Fleet: GWS Factories Operating

SCOTTSBLUFF — "The factories are not closed," Claud Fleet, spokesman for Great Western Sugar Co. (GWS) said Monday. "I wish we could clear up that misunderstanding."

GWS announced Friday that all agricultural maintenance and factory maintenance personnel at 11 factories at Scottsbluff, Gering, Bayard and Mitchell, Neb., Lovell, Wyo., Goodland, Kan., and Loveland, Greeley, Fort Morgan, Sterling and Ovid, Colo., would start paid vacations or unpaid leaves of absence Monday or as soon as factory lay-by is completed.

In Nebraska, factory lay-by, or completion of campaign cleanup, has been accomplished at Bayard and Mitchell factories. Scottsbluff and Gering factories are expected to complete cleanup this week.

"Actions taken by the company Friday," Fleet said, "represent a careful allocation of normal intercampaign maintenance money to those areas of the company that have firm beet contracts for 1977."

The GWS announcement Friday said the "action does not affect Billings, Mont., where grower associations have approved contracts with the company for 1977-78. Fremont and Findlay, Ohio, factories, the Agricultural Research Center and the Johnstown MSG Plant in Colorado are not affected, nor does the action relate to the permanent shutdown of the Brighton and Longmont, Colo., factories and the Johnstown Molasses plant."

GWS and growers in Nebraska, Colorado and Kansas have not yet reached a contract agreement, although both company and growers have made contract proposals.

"The contract situation this year," said Fleet, "is no different than in the last few years when we had no contract until late in the spring. The exception this year, is that the contract is further advanced at this point than in prior years. Maintenance expenditures now are being timed to match available beet supplies at each factory."

Fleet added that there are no changes in intercampaign activities at the 11 affected factories with the exception of maintenance work.

"This is just a delay in the programming of maintenance work," Fleet said. "As to when it will pick up again, we can't answer right now."

Asked if it hinges on the company and growers making a contract, he replied: "Doesn't it always?"

He said that continued operations in the affected factories includes management and all activity relating to transfer of orders and shipping.

Contract negotiations between the company and growers are at a standstill. A meeting is being planned for the Nebraska Non-Stock Beet Growers Assn. in which the directors will make recommendations to growers, according to Kenneth Carpenter of Lyman, vice president, and Ray Lind of Lyman, member of the association's executive committee. However, a date for the meeting has not yet been announced.

Lind said Nebraska association directors have been in contact with grower associations in Colorado and Kansas and grower meetings are being scheduled in those states also.