

AEC CHAIRMAN SEABORG ISSUES STATEMENT ON BIKINI

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(Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, Chairman of the U. S. Atomic Energy Commission, today issued the following statement on AEC's role in the decision to allow the former residents of Bikini to return to their atoll.)

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It has been greatly satisfying to my fellow Commissioners and me to take part in the decision, announced today by President Johnson, to return the Bikinians to their atoll. The attached AEC report on the radiation survey of Bikini was a cornerstone of that decision.

The report, which declares the atoll once again safe for human habitation, represents the work of many highly qualified men, including the scientific team which surveyed the islands in 1967 and the special consultant committee of experts who produced the report.

It has been just over 10 years since the last nuclear test took place at Bikini on July 22, 1958. The intervening years have brought a remarkable recovery on the islands, as AEC sponsored research teams noted in both 1964 and 1967.

The 1967 survey was made at the request of the Secretary of the Interior whose department is responsible for the welfare of the Bikini natives. The Bikinians were moved from their atoll in 1946 before the first nuclear test took place.

The team which visited the atoll in 1967 included radiological and health physicists, marine biologists, a tropical

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agriculturalist, an anthropologist and representatives of the Pacific Islands Trust Territories, Department of the Interior.

Eight of the most highly qualified experts available were asked to review the survey material. After meeting with members of the survey team and examining their reports, these consultants reached the unanimous conclusion that it would be radiologically safe to allow the Bikini people to return to their home atoll. Their report was forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior earlier this month.

While Bikini is best known as a weapons testing site, it has also contributed significantly to man's knowledge of the long term effects of radiation on an environment.

During the years when radiation levels were too high for people to live there permanently, the AEC sponsored several scientific studies on the atoll. In fact, Bikini truly served as a living ecological laboratory.

Before it was either a proving ground or laboratory, though, Bikini was a home land. Having been closely associated with nuclear energy, and Bikini, for all these years, I find it particularly gratifying now to take part in the atoll's return to usefulness as a home for the Bikinian people.

Copies of the technical data from <sup>the</sup>~~that~~ survey are available for examination at the Public Document Room in AEC's Washington office at 1717 H Street.

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