Dear Tom,

Many thanks for your letter of December 10. In reply to your first question about whether enteroviruses other than polioviruses also existed in the 18th and early 19th centuries in Europe and Italy, I would say that there is every reason to believe that these viruses of the human heritage have existed with human beings since early evolutionary times. There is also reason to believe that strains of increased virulence arise at different times. The recent outbreaks of paralytic poliomyelitis caused by ECHO virus 71 is one example.

Regarding your question about the cost of annual mass vaccination in tropical and subtropical countries, I would like to point out that these programs have been carried out with large numbers of unpaid volunteers and that the chief cost was that of the vaccine. In Brasil I was told that an army of approximately 400,000 volunteers carried out the vaccinations in 1980 and 1981. These volunteers have, of course, been directed by people from the state and municipal health departments as part of their regular jobs.

Warmest personal regards and best wishes for the coming year and all the years ahead.

Sincerely,

Albert B. Sabin, M. D.