

BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY
ASSOCIATED UNIVERSITIES, INC.
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REFER:

June 5, 1958

Dr. Charles L. Dunham, Director
Division of Biology and Medicine
Atomic Energy Commission
Washington 25, D. C.

where is it?

Dear Chuck:

I sent you a letter of appreciation for the splendid assistance given us by various groups on our mission. In the present letter I thought I might bring up some of the things that happened on our trip.

Things went very smoothly as far as support was concerned. Unfortunately, things began popping with our arrival at Eniwetok and was followed by a slight fallout. This seriously contaminated our LCU for our purposes as we found on arrival at Rongelap the following week. With the best of intentions the crew had painted the deck just prior to our getting the steel room on board, sealing in activity. We later used acid solutions and finally had paintremover flown in from Eniwetok and were able to get the background in the steel room down to about one-fifth of what it was to begin with. We could see the peaks of activity in the Rongelapese and, even though the background was undesirably high, we hope to quantitate the amounts. There were some peaks which we have not identified in addition to the prominent cesium and zinc peaks. We counted about 100 people. We hope to be able to compare the ones that lived on Eniaetok from those on Rongelap and a few that had more recently moved there from Ebeye. It is unfortunate that the Eniaetok people had been living on Rongelap for the month prior to our arrival since it is the radioactive body burdens of people living on this more contaminated island that is of most interest. Fortunately there apparently had been only slight additional fallout on Rongelap atoll from the present tests to date.

On arrival at Rongelap we found Mr. Neas and Dr. Hicking from Majuro and Major Ritchie from the Task Force there in regard to various claims made by the Rongelap people. It is indeed unfortunate that the rehabilitation of these people had to be disturbed by the test series. I am afraid more claims based on this situation will be forthcoming. The only claim which our team was responsible for was the uprooting of two coconut trees used as mooring by the LST in March.

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I found that there was a certain feeling among the Rongelap people that we were doing too many examinations, blood tests, etc. which they did not feel necessary, particularly since we did not treat many of them. Dr. Hicking and I got the people together and explained that we had to carry out all the examinations to be certain they were healthy and only treated those we found something wrong with. I told them they should be happy so little treatment was necessary since so few needed it and most of them were healthy, etc., etc. Perhaps next trip we should consider giving more treatment or even placebos.

During the above meeting the question came up about eating coconut and land crabs. I must confess I didn't know there was any difference between the two. When I told them they could not eat the coconut crabs, they were a little peeved since they had been told by the weather station people that they could eat them. It seems they depend on these crabs for food to a greater extent than I had suspected. Perhaps we can re-evaluate this problem in the light of the more recent analyses being made by the University of Washington group. Would samples from Arbar Island to the west be radioactively acceptable? This problem should be clarified for the people.

I spoke to Dr. Hicking about the health aide situation and he agrees to try and place one aide on Eniaetok and one on Rongelap. About 50 people normally live on Eniaetok, some 12 miles distant. I told him AEC would pay the salary of the extra health aide.

Mr. Neas brought up the subject of the \$5 a day charge made by the Navy for hospitalization at Kwajalein. I told him I would ask you to see if the Navy would waive this charge until the people got back on their feet economically and after this time only charge the usual Trust Territory hospitalization fee (\$1 a day, I believe.)

I saw the DISTAD representative of Ebeye, Mr. Umhoefer, and asked him to see if the usual monthly visit of the practitioner (Dr. Iaman) from Ebeye could be carried out regularly. Apparently the activity associated with the test series has somewhat curtailed the use of Navy planes for this purpose, but should be rectified at the end of the tests. I also asked that Dr. Iaman send me regularly a report of any serious clinical conditions seen on Rongelap and summaries of cases admitted to the hospitals. The importance of radio communications between Rongelap and Ebeye and Majuro in regard to emergency medical situations was discussed at Rongelap with the health aide and the radio operator.

I was most pleased to see Mr. McKenzie, the agriculturist from Majuro, at Rongelap. He is instituting a vigorous program in planting of important food plants there. I understand one agriculturist will be present on Rongelap at least half time to implement the program. This program is of extreme importance in view of our finding in March a group of children with night blindness probably resulting from vitamin A deficiency.

CHARLES --

I am most appreciative of the fine spirit of cooperation on the part of the Trust Territory and Navy in our mutual problems concerning the Rongelap people.

Sincerely yours,

Bob

Robert A. Conard, M. D.
Head, AEC-Navy Team
Marshallese Surveys

RAC/hlb

cc: Dr. L. E. Farr
Dr. D. Bruner
Mr. Maynard Neas
Dr. A. Hicking
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