

LEADING POSITION

GW workers off job despite settlement

Workers at the Great Western Sugar here and in three other states remain out of work despite a settlement last week with beet growers. Meanwhile workers in the Billings factory are still on the job.

A company spokesman, Claud Fleet, Denver, said Wednesday he expected an announcement on the workers status around Monday. He said that guess was based on a conversation Tuesday with Great

Western Company president Jack B. Powell.

FLEET SAID the workers had not been called back because there was no way to determine just how much acreage would be planted next year and thus plant logistics were not fully determinable.

Fleet could not completely explain why:

- grower representatives were told

17,000 acres will be planted here over a week ago;

Billings, where all the acreage is in nearly the same contract status as Lovell, has not laid off any maintenance workers; or,

- why this year is any different from last year when all contracts were not signed yet but maintenance workers were on the job.

On the first "why," he said he was not sure where or how reliable the

growers' 17,000-acre figure was.

On the second "why," Fleet said the Billings growers had approved the first contract offered and had a head start on the other four states. He acknowledged, however, that not all contracts there were signed either.

On the third "why," he said the company was not making the same mistakes spending money before it should (be spent) as it had previously.

In the original announcement of

the layoff Feb. 11, Powell attributed the move to current sugar prices and no beet contracts.

ASKED IF A rumor that the layoff was instead a result of an efficiency study of the factories last campaign was true, Fleet said, "I really doubt it."

He explained it appeared to him that Powell was making every effort to expedite the announcement of a return to work.

According to the rumor, a layoff of 500 men at \$1000 monthly salary would save Great Western a half million dollars each month between campaigns.

MEANWHILE GW agriculturists here are working toward the 1977 crop. Agricultural manager Don Lindshield said, "We don't have the printed contracts in hand yet to take to the growers, but we are taking orders for herbicides and seed."