

After 20 Years

Fallout Effects Worry Islanders

"From generation to generation we went without worrying about anything," said the mayor of tiny Rongelap Island in Micronesia.

Then in 1954 the United States set off H-bomb Bravo on Bikini, and the radioactive fallout drifted and fell like snow on Rongelap and its 86 residents.

Since then, said Mayor Nelson Angjan, "We worry all the time. We are worried about our lives and we don't know what is happening."

Angjan said his people have appealed time and again to the United States for adequate medical care. American doctors visit the island and examine the people twice a year now rather than once.

"THEY TELL us to eat coconut crab only three times a week," he said, but do not explain why it cannot be eaten every day.

"We don't eat it at all now. We are afraid," he said.

"They say don't worry. Don't question the doctor," he said, "and they give the people pills. We don't know what for or why."

Angjan said 19 persons have died in Mainland hospitals of leukemia, "but we don't know why they die on Rongelap."

Many of the people of his island have had surgery for thyroid tumors, he said, including all those that were children

and all those still in the womb at the time of the fallout.

HE SAID the United States deported a Japanese medical team that had been invited by the people to conduct physical examinations.

Angjan would like to send four or five of his people to Japanese doctors in Hiroshima to be examined.

In a petition to the Secretary General of the United Nations and the United Nations Trusteeship Council, Angjan is asking that:

—Qualified doctors be based on Rongelap to provide daily medical service.

—Radiation experts and medical doctors, preferably including some from Hiroshima, survey Rongelap and issue individual diagnoses.

—The Atomic Commission no longer be permitted to use the people of Rongelap and adjacent Utirik as "guinea pigs" for their bomb-related research.

—ONLY 35 of those exposed to the radiation sur-



Nelson Angjan

vive today, Angjan said. He said the population of Rongelap is now 200, and that they want to stay with the current administration of the Trust Territory.

He said money on Rongelap is no problem. "In three months we can make 20 to 25 tons of copra. From the sale of copra, the people buy imported rice, flour, sugar and kerosene." They eat coconut, breadfruit, pandanus, fish and shellfish, he said.

He said he has 9 children, and earns about \$1,000 a year, which is enough to support his wife and family.

For 27 years he worked on Kwajalein as a carpenter, and returned to his native island a little over a year ago.

"Don't talk to me about money," he said.

"Money is nothing. My life is important.

"The life of my people is important."