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401331

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

TELEPHONE: (516) 345- 3577

18 October 1976

Dr. James L. Liverman
Assistant Administrator for Environment and Safety
Energy Research and Development Administration
Washington, D. C. 20545

Dear Jim,

As you know the situation in the Marshall Islands concerning our medical examinations has grown steadily worse and it is becoming increasingly difficult to continue the surveys. The purpose of this letter is to suggest a specific course of action, to clarify the situation and to reach an understanding with regard to future surveys.

You have received the Utirik letter of complaints and on his quarterly island trip last month Dr. Knudsen was asked to leave Utirik. It appears a suit against ERDA is being instigated by the people of that atoll, which apparently is being organized by the Peace Corps representative there. The situation is not as acute at Rongelap, but these people also have complaints which are being transmitted in a letter to you. And of course there is concern among the Bikini people about the plutonium finding. Many of the complaints were discussed at the recent meeting (Sept. 23, 1976) at ERDA which resulted in agreement that there should be increased medical care in these atolls, including the people returning to Bikini and Eniwetok. I have discussed the situation with Vic Bond, Gene Cronkite and Knud Knudsen and we believe that in order for our examinations to proceed without interference, a meeting with Marshallese representatives of these atolls and their Congressmen, outlining the extended medical program and airing all complaints, might greatly improve the situation.

Enclosed is a rough draft of a letter suggesting a course of action which is recommended with respect to the Marshallese studies. Though, for protocol purposes, the letter is addressed to Mr. Peter Coleman, High Commissioner of the Trust Territory, it is likely that Mr. Oscar DeBrum, District Administrator of the Marshall Islands, will be responsible for organizing the proposed meeting. We would suggest that Congressman Ataji Balos and Charles Domnick receive copies with covering letters and suggested covering letters are enclosed. These two Congressmen represent Rongelap and Utirik people and could be influential in helping if they are not already involved in legal complications. The covering letter to Balos also includes a suggested answer to a letter written to me and referred to you concerning inherited genetic defects and also a statement about the unfortunate effect

401331

Dr. James L. Liverman
Dr. R. A. Conard

18 October 1976
Page Two

of the Japanese doctor's news report on the Rongelap people.

Undoubtedly the expanded health care program will result in increased costs but we are unable to state the amount at this time.

We believe that prompt action in this matter may forestall further problems including legal complications.


Sincerely,

Bel

R. A. Conard, M.D.

cfh

cc: Dr. V. P. Bond
Dr. E. P. Cronkite
Dr. K. Knudsen

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