

Beet Growers May Seek GW Court Order

By RUTHANN LEHMAN

DENVER — The president of the Mountain States Sugar Beet Growers Marketing Association this morning charged the Great Western Sugar Co. (GW) with possible criminal violation of the law for attempting to sign individual sugar beet farmers to contracts.

Kish Otsuka, president of the marketing association, said he is prepared to get a restraining order to stop the sugar company.

GW began approaching farmers Tuesday, but the two spokesmen said individual negotiations have apparently already been suspended.

"If this goes into a legal battle, then I think we've lost the industry because the farmers are tired," he said at a press conference.

The sugar company probably violated the law by intentionally, knowingly and

could talk, but they didn't listen. We have a participatory contract and we feel everything should be laid out on the table."

At issue is the question of "purity" or sugar content.

Reynolds maintained that GW's charge that it is losing money due to declining sugar content is unsubstantiated.

"We are willing to go along with the purity concept, but we need to be assured that the test for quality is a valid test and can be used as a management tool to increase quality," Reynolds noted.

A Dec. 9 report from the five-member purity committee was unsatisfactory, according to Reynolds, because it did not support GW's claim and it failed to establish a formula for price determination.

"The decline in extractable sugar last spring may have been due in large part to the length of time the beets were stored in piles on the ground," Reynolds observed.

"We will accept our responsibility for a decline in sugar content in growing. But we will not accept an inordinate amount of the blame for their extraction problems," he said.

A second negotiable issue is the question of whether the farmer or the sugar company will pay additional freight costs of moving sugar beets from areas where factories will shut down after this campaign.

GW announced in January that sugar beet factories in Longmont and Brighton would be closed. A molasses factory in Johnstown will also be shut down.

Reynolds estimated that farmers growing 10 per cent of the usual sugar beet tonnage in a six-state area has been contracted by GW. But, farmers in Colorado and Kansas, which normally grow 55 per cent of GW's total yearly tonnage, are not yet signing contracts.

He would "not rule out the possibility" of boycotting sugar beet crop this year.

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directly interfering with the association's contractual agreement with its members, Otsuka said.

GW's success in signing individual farmers to contracts "at best has been very minimal," according to Stephen Reynolds, executive manager of the Mountain States Sugar Beet Growers Marketing Association.

In the latest round of a greatly strained relationship Otsuka charged that recent statements made by GW President Jack Powell are an "attack on my own integrity and that of the association.

"We have attempted to discuss this matter in a positive way, but the company's response is continually negative," Otsuka said.

He asked the sugar company to open new negotiations, claiming he did not want to re-open the old ones because "we