

Saccharin Ban Threatens Jobs

Sweetener Firm Caught In Irony

Sweet 'n Low Founder Once In Sugar Industry

NEW YORK (AP) — Benjamin E. Eisenstadt was tired of the fierce competition in the sugar industry, so he got out of the business and developed a formula for artificial sweetener.

Now the 70-year-old president of Cumberland Packing Corp., a family firm that makes Sweet 'n Low, may have come full circle.

"We don't want to give anyone cancer," Mr. Eisenstadt said last week in his tiny office at the Brooklyn plant where 35 million packets of Sweet 'n Low, the biggest-selling low-calorie sugar substitute, are made each day.

A proposed Food & Drug Administration ban of saccharin means that Mr. Eisenstadt would have to stop making the artificial sweetener because there is no other approved sugar substitute. About 600 people could lose their jobs.

"FOR 80 YEARS, thousands of people—diabetics, people fighting the battle of the bulge—have benefited from it, and now they won't even let you sell it with a label, a warning on it," he said.

The firm faced a similar problem about seven years ago when the Government prohibited cyclamates. They substituted saccharin in the Sweet 'n Low formula.

"Maybe you can stand one punch in the nose, but it's difficult to take two," he said, shaking his head.

Mr. Eisenstadt's son, Marvin, Cumberland's executive vice president, is gearing

up for a fight to keep his business going.

Marvin said that Cumberland, with a three-month inventory of Sweet 'n Low, eventually will have to stop production and lay workers off.

"But I think there's going to be a rush on the product," he said. "So we'll keep making it as long as there are people who want to buy it.

"WE'RE GOING TO appeal to the public—ask them to write to their congressmen," Marvin said. "Hopefully reason will prevail."

Cumberland executives argue that a person would have to consume 4,000 packets of Sweet 'n Low a day to compare with the amounts of saccharin fed to laboratory animals that developed cancer.

Eighty-five to 90 per cent of Cumberland's business is in Sweet 'n Low and the same low-calorie sweetener packaged under two other labels. Cumberland also packages Sugar in the Raw, an unrefined sugar, and Sweet 'n Low tea. Last year, the company, including plants in England and Medley, Fla., did \$30 million in sales.

Sweet 'n Low is used in many countries and is packaged under franchise in Israel, Canada, and Venezuela.

About 350 of the 500 workers in New York are represented by an independent union. At a rousing meeting in the plant cafeteria, the employees vowed—in Spanish and in English—to fight for their jobs.

But out in the shipping office, invoices were arriving with a penciled notice: "We will accept the product conditionally only if we can sell it."