Sugar plant

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (AP) — Efforts to continue operating Holly Sugar Co.'s plant in Delta have failed, officials of the sugar company and the Western Colorado Beet Growers Association announced jointly Tuesday.

John B. Bunker, Holly president, and Keith Bond, president of the beet growers group, said it was decided at a meeting here that it is "no longer economically feasible" to continue running the plant.

The meeting had been called by growers to discuss alternatives for keeping the plant open. Holly indicated several months ago that it planned to close the facility because of economic considerations, including the lack of legislation needed to protect the domestic sugar industry from low-cost imported raw cane sugar.

Sugar quota

WASHINGTON (AP) — Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland said Tuesday he plans to seek a reduction in foreign sugar entering the United States this year but hasn't decided how large the cut should be.

Bergland told reporters a decision by the Ford administration last year to set the annual import quota at seven million tons of raw sugar was "a meaningless gesture" since actual imports are expected to be far less.

He said imports may be in the range of 4.6 million to 4.8 million tons this year.

The sugar quota probably could be reduced to six million or possibly five million tons without much trouble, but a further cut might raise a question of legal authority, Bergland said.

Agriculture Department lawyers are looking into possible alternatives, Bergland said. One might be to set price supports on domestically produced sugar and then establish a reduced quota to help carry out the program.

But Bergland said the Carter administration is still discussing what its policy toward the sugar industry should be.

The Sugar Act, which for 40 years set domestic and foreign sugar quotas in the U.S. market based on anticipated need, expired in 1974. Bergland said the absence of the law has created difficulties for domestic producers.