

Is it right to vaccinate

THE announcement by Professor George Dick on Tuesday that the wholesale vaccination of children costs the lives of 20 babies a year has created a storm of controversy. What are the facts?

First, what the professor says is not new knowledge. It has always been so. A small percentage of those vaccinated develop side effects, which, however, rarely prove fatal, but about 20 children do die every year.

Fortunately, smallpox is a rare disease, and in the past decade not more than a couple of dozen infected people have died.

But in the same time a couple of hundred children have died from vaccination.

**WHAT ARE WE TO
INFER? THAT MORE
CHILDREN DIE FROM
THE "CURE" THAN
WOULD DIE FROM THE
ILLNESS?**

Low incidence

Of course, this isn't so — it is only because we as a community have been vaccinated that the incidence of the disease is so low.

If widespread vaccination hadn't been carried out effectively many hundreds of people would have probably died in recent outbreaks.

If we are to save lives on a large scale must we then resign ourselves to the persistent sacrifice of one baby in every so-many-hundred-thousand?

I think not. A three-pronged attack would solve both problems at once.

Screening

1. All entrants into the country should be thoroughly screened to ensure that they have *valid* vaccination certificates. The authorities must reserve the right to vaccinate doubtful entrants.

2. In the very unlikely event of any outbreak, a workable system of vaccine distribution should be implemented to vaccinate those in the region within a day or two of the first case. Diagnosis should be made microscopically.

3. Pure vaccine should be produced by tissue-culture techniques, if this is

SCIENCE

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practicable, rather than the crude calf lymph which is prepared today.

In this way we could be rid of the risks both to children and to adults in the event of outbreak. **WHAT WE WANT NOW IS GOVERNMENT ACTION.**