

Halton Hills biggest employer

Neilson's will make new 1% milk



One per cent milk comes on sale April 30, Robert Burch, vice-president of marketing and sales at Neilson's Dairy said. The new light packaging is an attempt to communicate a low fat and low calorie product, he said. Neilson's is making a number of changes to its Georgetown plant, Mr. Burch said. (Herald photo)

By ALAN MACKIE
The Herald

While technology changes very slowly in the dairy industry, the William Neilson Company Limited is making a number of changes this year, including splitting the company into two sections, creating 60 new jobs at the Georgetown plant and introducing one per cent milk, Robert Burch, the vice-president of marketing and sales said.

The company has recently split into two separate entities called Neilson's Dairy and Neilson's Cadbury, Mr. Burch said. The company, which is located on Guelph Street in Georgetown, is Neilson's dairy.

The split merely centralizes the dairy section of Neilson's which "allows us to grow and gives us a greater focus" as well as having all their resources close at hand, Mr. Burch said.

Neilson's Dairy makes all the milk products and other dairy products, he said.

One of the recent additives to the company is Danone fruit bottom yogurt, Mr. Burch noted. Danone is originally a Spanish product but Neilson's Dairy has obtained the rights to make and distribute the product in Canada, he said.

It is the number one selling fruit bottom yogurt in the world, he said. Danone is sold in 20 countries including China, Japan, the United States, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Morocco, Mexico, Brazil and, of course, Spain.

The 75-year-old product is now

selling in Canada. In its short selling life Danone is now the number two selling fruit bottom yogurt in Ontario, he said.

The company's split will also let Neilson add to its approximately 400-member staff. Approximately 60 jobs will be created in the Georgetown plant, Mr. Burch said.

Before October the company hopes to have filled these positions, he said. Neilson's will start hiring during the summer.

At the moment the big push for the company is the selling of one per cent milk which will start April 30, Mr. Burch said. By no means does this mean a replacement of any of the other Neilson's milk products, he said.

Mr. Burch is expecting the new one per cent milk product to capture a large portion of the Ontario's milk drinkers market the way it has in four other provinces.

Since Manitoba started selling one per cent milk in May 1987, it has captured 14 per cent of the market, Mr. Burch said.

In Saskatchewan nine per cent of the milk consumed was one per cent milk. Saskatchewan started selling one per cent milk in November 1988, he said.

Since August 1988, one per cent milk has captured 13 per cent of the Alberta market and 10 per cent of the British Columbia market, Mr. Burch said.

He added, one per cent milk has less fat and calories than either homogenized milk or two per cent milk. "Many people do not like the taste of skim milk but want low fat," he said.

Skim milk has only a trace of fat in a 250 millilitre serving, Mr. Burch said. It also has only 90 calories, he added.

Homogenized milk has eight grams of fat and 157 calories in the same sized serving, he said.

Two per cent milk has five grams of fat and 129 calories in the same sized serving, Mr. Burch said.

The packaging of the new product is also different. The new one per cent milk carton is white instead of the normal "heavy" reds and blues of the other products. White is a light "fresher" color that communicates low fat, Mr. Burch said.

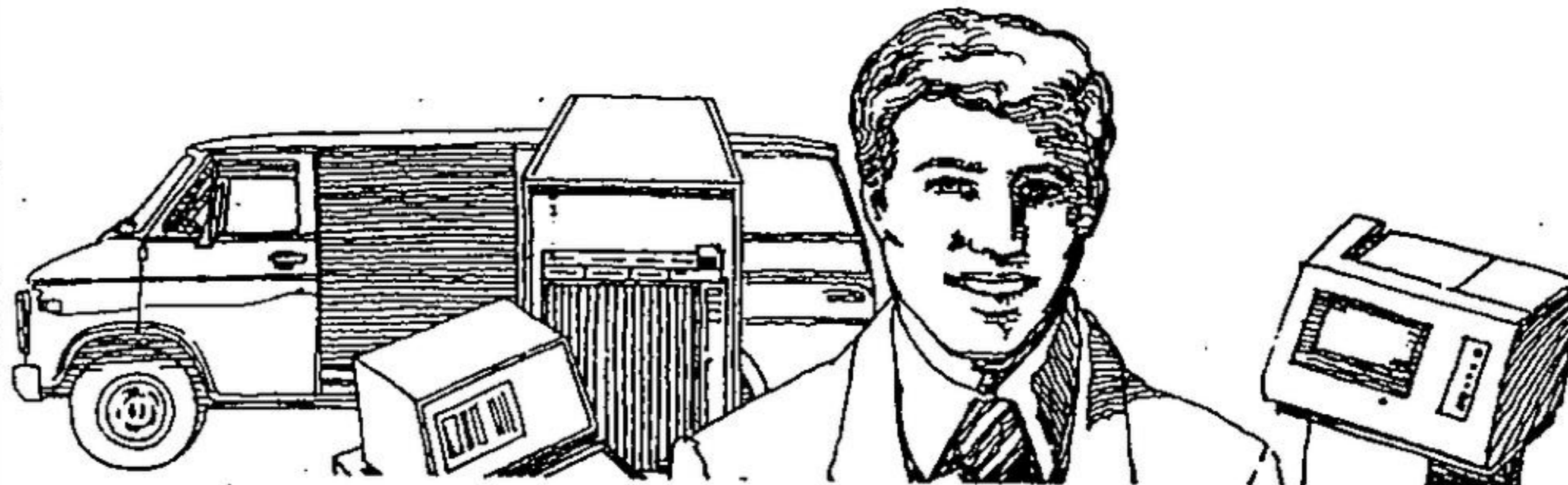
Mr. Burch sees the same low-fat and calorie trend expanding its way into the other dairy products. "I think what will change are products, not technology," he said.

