obviously desirable, wherever possible, to recognize and diagnose the disease in its acute form.

4. More publicity should be given to the fact that drinking raw milk, which may be infected, can cause human brucellosis.

St Just. D. J. BREWER.

Resistance and immunity in families

Sir,

The current usual outbreak of acute childrens' illnesses calls to mind the problem of resistance and immunity in families such as was outlined in a paper by Dr G. I. Watson of Peaslake, Surrey, in the No. 1 supplement to volume 11 of the *Journal.*

The younger child of a family I recently attended, a girl aged four years nine months, developed classical chicken-pox lesions of a mild nature on 24 September 1969. Her elder brother, aged seven years, contracted chicken-pox on 5 November 1969 suffering a worse illness typified by more spots, greater fever and general upset.

Surprisingly enough, the younger child then developed a classical chicken-pox eruption, after three days of prodromal malaise, on 19 November 1969. The rash in this instance was much more severe with treble the number of spots especially on the forehead and scalp. The areolas in the second attack were much more marked and I put her on Piriton syrup and Phenergan at night. This is reported to reduce the overall number of spots and indeed seemed to do so.

The rarity in chicken-pox of this pattern prompted me to report this case.

Bromley. P. W. LUMLEY

Abortion

Sir,

I would like to write a word or two on the emotive subject of abortion, but before making any comment I should also like to say that I have the deepest respect for the opinion of my colleagues who specialize in gynaecology or medicine.

It is a matter of fact that the greater the age of a woman bearing a child, the greater are the chances that that child will be born mongoloid (*World Medicine*, 9 September 1969). In *Pulse*, under the heading 'Capsule', we read that doctors who refuse abortion and allow unwanted children to be born are doing the community a grave disservice (Sir Alan Parkes, president of the Eugenics Society). In *G.P.*, Dr Gareth Hardin, professor of biology at the University of California, has condemned birth control as a policy of insanity and has said that the result of voluntary birth control would be uncontrolled population growth, warning that in 10–20 years there would be 50 or 100 million starving people throughout the world in a single year. We know that in ten years time the world population, excluding China, will rise from 150,000 million to 250,000 million.

In spite of this population explosion our human biologists are trying to make fertile our infertile mothers, and as a result cause multiple pregnancies to take place. I do not deny the right of every mother to have a baby but until the drugs that are used for this are perfected, are we to have litters of babies? Gynaecologists throughout the world have a great responsibility to generations as yet unborn to see that this earth remains reasonably habitable and that children are not born here just to die again from starvation, like may-flies on a hot summer's day. In the face of the accumulating evidence on population explosion, how can they refuse abortion on demand and justify that refusal?

By abortion on demand I mean the decision to be made by a doctor in good faith and conscience; conscience being the operative word.

I have never made a request for an abortion to be carried out by a gynaecologist that was not completely within the terms of the old Act. As regards the new Act, I have put in a request that did not come specifically within the terms of the Act; that is a request for termination when a mother of 39 years of age became pregnant, and already had two grown-up children. This mother was distressed, and would have been more so if she had read *World Medicine* of 9 September 1969. My request for termination was refused. I have not the slightest doubt that had she been a wealthy woman she could have found a private home in one of the big cities to have carried out her abortion.

It can be argued that as it is no longer a crime to commit suicide (Felo de se Act, 1961), it is no longer a crime to have a pregnancy terminated.

The laws relating to homosexuality, suicide and abortion are all derived from Canon Law; if someone is allowed by law to treat their