MODESTO, CALIF.
BEE
D. 45,000 S. 63,000

JAN 14 1976

# Test Before Using

If they ever begin awarding bureaucrats medals for candor, Russell Train, head of the Environmental Protection Agency, ought to be considered for an oak-leaf cluster.

Train was as blunt as a karate chop recently when he used his announcement of vinyl chloride emissions standards as an occasion for urging Congress to require pre-market testing of new chemicals.

The idea, stated simply, is to find out whether a substance is dangerous to man or the environment before factory workers, consumers, children, fish and wildlife are exposed to it, instead of waiting until the statistics of disease and death come in, then setting standards.

In short, the safety of the product would be determined on laboratory animals rather than on people.

During the past two years, the evidence has been overwhelming that more and more chemicals now on the market and in use threaten humans, animals and plants, and even entire ecosystems.

Two chemicals come immediately to mind: The ubiquitous polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that are persistent, poisonous industrial compounds found in growing quantities in the environment and the polyvinyl chlorides which cause liver cancer in humans.

Several versions of a strong toxic substances control act are before Congress. They would give the Environmental Protection Agency authority to require toxicological screening and, if indicated, extensive testing of all commercial chemicals, both those already on the market and those proposed for marketing.

Congress is not unsympathetic to such legislation, but it has not gotten together on a bill. Both houses passed toxic substances bills last session but could not reconcile their differences.

Never have the arguments been stronger for an effective national toxic substances control act. Congress should not temporize on this matter. The longer it dawdles the more we will have to pay for health care, pollution control and for cleaning up a contaminated environment.

MONS 032968