



BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY
ASSOCIATED UNIVERSITIES, INC.

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Safety & Environmental Protection Division

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February 6, 1978

Dr. W. W. Burr, Jr., M.D.
Deputy Director
Division of Biomedicine and Environmental Research
U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, D.C. 20545

Dear Dr. Burr:

The nuclear weapon which was exploded on Bikini Atoll on March 1, 1954 resulted in an inadvertent exposure of the Marshallese living on the islands Rongelap and Utirik. In addition, other islands in the Bikini Atoll received fallout in significant amounts. The USAEC, now DOE, instituted an extensive medical and environmental program aimed at understanding the effects of such fallout on the people and their environment. These programs are being continued. However, through all of these extensive efforts the Marshallese were in essence observed as subjects of the study and not as participants in a joint venture aimed at understanding the interaction of radiation in the environment and man. In recent times the Marshallese have expressed their concern over the lack of such communication and are now taking the stand: "You (DOE) have learned so much from us but in return we know nothing of what you are doing, why you are doing these observations, and what your studies mean to us."

Recognizing the urgent need for an effort to mitigate the growing concern of the Marshallese over what has been happening during the past 23 years and also recognizing that the very future of DOE programs can be jeopardized, and Brookhaven National Laboratory had one of its scientists, Dr. Janakiram Naidu, spend six weeks on Rongelap in an effort to educate the Rongelap people on matters pertaining to the effects of radiation on man. It was obvious from the start that one could not present a sophisticated science such as nuclear interactions, effects of radiation on living cells, etc., in a language capable of only exchanging basic thoughts and needs. However, the very presence of a person willing to live like them, eat their food and be available to answer, within the limits of the language, their questions on radiation, on our role in the islands, on what has happened to them and on what could happen to them in the future, has appeared to have reassured them that they were finally being recognized as individuals and not as they have felt as "guinea pigs".

Success in these preliminary efforts has prompted us to propose an extension of this educational program to other islanders that were exposed to fallout such as those in Utirik, and to those islanders who will be returning to islands that were exposed to fallout such as Bikini, Enewetak, etc.



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W. W. Burr, Jr.
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We feel that there are two possible ways in which such a program could be carried out. These are:

(a) Continue the initial efforts of sending Dr. Naidu to stay on these islands for a period of six weeks and present a similar educational program as offered in Rongelap. However, in these visits Dr. Naidu be accompanied by Miss Evelyn Craighead (resumé enclosed) who will assist him in presenting the lectures in Marshallese and will in time take over the educational program for other islands. In addition, efforts will be made to translate the lectures into Marshallese, preferably as a textbook which could be distributed to the people as part of our educational program. Also, Miss Craighead will participate in our environmental monitoring visits. During these visits she will hold frequent meetings with the Marshallese to address these questions and provide information where necessary. In a year or two we expect that we could hire the services of a Marshallese who has been educated in the U.S. with a B.S. He would be expected to eventually replace Miss Craighead after being with us for a year. At that time Miss Craighead will act as a consultant.

(b) Hire a Marshallese, who has had his education in the United States, especially if he has a B.S. This person would be exposed to our programs in the laboratories in the United States, and participate in our field trips to the islands. In a year or so he would be stationed in the Marshall Islands and be available for all the visits to the islands along with the scientists in their field trips. He will then be in a position to help present to the Marshallese our role in the islands and how our efforts are aimed at assisting them to understand what we are doing to mitigate the effects of radiation.

In reviewing the above two methods, we feel that the first method has definite merits over the second. The reasons being:

(a) Miss Craighead who has worked as a peace corp teacher will fit easily into the role of an educator. Her command of the Marshallese language is two-fold, in communication and translation. Though compensated by us, it will not appear as if she was being paid to speak well of us, since in her role as a peace corp teacher, they did not feel that she was a spokesperson but one who was on the island to help them learn the English language.

(b) Her knowledge of the customs was gained by actual experience thus enhancing her acceptance.

(c) Hiring a Marshallese right from the start would immediately create a rift in the relationship between him (or her) and his fellow Marshallese for two important reasons.



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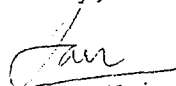
1. His salary would be far greater than the average Marshallese,
2. the high salary paid to him would indicate to the Marshallese that he has been bought by us and will therefore always speak well of us.

(d) This will not be the situation in case 1, in which we hire a Marshallese after Miss Craighead has run the program for a year and be gradually introduced into the program. Under the circumstances, the individual will not appear as someone who has been bought by us to speak well of our programs.

It is, therefore, felt that we should try the first method on a trail basis for one year starting from March 1978 when Dr. Naidu goes to Utirik for six weeks.

It is hoped that DOE can give this their support in view of the importance of our future success in the Marshall Islands.

Sincerely,



Janakiram Naidu
Ecologist

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cc: V. P. Bond
R. A. Conard
N. A. Greenhouse
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Attachment