

NEWS AND VIEWS

More Oxford Colleges

THE Report of the Franks Commission may already have borne some fruit. The Ford Foundation of America and the Wolfson Foundation in the United Kingdom have between them agreed to contribute a total of more than £4 million to support and endow two graduate colleges at Oxford. This is the largest single sum the University has ever received, and there is some reason to think that the generosity of the two foundations has been stimulated by the argument of the Franks Commission in favour of more postgraduate teaching at Oxford. The two colleges to benefit are St. Antony's, originally founded in 1950, and a new foundation to be called Wolfson College. The latter will concentrate its interests in the sciences.

After the public announcement of the double endowment, Mr. William Deakin, the Warden of St. Antony's, said that he hopes he will be able to increase the number of postgraduate students at the College and the number of scholarships available to people from abroad. The College specializes in studies of Eastern Europe and the Far East, and plans to increase the amount of research in those subjects. The College also needs a new building, having begun its career with the ascetic view that learning comes before living, and having recently found the discomforts of a converted house in north Oxford an impediment to thought, or at least to good administration.

Wolfson College has been endowed equally by the Ford Foundation and the Wolfson Foundation to the tune of roughly £3 million. It will absorb the graduate society hitherto called Iffley College. The intention is that roughly two-thirds of its fellows should be scientists or doctors, though there will be Sir Isaiah Berlin, professor of social and political theory at Oxford, as Master (in effect though not, perhaps, in name) to redress any imbalance there may be. Mr. McGeorge Bundy, now president of the Ford Foundation but until recently Special Assistant to the President of the United States, has let it be known that he hopes that these endowments of Oxford will help to counteract the drift of people from Europe to the United States.

No Immunity against Fall-out

No general methods of immunizing man against the hazards of radioactive fall-out are likely to be forthcoming for many years—if ever. Given as many as possible of the factors relating to a particular case, some remedial measures might now be possible, but even then it would be necessary to balance the anticipated risk from radiation against the risks and social disadvantages that might result from the implementation of particular countermeasures. Such are the conclusions of the Medical Research Council's Committee on Protection against Ionizing Radiation, under the chairmanship of Sir John Cockcroft, in its report *The Assessment of Possible Radiation Risks to the Population from Environmental Contamination* (H.M.S.O., 1s. 9d.). By predicting the magnitude of the doses that will arise many years hence, and coupling this with long-term studies of the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and with other data, risk estimates

have been extrapolated in terms of the possible incidence of fatal malignancies and certain genetic defects.

As a result of the atmospheric tests of nuclear weapons which had taken place up to the end of 1965, it is estimated that in the United Kingdom, by the year 2000, three additional cases of leukaemia, two of all other types of fatal cancer and two of thyroid cancer per million of the population exposed may, at the worst, have been caused. These figures refer to the increased incidence over and above the natural incidence—the figure for all types of fatal cancer (including leukaemia) in Britain is at present about 2,200 cases per million per year. It has also been estimated that, in the case of the present generation, one additional case of visible genetic abnormality could be caused in the offspring of each million persons exposed. (The natural incidence is about 15,000 per million live births.)

The report directs particular attention to countermeasures against radioactive fall-out. Iodine-131 has a considerable effect on the thyroid glands of infants. Because fresh cow's milk is the dominant route of this isotope to the body, the substitution of dried for fresh milk in the diet of infants would provide a large measure of protection: storage of dried milk would certainly offer a high degree of protection, as the activity of this isotope decreases by a factor of about 15 in every month. High concentrations of strontium-90 have been found in the bones of children between 1 and 2 years old; again, cow's milk is known to be the main source of this isotope. Remedial measures at present under examination are those designed to inhibit selectively the uptake into the body of this isotope. Thus supplementation of the diet by calcium in various chemical forms has been considered. Protection against the genetic effects are more difficult, as these are attributable primarily to external radiation and ingested caesium-137. Except in the early months of life, a large fraction of the caesium-137 that enters the body is contained in components of diet other than milk and, as the Committee emphasizes, any attempt to decontaminate these would involve major dislocation of normal food supplies.

Is a Virus a Virus?

THE World Health Organization has made public a cautionary statement on the detection of viruses associated with leukaemic tissues—human and those taken from domestic animals:

The search for virus particles by electron microscopy has to be considered as a preliminary stage only and the finding of characteristic particles as a useful guide for further biological experimentation. The absence of virus does not exclude the viral nature of the disease and the presence of particles does not necessarily mean that they are causally related to the disease. The assumption that viruses like those of avian and murine leukaemia are responsible for the human disease may not be correct. Other types of viruses or other causative agents may be involved.

If it is assumed, however, that viruses exist in leukaemic tissues from man and domestic animals similar to the viruses associated with mouse and chicken leukaemia, the following criteria for detecting particles which have a high probability of being viruses (based on observations on known leukaemia viruses) should be taken into consideration in using the thin-section and