

## CABINET PAPER—PRIVILEGED

Property of the White House—For Authorized Persons Only

- 2 -

In this as in later TV interviews and a press announcement, the Surgeon General stressed that the action was taken in the public interest, that no necessary indictment of Cutter products should be made, and that the immunization program should continue. It was pointed out that the report on the Salk vaccine indicated from 60 to 90 percent effectiveness and that some cases of polio had to be expected. Public Health Service personnel left immediately for Berkeley to check the vaccines produced in the Cutter Laboratories.

### Extent of Polio Problem

Poliomyelitis is a Nation-wide problem that has risen steadily from year to year.

A total of 36,711 new cases and 1,620 deaths were reported to the Public Health Service in 1956. This was the third highest year of polio incidence in U.S. history, being exceeded only in 1949 and 1952.

The peak incidence for the country as a whole occurs in the 5 to 9 year age group, but many attacks of the disease occur among both younger and older children and adults. In 1956, polio struck hardest among children 5 and 6 years of age.

Polio is typically a summer disease, usually beginning in April and lasting through October. It reaches a peak in August and September. In general, the West South Central and the Pacific States show a rising incidence well ahead of the rest of the country.

### Development of the Vaccine

Poliomyelitis had been recognized in the eighteenth century until quite recently, however, scientists were not sure where the disease came from, how it entered the body, or how to control it.

Conquest of polio became possible in 1949, when Dr. John Enders, of Harvard University, succeeded in cultivating the polio virus in human tissue cultures. This paved the way for the production of the large quantities of virus prerequisite to production of vaccines.

This achievement, together with discoveries that there are three distinct types of polio virus and that the virus travels through the blood stream before reaching the nervous system, was basic to the development of a vaccine.

In developing the vaccine, Dr. Jonas E. Salk, with funds provided by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, ably applied all the basic developments of the many scientists who contributed to the conquest of polio.

**CABINET PAPER**

for Information