

February 15, 1968

Hon. Clifford P. Casper FEB 23 1968  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Casper,

Thank you for your reply to our letters concerning the people of Killi and their desire to return to Bikini.

We hope the information you received from the Office of Territories impressed you as to the Killi problem. But as far as Hope and I are concerned, there was nothing new in what they had to say. In fact, we have information that may make more clear the picture of these people as we see it.

We want to reemphasize the lagoon problem since this is the crux of the Killi situation, but will not go into any details except to say that our previous letters give examples.

Here we would like to make some comments and observations concerning the letter from the Office of Territories and some other general comments.

A single island such as Killi is not uncommon in the Pacific, but it is uncommon in the Marshalls. There are only five; including Killi, there are Jabwot, Mejit, Lib, and Jemo. There are no inhabitants on Jemo; it's a bird island. The question arises concerning the Mejit people cited in the letter from the Office of Territories: are the people of Mejit displaced people forced into a single island existence, or did they choose to live on Mejit? We think this makes a big difference as to people's attitudes and their acceptance of the situation.

The next point explained in the letter concerns the Trust Fund set up for the Killi people. It does sound like a great deal of money. The field trip will arrive shortly with the semi-annual interest money; each person on Killi will receive all of \$12. Excuse us if we sound impertinent, but with the cost of kerosene at \$1 a gallon we and the Killi people are not very impressed. Also the payment of this money did not begin until 1957, ten years after they were removed from Bikini. Was there any arrears payment? No! Again we are not impressed, more ashamed.

The government did help the people by building homes and planting coconut and breadfruit trees and a taro patch. What interest has the government shown since then? Killi was ravaged by a typhoon which destroyed all of the islands taro plants and damaged many of the coconut trees. The island is now quarantined because its breadfruit trees have pingelap disease - these trees are dying. What interest is the government taking in the Killi people now?

Killi is smaller than Bikini; as a matter of fact, it is smaller than the island on Bikini where the people had their main village. A quick look at a map comparing the two and you can see that there is a tremendous difference in land area. Granted the people did not inhabit all of Bikini atoll, but the remaining islands were used for various

1936

purposes - some were bird or turtle sanctuaries, one provided a natural 'pen' for pigs. None of this is possible on Killi. In addition, land is the most precious possession of a Marshallese.

Killi is supposed to be a temporary home. How long is temporary? So far, 20 years. The people feel that any day they may receive word that they can return to Bikini. This belief was further heightened by a letter written by High Commissioner Norwood to the Killi people. He stated, "It may be possible to resettle Bikini in the not too distant future... Mr. Rasmussen (of the Atomic Energy Commission) told me that the Atomic Energy Commission scientists have decided that Bikini is now ready for human habitation." It is NOW READY for human habitation. This letter was dated September, 1966.

A few months ago a visiting senatorial team came to the Marshalls. It resulted in another statement that caused these people to get very excited. Senator Moss of Utah when queried about Killi said that the people could return as soon as Bikini is cleared of radioactivity. According to Mr. Norwood's letter, it's been cleared since 1966. What are these people to think?

There has been no official word from the U.S. government as to the fate of the Killi people. Will they be permitted to go home or will they stay on Killi for 20 more years? Right now they are at a stalemate. New projects sponsored through the community development program of the Trust Territory are rejected by the Killi council because they feel their return to Bikini is imminent. Is it? Can you inquire as to the answer? Where does the decision lie, with the Atomic Energy Commission, the Air Force, or the President? Or is it with a combination of these? If Bikini is NOW READY for habitation, please ask someone to make a decision. These people are tired of their temporary situation. They want to go home.

Sincerely,



Todd Jenkins  
PCV, Killi Island

1937