

SECOND POSITION

1977 may be the year this area discovers just how dependent it is on the sugar industry. The Great Western Sugar factory at Ovid is a large employer and a great taxpayer in Sedgwick County.

But, having a few maintenance employees out of work for a year is only part of the impact the factory shutdown might have. Let's face it, raising sugar beets takes more labor, more equipment, and more trucks.

To put it another way, it simply takes more dollars circulating in the area to produce sugar than some of the other crops raised here.

We can all hope that sugar beet growers and the sugar company can come to some type of agreement, perhaps even before this column is printed.

And, it appears the sugar price outlook will have to appear a little more rosy before the growers or the sugar company will mess with the beets.

After having lived side-by-side with the sugar industry for the last 12 years, I would sure hate to see even a temporary dissolution of our relationship. — R.W.

4 North Platte Telegraph, Neb., Wednesday, February 16, 1977

Teamsters protest plant closings

SCOTTSBLUFF, Neb. (AP)— The Teamsters Union said in a statement received in Scottsbluff Tuesday it is joining Nebraska Gov. J. J. Exon in protesting closing of Great Western Sugar Co. plants at Bayard, Mitchell, Scottsbluff and Gering.

Exon said Monday he wants a State Justice Department investigation to determine if there were violations of Nebraska's anti-trust laws.

A statement from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters said its locals are collective bargaining agents for 185 to 250 workers who are affected by the restricted sugar plant operations.

Exon said the company's announcement "can certainly be construed, among other things, as an attempt on the part of Great Western to gain an unfair bargaining advantage to force our sugar beet growers to accept the contract for this year's production offered

by Great Western."

Nebraska Atty. Gen. Paul Douglas said he was contacting the anti-trust division of the Justice Department and the Colorado attorney general on the matter, as well as making a separate investigation.

In the statement from Washington, Teamsters President Frank E. Fitzsimmons called the plant closings "a cruel, unilateral move by the company to force Nebraska growers to accept its terms of payment for sugar beets."

The statement said growers traditionally have been paid for sugar content of beets. Now, it said, the company "is attempting to enforce a test on the growers to determine purity, which would most likely result in lower payment to the growers than they have previously received."

Fitzsimmons encouraged Exon to "push forward with all possible

measures to protect the Teamsters workers and the growers."

The Teamsters members are maintenance workers at the plants.

Fitzsimmons said he has asked union attorneys to investigate the possibility of legal action against the company "for closing the plants during the term of a collective bargaining agreement with the Teamsters local unions involved."