Any major change in the technology, although it may not change the actual product, could stop some people from continuing to buy a specific product, Mr. Burch said.

Neilson's is already rated as the top modernized plant for its size and market, Mr. Burch noted. The plant has a fully automated milk processing machine to stop contact between the employees and the product, he said. Mr. Burch added, it also helps us to make a "consistently good product."

"The environment the industry is in makes (new) technology slow in coming," Mr. Burch said. "But that does not mean we're not looking."

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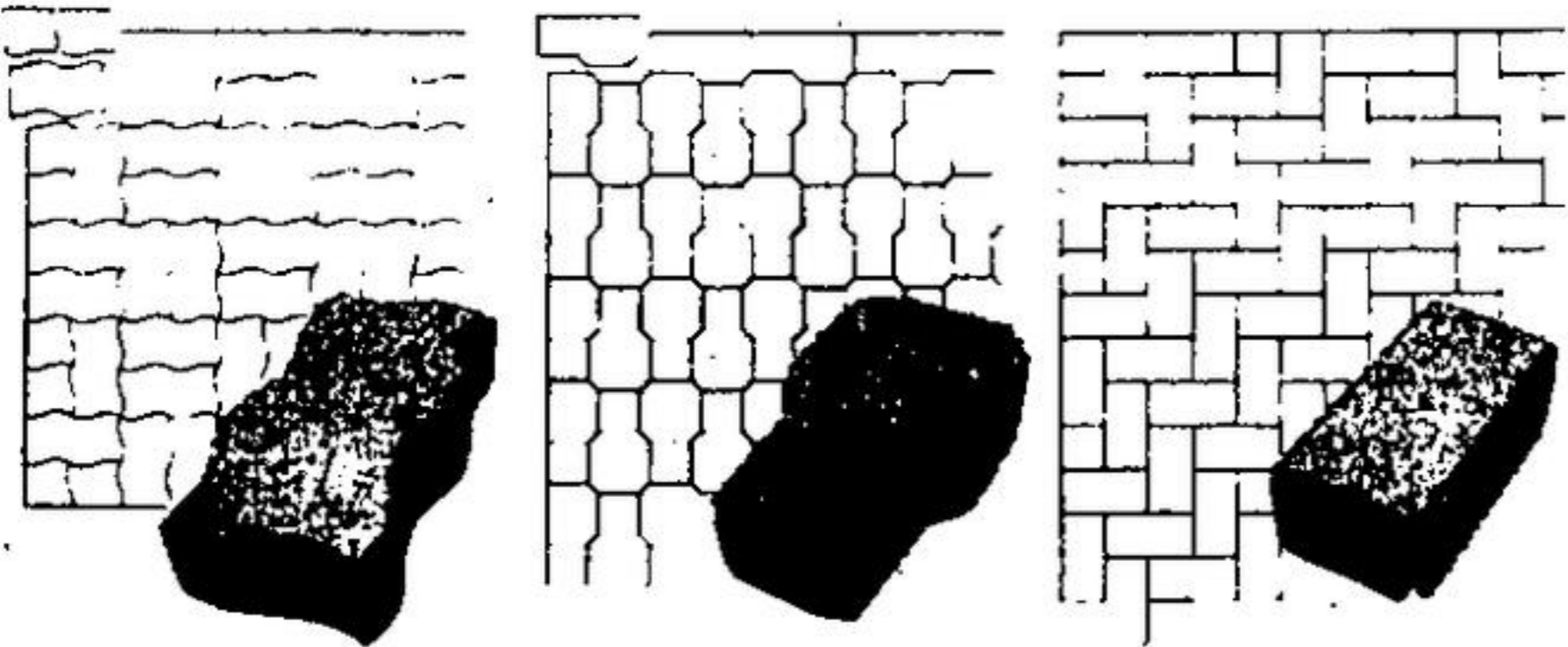
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