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MARIANAS VARIETY NEWS & VIEWS

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor:

At a recent conference in Tokyo, I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Uludong and Miss Mendiola. At that time, I expressed my concern over the radiation exposure of the people of Micronesia who have returned to Bikini and over the possible exposure condition that may exist when Eniwetok is returned to your people.

The information that I have comes from a draft Environmental Statement on the Pacific Cratering Experiments (PACE) that was prepared by U.S. Department of the Air Force and dated April 1972. That report indicates that the mean background exposure at Bikini Atoll is 0.086 mr/hr. Since there are 8,760 hr/yr, this means a yearly exposure of 755 mr. The average background exposure on a worldwide basis is only some 120 mr/yr. The Micronesians on Bikini are thus receiving some 620 mr/yr from residual bomb radiation. This can be contrasted with the U.S. radiation protection guidelines which allow an individual to receive 500 mr/yr but population groups are restricted to 170 mr/yr. It has never been felt that these exposure levels are harmless to man. In fact, the guides state that the exposures should be kept as far below these guides as is practicable. Moreover, a committee of our National Academy of Sciences recently stated that these guidelines are unnecessarily high and the Atomic Energy Commission reduced the allowable exposures from nuclear reactors to 5 mrem/yr. Quite obviously, the people of Micronesia are not being shown the same consideration. Because of contaminated food supplies, the dosage to the people of Bikini is larger than that stated above.

Since the population of Micronesia is small and since many of them have already been expose to substantial dosages from the weapon test, their future exposure should be more restricted than other less affected nations. I feel that the contamination levels on these islands should be substantially reduced. This would require the removal and replacement of the surface soil but that is possible. Remember here that the U.S. now stores a large amount of soil brought from Spain and we brought back a lot of icewater from Iceland.

Sincerely yours,

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