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In an amendment to the drug enforcement bill currently before the House of Representatives, all nations importing Cuban sugar would be prohibited from selling sugar to the United States. Attachment to the drug legislation is justified by Sen. Jesse Helms' contention that Cuba is engaged in drug trafficking. Helms introduced the amendment to the drug enforcement bill. If the Helms amendment is approved by the House, Canada, Costa Rica, Peru, Mexico and the Dominican Republic, among others, would lose their sugar quotas to the US market unless they discontinue purchases of Cuban sugar. According to an Oct. 14 report by Cuban news agency PRENSA LATINA, the amendment is not expected to pass the House due to lack of evidence regarding Cuba's "drug connection." However, because the Reagan administration is commited to tightening the economic blockade against Cuba, Helms is considering attaching the amendment to a basic commodity trade bill. In 1985 US agricultural legislation contained mechanisms for applying an indirect blockade on Cuban sugar. According to this legislation, sugar quotas to the US market by countries importing the Cuban product and then reselling it to the United States would be dropped. Helms' new amendment is a result of difficulties in securing reliable empirical evidence that buyers of Cuban sugar are in fact reselling it to the US market. The Senate approved the Helms amendment about two weeks ago. Since then, the measure has been the target of criticism from Australia, Canada, and more recently, by the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Sugar-Exporting Countries (GEPLACEA). GEPLACEA members are currently attending an annual meeting in Brazil which began Oct. 13.

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