

Marshall Islands file

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BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY
ASSOCIATED UNIVERSITIES, INC.

UPTON, L. I., N. Y.

TEL. YAPHANK 4-6262

REFER:

403813

17 April 1961

Central

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FOLDER _____

~~Mr. Courts Oulahan~~
Deputy General Counsel
Office of the General Counsel
Atomic Energy Commission - Room A-251
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Mr. Oulahan:

In regard to our telephone conversation of 14 April, the following remarks are presented concerning the general situation at Rongelap during our medical survey carried out in March, 1961.

On arrival at Majuro, Mr. William Finale (District Administrator of the Marshall Islands District) informed me that the letter written by Dr. Dunham to the Rongelap people had not been sent to Rongelap but had been read over the radio. This broadcast probably did not reach the Rongelap people since there are only three radios on the Island. Mr. Finale agreed not to send the letter to Rongelap for publication in view of your request that the letter be rescinded.

Prior to our arrival at Rongelap, Dr. H. E. Macdonald (Director of Public Health of the Trust Territory) who participated in the survey, along with several other Trust Territory personnel, showed me a report written by a secretary of the UN meeting of the Rongelap people held in February 1961. I was not able to get a copy of this report but it contained principally the complaints of the people, most of which were related to supposed effects of the fallout. Since these complaints were very similar to those to be discussed below, they will not be reiterated here.

On my arrival at Rongelap, a town meeting was held and Dr. Macdonald and I expressed to the people the objectives of our visit and answered questions. The people continued to be concerned about the effects of fallout on their Atoll and on themselves. I did not feel that their concern was any greater this year than expressed in similar meetings with the people during the past years. A chief complaint was that they were not getting enough to eat and felt weak. Dr. Macdonald told them that the Trust Territory policy was, "--No work, no eat--". This matter was not pursued since it was not within the province of our group. Some of the other complaints concerned poisoning by fish (an old

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complaint), they claim that certain fish have black spots in their belly, they believe this is related to radioactivity and causes the sickness. They're still disgruntled that they are not allowed to eat the coconut crabs, which is the one forbidden item in their diet in view of the concentration in this crab of Strontium⁹⁰. They complained that the coconuts were small and referred to certain changes in coconut trees and pandanus trees which they believe are due to fallout. There was a complaint that I had not heard before and that is, that several people had gotten inflammation and blistering of the mouth from eating arrowroot flour. This latter complaint was probably due to improper preparation of the flour which has been known on other islands to produce such symptoms. Despite all of these complaints the people were very friendly and cooperated extremely well during our stay in carrying out the physical examinations and in submitting themselves to be examined. If anything, they were more friendly and more cooperative this year than in the past several years. I heard no mention of the suit. Personal discussions with several of the people revealed there was a feeling that the AEC should furnish them additional food in view of their circumstances.

Physical examination showed that the people generally were in a state of good health, their nutrition was reasonably good, and there were no illnesses or disabilities that could be attributed to radiation effects. The survey went extremely smoothly and the Trust Territory medical personnel, and our personnel worked well together.

I hope this information will be of some assistance for the preparation of your background report. I will look forward to seeing your report when it is available.

Dr. Farr said that he would mail you copies of correspondence in regard to the Bingham affair. If I can be of any further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely yours, .

RAC:ag
cc: Dr. Lee E. Farr
Dr. C.L.Dunham
Dr. H.D.Bruner
Dr. E.H.Forgotson

Robert A. Conard, M.D.
Medical Research Center

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