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Chemical Threat Grows, Aspin Says

WASHINGTON (AP)—Rep. Les Aspin, D-Wis., said Sunday that with U.S. production of the poisonous PCB chemicals to end in 1977, imports of the substances have risen sharply, apparently in an effort to prolong their use.

Under the new Toxic Substances Act, all uses of PCBs in the United States must end by June 1, 1979, but Aspin said the sole U.S. manufacturer, Monsanto Chemical Co., plans to end production by October 1977.

"Unless imports are quickly ended," Aspin said in a statement issued by his office, "PCBs will continue to threaten the environment, and at an accelerating rate, judging from this year's imports."

He said he will ask the Environmental Protection Agency to ban further PCB imports before the 1979 legal deadline, once the incoming administration of President-elect Carter has taken office.

Asked about Aspin's statement, an EPA spokesman said the agency has no intention of speeding up the ban on PCBs.

He said Congress allowed the two-year delay to give industries time to obtain suitable replacements for PCBs, and the agency still considered that a valid approach to the problem.

PCBs have not been proven to harm human beings, but have been shown to cause serious illnesses in laboratory animals and were found by the EPA in samples of human mothers' milk, indicating that they are being absorbed by humans.

Aspin said data from the U.S. Customs Service showed that the United States imported 316,985 pounds of PCBs during the first eight months of 1976.

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