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November 18, 1967

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Senator Clifford Case  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Senator Case;

I've decided to confront you with a serious problem facing my wife and I and 300 people with whom we are living. I am making you the sounding board knowing the kind of man you are and that you represent me in the Senate.

My wife Hope and I are serving two years in the Peace Corps. We have been assigned to the isolated island of Kili in the Marshall Islands District of the Trust Territory. If after hearing the word Kili you don't know what my problem is, you are an example of how important it is for me to write this letter. Please don't take that last statement as an insult; it's intention was to make the point that there are only a handful of people that know about the people of Kili and their distressing situation. If you are aware of the Kili problem, then I am further justified in choosing you to hear me out.

Looking at any map, whether of the world or Pacific Ocean, you will probably NOT find Kili. It is on neither such maps that we received with our Peace Corps book collection. We have written and received an up-to-date picture series of Australia and the Pacific Islands, and not only was Kili missing, the entire Trust Territory had apparently "sunk". One last example to show you my doubts as to who knows about this problem occurred in the United States just before we left for training. I wanted my subscription to a popular weekly news magazine to reach me at our training site in Micronesia. I queried the mailing department as to whether or not they could and would send my subscription of Micronesia. In turn, I received a letter stating that maybe I had misspelled the word or was inaccurate in some way, because they could not find the "city Micronesia anywhere in the United States"!!!

Assuming, as I must, that you are not fully aware of this problem, I will briefly explain the history of these people. If my assumption

is inaccurate, please accept my apologies. The people of Kili originally inhabited the Bikini atoll. The United States government asked these people to leave Bikini so that an atomic bomb could be tested. The United States promised to find them another home. The Bikini people accepted the offer and were removed from the atoll. After subsequent minor tries at finding a home, which failed because of land ownership reasons and inability of the chosen atoll to sustain "extra" life, Kili was decided upon. An agricultural and island improvement program prepared the island for its new inhabitants. That was twenty years ago. Since then a typhoon and neglect have marked the lives of these people.

KILI IS NOT SUITED TO THE MARSHALLESE WAY OF LIFE. The "staff of life" for the former Bikini people is a lagoon. There is none at Kili. It is an island surrounded by high waves that make their lives very exasperating, unstable, and perilous. To get their outrigger canoes over the waves is a danger I see them face daily. If they do "beat the waves", they then face the problem of catching fish. A lagoon provides fish, turtles, clams, lobster; in the ocean they rely solely on fish. The efforts at catching fish are tremendous; The returns are slim. Many days no fish are caught at all! We can sympathize with their fishing hazards here on Kili and see the advantages of a lagoon, especially since we trained on Udot in the Truk lagoon.

Not only having to contend with the forces of nature, the Kili people are at the whims of the captains of the supply ships. Field trip ships come about once every three months. The ships are from Majuro; they sell food, kerosene, and other supplies to the people of the outer islands as well as pick up the island's copra. If the waves are too big at Kili, Kili is bypassed. The copra rots and the people are unable to buy food and kerosene.

A ship arrived at Kili, Wednesday, November 15, at 7:00 P.M. It was too dark to do much work; it's hard enough fighting the ocean in the daytime. At 5:00 A.M. on the 16th, I was awakened to the news that the ship would be leaving soon, but the ship's outboard would make one last trip. On board the ship, I argued with the captain to stay, but his only concern was maintaining his schedule and preventing his boat from being damaged on the reef. The people or their needs were not

mentioned. It didn't matter to him that the Kili stores were out of food, that there was  $\frac{1}{2}$  barrel of kerosene on the island (which belonged to Hope and I), and that there was a refrigerator and stove for the dispensary and all the education supplies still on board his ship. He didn't seem to care that there were Kili bags (handicrafts made on the island) and copra that the people wanted to sell. He had to keep a schedule!

The real incident that prompted me to write this letter occurred this morning, Saturday, November 18. The boat had previously departed Kili for Ebon atoll, but was asked to return to Kili to pick up the magistrate, Juda, on a medical emergency call. The boat returned this morning at 3:00 A.M. The ocean was extremely rough, but the patient had to be removed from the island. In a lagoon this operation would be no problem. It was an hour and  $\frac{1}{2}$  operation at Kili. The ship was only 200 yards from shore. First the ship's outboard was caught on a wave, and the engine had to be repaired. Loading the outboard with the patient and those accompanying him was the next problem. The waves continually seesawed the boat while the men tried to steady it. Finally the patient was carried on, and the outboard made its attempt to return to the ship. To do this the Kili men walk the boat out as far as possible, try to time the waves, and then "gun" the motor attempting to escape during the wave interval. The boat coasted over the white foam of a preceeding wave and met the dark ocean head on. From the shore we could see a black line rising before the craft which indicated the formation of another wave. The crest of the swelling raised the boat and then suddenly dropped it, splashing forward. The wave had been beaten, but it left the passengers drenched and took one small suitcase overboard. Remember, this was a medical emergency and there was a very sick man on board. The small craft made it to the ship and the ship departed.

Is it any wonder why we heard, "Killi enana, Bikini emon"? (Kili is bad, Bikini is good.) Their lives are centered around a lagoon. The one thing that is most important to them is not available here on Kili. They want to go home! Can they, after 20 years of life on Kili? They don't know. Bikini has been declared safe from all radioactivity. They have received a rather optimistic letter concerning this subject.

Their hopes are high. They know there is talk in the air and that the problem is coming to a head. But they want to know. They don't want to be left in the middle. They won't start any new projects because they feel that they might leave at any moment. They are stagnant because they don't know.

This is why I am writing this letter. Is the Congress aware of the problem? Are those who make the decision fully aware of this aspect of the situation? Can these people go back to Bikini? Will Bikini be used for future testing as has been rumored?

My wife and I realize that by living so close to the situation, we feel it more than someone just reading our thoughts. Maybe only by coming to Kili can someone appreciate the people and their problems. Maybe this is why very little seems to be done toward reaching a decision. This is why very little is done to help these people. This is why I feel that I should make people aware of Kili. I'll only be here two years, how much longer will the Bikini-Kili people remain?

Sincerely yours,

*Todd E. Jenkins*

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