TWO COLO. FIRMS

6 Refiners Indicted For Sugar Pricing

SAN FRANCISCO — (AP) — Six major sugar refiners have been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiring to raise and fix the price of sugar for at least three years prior to 1973 in 19 Western and Midwestern states.

The Justice Department also filed two companion civil suits Thursday seeking to prohibit the companies from exchanging price information.

The action culminates a year-long Justice Department investigation of pricing practices in the $2.5 billion U.S. sugar market.

Probe of Recent Pricing

The probe gained urgency with recent sharp increases in retail sugar prices, but Thursday's indictments and companion lawsuits don't involve the recent rise, a government spokesman said. Assistant Atty. Gen. Thomas E. Kauper, head of the Justice Department's antitrust division, said, however, that recent pricing practices in the industry are under investigation.

Three of the six companies were indicted for conspiring to fix sugar prices in California, Arizona, and in Las Vegas and Reno, Nev. Five of the six firms were charged with a separate price-fixing conspiracy in other Western and Midwestern states.

Third Civil Lawsuit

In a third civil suit, two companies— including one indicted firm and a seventh sugar company—were accused of conspiring to restrain competition in five Western states. The government said they had agreed not to market sugar under grocery chain house brands which usually are sold at cheaper prices.

The six companies named as defendants in the indictments returned in U.S. District Court here were Great Western Sugar Co., Denver; American Crystal Sugar Co., formerly of Denver; Holly Sugar Corp., Colorado Springs; California and Hawaiian Sugar Co., San Francisco; Amalgamated Sugar Co., Ogden, Utah, and Consolidated Foods Corp. of Chicago.

American Crystal was dissolved in 1973 and was succeeded by a cooperative association based in Fargo, N.D., which goes by the same name.

Indictments were expected, companies say. Page 49, section D.