

UNITED STATES  
 ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION  
 WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

R

AUG 21 1973

Honorable Olympio T. Borja  
 Chairman, Special Joint Committee  
 Concerning Rongelap and Utirik  
 Congress of Micronesia  
 Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Senator Borja:

This is in response to your letter of April 23, 1973, with the enclosed copy of your interesting report. Your committee is to be complimented for its hard work in pursuit of its mission. The following addresses the several matters discussed in your letter.

The Atomic Energy Commission has received a request from Mr. Stanley S. Carpenter of the Department of the Interior on behalf of the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory to enter into an executive agreement relative to Micronesian Public Law No. 5-52. In a response to Mr. Carpenter, I have expressed AEC's interest in discussing with the Department of the Interior the funding by AEC of research-related services as they may be provided under that law. The distribution of funding must take into account the authorized responsibilities of the Trust Territory Government to provide routine medical care in the Pacific Islands and of AEC to conduct research-related activities.

It is my understanding that Dr. Knudsen has provided valuable medical service to the people of Rongelap and Utirik. If Dr. Knudsen does not return to the Marshall Islands District, the AEC has approved recruitment of a replacement for him. In contrast to the large medical manpower pool of the U. S. Public Health Service, AEC and its contractors, including laboratories, employ relatively few physicians and, accordingly, have a limited potential for recruitment of a suitable physician. However, if the recruitment becomes necessary, Dr. Conard, with the assistance of the distinguished physician members of his survey teams, should be able to obtain the services of an interested and qualified physician. You may be assured that AEC will assist Dr. Conard in this matter.

REPOSITORY DOE/PASO  
 COLLECTION DOE/NV  
 BOX No. 1228, "ERDA # 3"  
BIO-MED, DR CONARD  
 FOLDER 01 THRU 12/1973

5051797

*(BioMed)*

Honorable Olympio T. Borja

- 2 -

I have been informed by Dr. Conard that, in view of death, he will have a special team conduct a hematologic survey during the interim period between the annual surveys. In this way it should be possible to detect any disease-related hematologic abnormalities at an early stage.

Relative to the funding of Dr. Conard's work, the level of AEC financial support has enabled his surveys to include an extensive battery of relevant tests. As need arises for additional procedures or projects, Dr. Conard submits his requests to AEC where they are considered for approval by our staff. In fact, AEC is now considering the acquisition of a vessel to be used by Dr. Knudsen and the medical survey teams as well as by other AEC-sponsored biomedical and radiological groups. Such a vessel would make possible more frequent visits to Rongelap and Utirik atolls.

With respect to the concern of the people over eating certain foods, only one food item, the coconut crab, was restricted in the past, and that restriction was liberalized for Rongelap recently. It is unfortunate that the population has been fearful of eating other foods which have been considered safe for consumption. Repeated reassurance is probably the most effective means of combating this fear. Your committee and other respected Micronesian citizens are probably best able to assure the inhabitants of the islands of the safety of those foods. Dr. Conard has informed us that he and members of his scientific team will contribute their scientific expertise in support of this important educational program.

I have brought to the attention of AEC personnel who conduct radiological surveys in the Marshall Islands your suggestion concerning another radiological survey of Rongelap and Utirik and a subsequent report on the survey to be written in the Marshallese language. You undoubtedly are aware that AEC surveyed Bikini Atoll at various times from 1967 to 1972, and recently conducted a survey of Eniwetok Atoll from October 1972 to February 1973. At present, the extensive data accumulated during this latest survey are being analyzed. It is our wish to have the Eniwetok people fully informed of the results of the survey in order that they may participate in a knowledgeable manner in the decisions and planning for their return to the Eniwetok Atoll. We are in fact taking the necessary action to have the essential results of this survey made available in the Marshallese language.

Honorable Olympio T. Borja


- 3 -

Your information as to the relationship of Dr. Conard and the Brookhaven team to AEC is correct. Dr. Conard is neither an employee nor an official representative of AEC. In view of the desire of the inhabitants of the Islands to communicate with an AEC representative, I will suggest that either Mr. Streenan or another representative accompany Dr. Conard's team during the next medical survey.

With regard to your request for information or advice, please let me reassure you that AEC staff will cooperate with your Special Committee to the extent of their capabilities.

I regret the delay in this reply and trust that I have clarified our position on these matters of mutual interest.

Sincerely,

  
C. E. Larson  
Clarence E. Larson  
Acting Chairman

cc: Mr. S. S. Carpenter, Dept. of Interior  
Hon. E. E. Johnston, High Commissioner,  
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

bcc: William Streenan, Nevada Operations Office ←  
Dr. R. A. Conard, Brookhaven National Laboratory

5051799