GROWERS: GW SUGAR CONTRACTING ILLEGALLY

DENVER (UPI) — The head of a Rocky Mountain sugar beet growers association today said Great Western Sugar Co. was acting illegally in attempting to negotiate individual contracts with growers.

"The company's approach to our individual members is considered to be an intentional, knowing and direct interference with the contractual relation between the association and its members," said Kish Otsuka.

"We believe that Great Western Sugar may be in direct violation of the criminal statutes of Colorado," he said.

Otsuka said Great Western president Jack Powell told officials of the Mountain States Beet Growers Assn. on Jan. 31 that the company regarded 1977-78 beet sugar contracts with growers void.

HE SAID Powell accused the growers association "of orchestrating a program to assure that there would be no initiation of a purity committee report and blatantly planning to subvert meaningful implementation of the report.

"I consider these statements an attack upon my own integrity and that of the association," said Otsuka.

Great Western and growers last year agreed to submit the question of beet purity to a committee. Great Western wanted payments for beets computed on purity and not tonnage as in the past.

Steve Reynolds, executive director of the growers' association, said earlier this week beet farmers could lose $1 to $2 million if they accepted GW's formula for purity.

POWELL SAID the company insisted on negotiating individually with growers because of unsettled market conditions within the sugar industry. He said findings of the purity committee were based on nearly 140,000 beet samples.

Otsuka said Great Western should begin negotiations immediately with the association for the 1977 crop year. He said beet farmers were willing to "negotiate on a base that is fair and equitable."

He said the association studied the purity committee report and "attempted to discuss, in a positive way, the alternatives for a meaningful implementation of the report. The company's position was continually negative."