

UNITED STATES  
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

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R. E. Hollingsworth, General Manager

THRU: S. G. English, Assistant General Manager  
for Research and Development

PAYMENTS FOR CONTINUED MEDICAL STUDIES OF UTIRIK (MARSHALLESE) PEOPLE *D/c*

As you know, we support a long established program of periodic medical surveys of the Marshallese people, who were accidentally exposed to fallout radiation during the 1954 weapons test activities, which is conducted by Dr. Robert A. Conard of the Brookhaven National Laboratory. The data developed from these medical examinations have proved to be extremely valuable from the standpoint of increasing our knowledge of biological radiation effects, as well as rendering an important medical service to the individuals involved, and these studies are planned to be continued for as many years as deemed necessary and useful.

Recently Dr. Conard has become increasingly concerned over the fact that the Utirik people are beginning to insist on some sort of recompense for being exposed to the fallout radiation. This stems at least in part from the fact that the U.S. Congress passed an Act\* approving payment to the Rongelap people (of approximately \$11,000 per individual) in recompense for this population's exposure to fallout radiation. The Utirik people were exposed to a far lower level of radiation than were the Rongelap (estimated gamma dose, Rongelap - 175 rads; Utirik - 14 rads). Dr. Conard reports that when he attempted to explain to the Utirik people the small amount of radiation they had received, their response was to the effect that since they had received a "little bit" of radiation, they should receive a "little bit" of money. Dr. Conard believes that a token payment to each of the Utirik people involved, including descendants of deceased, would accomplish a great deal in assuring their future cooperation in the periodic medical examination program. He suggests a payment of \$100 per person and

\*P.L. 88-485 enacted August 22, 1964, entitled "To provide for the settlement of claims of certain residents of the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands."

(sum not to exceed \$950,000.)
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since 157 people are involved this would amount to about \$16,000. He further recommends that such a payment be clearly identified as an "inconvenience payment" and disassociated completely from any recompense by virtue of these people being subjected to fallout radiation.

Dr. Conard outlined this problem before the Advisory Committee for Biology and Medicine at its 134th meeting in May 1970, and the ACBM in its report of that meeting to the Chairman, AEC, made the following statement:

"At its executive session, the ACBM recommended that consideration be given to the development of some mechanism for payment to the Utirik population as research subjects in a way to assure their continued cooperation with the investigation of the Marshallese people accidentally exposed to radioactive fallout in 1954. It is clear that the mechanism for payment would have to avoid the connotation that this was in compensation for radiation exposure, in view of the low dose of radiation received by the Utirik population."

Because of the importance of continuing this study of the biological effects of radiation on one of the few groups of populations available for this purpose, I strongly urge approval of Dr. Conard's recommendation for an "inconvenience payment" to be funded from the budget of the Division of Biology and Medicine. However, it is recognized that there may be a certain amount of sensitivity related to such action and I am, therefore, enclosing a draft of a proposed letter to the Department of Interior to obtain their agreement to this approach. Informal discussions with representatives of the Trust Territory indicate no serious objection to the proposal.

Dr. Conard and his team plan a revisit to the Marshall Islands starting approximately October 20, 1970, for continuation of the medical examination program, and I am hopeful we can provide him with a favorable reaction to his proposal prior to his departure.

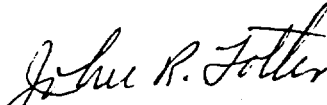
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R. E. Hollingsworth

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We request your approval of this proposal. You may wish to bring the matter to the attention of the Commission because of its possible sensitivity.

We plan to notify the JCAE of this action after it has been approved.



John R. Totter, Director  
Division of Biology and Medicine

Enclosure:  
Proposed ltr to Interior

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