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Importing PCBs

Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., is correct to express concern about the sharp increase in the importation of the toxic chemical PCB.

Under the new Toxic Substances Act, all use of PCBs in the United States must end by June 1, 1979.

But Aspin notes that the sole U.S. manufacturer, Monsanto Chemical Co., planned to end production by October 1977. Aspin views the increased imports as a means by which industry can stockpile PCBs.

PCB, polychlorinated biphenyls, has not been directly proven harmful to humans, but has been shown to cause serious illness in laboratory animals.

Aspin plans to ask the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to ban further PCB imports before the 1979 legal deadline, once President-elect Carter has taken office.

"PCBs will continue to threaten the environment — and at an accelerated rate, judging from this year's imports," the congressman said.

Aspin's planned action makes good sense. The increased importation of PCBs might be interpreted as an effort by some industries to prolong the use of the chemical.

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