



MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

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 BOX No. 1228, "ERDA # 3"
BIO-MED DR. CONARD
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April 23, 1973

ACTION Off of Eng
 INFO _____
 R. F.

Dr. William Burr
 U.S. Atomic Energy Commission
 Division of Biomedical and
 Environmental Research
 Washington, D.C. 20545

AMA _____
 AM E & L _____
 AM P & B _____
 AM OPN _____

Dear Dr. Burr:

I would like to elaborate on a topic in a previous letter of mine concerning the importance of stationing a physician in the Marshall Islands in connection with the special health care of the Rongelap and Utirik people. This is important in order to fulfill our responsibility to these people, particularly with regard to monitoring and treatment of thyroid abnormalities. In view of the development of the case of leukemia, there is now the need for two surveys annually and such a physician would participate in both. The Marshallese are desirous of having the continued services of a physician and, as you know, recent Micronesian political pressures have been brought to bear in this direction.

Dr. Knud Knudsen has been filling the position since last July. He and his wife apparently like living in the islands. Knudsen's love of the islands and people, and his outstanding clinical ability make him admirably suited for the job. Furthermore, his wife, a trained nurse, is willing to travel with him to the outer islands and assist him. It will be difficult to find a replacement for Dr. Knudsen. He plans to return to BNL in July. He considered staying longer, but was so frustrated by travel difficulties that he felt he was not able to fulfill his mission. However, he stated that if he had means of travel, independent of the Trust Territory, he might consider staying on. He has proposed use of a small Army surplus vessel. The vessel is 60 feet long, and we have been told is quite seaworthy and would be well suited to travel to islands such as Rongelap and Utirik which are within several hundred miles of Kwajelein. It has been estimated that the ship could be altered for our use at a cost of about \$100,000. In addition, there would be an annual expense of about \$60,000 for hiring a part-time Marshallese crew and cost of maintenance at Kwajelein. We have blueprints for this vessel. Such a vessel would be available also for our medical surveys and possibly for other AEC radiological surveys in the islands. The use of a medical vessel for Dr. Knudsen's work was recommended in the report of the Special Joint Committee on Rongelap and Utirik to the Congress of Micronesia.

Eric D. ...

I realize that funds are hard to come by at this time, but believe this proposal is of great importance to our operation in the islands and merits your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Conard, M.D.

mbf

cc Steeman M.D.

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