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Aspin asks ban on PCB imports

WASHINGTON (AP)—Rep. Les Aspin (D., Wis.) said Sunday that with American production of the toxic chemical PCB coming to an end in 1977, imports of the substance have risen sharply—apparently in an effort to prolong its use.

Under the new Toxic Substances Act, all use of PCB 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.

"Those 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 [EPA] to ban further PCB imports before the 1979 legal deadline as soon as President-elect Carter has taken office.

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

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

PCB, a group of related chemicals called polychlorinated biphenyls, is used in industrial and mechanical applications, including use as a coolant sealed inside electric transformers and capacitors.

IT OFTEN escapes to the environment through industrial waste discharges, accidental release, and the junking of equipment containing it.

PCB has not been proven harmful to human beings, but it has been shown to cause serious illness in laboratory animals and was found by the EPA in samples of human mothers' milk, indicating that it is being absorbed by human beings.

Aspin said data from the U.S. Customs Service show that the U.S. imported 336,000 pounds of PCB during the first eight months of 1976, far more than the 270,000 pounds imported during the entire year of 1975.

"THE CUSTOMS figures indicate that manufacturers may be building up stocks to use PCBs well after domestic manufacturing has stopped," said Aspin.

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