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Curtis Seeking Hearings to Air Sugar Situation

OMAHA (AP) — Expressing concern that the United States could lose its domestic sugar supply, Sen. Carl T. Curtis, R-Neb., said Friday he is calling for public hearings in Washington on the problems of the domestic sugar industry.

In a statement released from his Washington office, Curtis said, "Unless something is done to help American sugar producers our country could lose its domestic sugar supply."

Curtis said he is circulating a letter among 19 other senators from sugar producing states asking that they join him in requesting that Senate Finance Committee chairman Sen. Russell Long of Louisiana conduct the hearings soon.

SINCE THE Sugar Act expired at the end of 1974, Curtis said, prices paid to American sugar beet and sugar cane farmers have fallen drastically.

He said he has introduced an updated Sugar Act which would institute a country by country quota system for imported sugar to try to assure domestic farmers of "fair" returns.

Curtis suggested, however, that "there may be another legislative approach that would be in the best interests of the growers. We need to hear from all those who are so vitally affected in order to determine the best course of action," he said.

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Has beet country been moved?

Colorado was once known as Beet Country, U.S.A. But, in the last few years, the area has begun drifting away from the crop, and I'm wondering if Beet Country hasn't been moved to another area. Or, if the sugar beet is on the way out and sugar cane will take over. Naturally, I do not have the answer. The only people who know are those owning the sugar factories in this area.

Colorado became Beet Country years ago when someone (he was called Baumbaugh in the story Centennial) brought the crop to the area. I do not know what real name the author was referring to in his book—it could have been Eaton, Haythorn, or many others. Someone brought the crop here regardless of who it was.

The crop has been good to farmers and landowners, as well as the economy of the many rural communities around the factories. But, like all things, changes come. And, with Great Western's announcement Friday it appears the change is coming more rapidly than any of us thought it might.

When the Eaton factory closed a year ago, I wrote that Greeley would follow suit soon. There were those in that community that disagreed with me. Even after the closing of the three plants early this year, Greeley still held hope. Of course, Friday's announcement doesn't say the closing of the 11 plants is permanent, but, the implications are there.

The announcement has placed 215 people in Colorado in temporary unemployment and 265 in other states in the same category. What will happen now?

That's the \$64 question!

Many of us will speculate as to why Great Western has made these moves. We can only guess. I would say that EPA and federal government interference in the business has been a factor. I say this because during the newsprint shortage it was found that many paper plants closed due to the excessive demands of EPA.

I think perhaps the squabble with growers in this central area has something to do with the closings. Why do I say that? The news release to us read: "This action does not affect Billings Mont. where grower associations have approved contracts with the company for 1978-79."

Such business actions are always a shock, and the first question we ask ourselves is what do we do now? Once we get over the shock, life goes on pretty much the same. The kids still go to school, they win and lose athletic events, and the church bell rings at regular time on Sunday. But there is more to it than that.

We must get off our big, fat haunches and start looking, as did the pioneers, for something new to help our economy. Perhaps John Love was governor too soon. You know he worked to bring industry to Colorado — unlike Lamm who has worked to keep it out. Perhaps we should have Love back as governor!