again in April and October 1972. The final payments are actually a form of profit sharing as they are related to the efficiency of the sugar processing and to the price received for sugar sold by the company during the year ending in September.

Beets are an important factor in the Valley's economy. They provide an excellent cash crop, employment in the factories, and additional side employment in farm related industries. They also are closely tied to the area cattle feeding program as by-products are important in the feeding of cattle.

Beet farmers realize the importance of the industry to themselves and to their community and are currently making an effort to purchase the sugar company from Great Western United which has shown more interest in dollars than in making sugar. The current mailing of more than $2 million into the area should give added emphasis to the effort to gain control of the company.

Regardless of the ownership of the Great Western Sugar industry, it will apparently remain a vital, alive force in the Northern Colorado area.

New machinery and chemicals are rapidly replacing hand labor which used to accompany the raising of beets. With this advance one of the major objections to raising beets will be taken away and the industry will become an even larger asset to the community.

One major problem remains for the industry. At the present time beet sugar requires a federal subsidy to remain competitive with cane sugar. The subsidy is well justified as it continues a vital agricultural industry, and prevents the nation from being dependent upon foreign supply for a stable item.

Should Bob Owen and the farmer owned cooperative gain control of the Great Western Sugar industry the first item of business must be work on the genetic quality of beet seeds to make it possible to raise sugar beets that are economically competitive with sugar cane. This cannot be done through further improvement of the ton yield; it must be done through the improvement of the sugar percentage.

The research must start now to find a beet plant that will produce present beet tonnage and at the same time present a 20 per cent or larger sugar content. When this goal is reached there is little doubt that the sugar industry will thrive in the Valley. Every resident of the Valley will then benefit—the land owner, the beet raiser, the merchant, the professional men and the residents of the cities.

Beets are good . . . they should get better.