

408315



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF TERRITORIES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

R

Hon. Clifford P. Case
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

DEC 15 1957

Dear Senator Case:

This will acknowledge your letter of December 11 asking our comments with respect to two letters which you have received from Mr. and Mrs. Todd Jenkins, Peace Corps volunteers on Kili Island in the Marshall Island's district.

The overall history of the people now living on Kili, as related by Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins, is substantially correct. Their home atoll, Bikini, was acquired for use in nuclear testing in the late 1940s and the Bikini people were moved ultimately to Kili Island in the southern Marshalls. Bikini is an atoll which is typical of most of the Marshall's district. Kili, however, does not have a lagoon but is a single island with a fringing reef. Access to and from the island over the reef is admittedly difficult. Although this kind of island is not the usual one, it is by no means uncommon in the Pacific and Marshallese people have lived for many years on a similar island, Mejit.

The people of Bikini were paid \$325,000 for Bikini Island. Of this amount \$25,000 was paid in cash and the remainder was invested in a trust fund, the income from which is periodically paid to them. Houses and other village facilities were built for them at the time of their removal to the island and other assistance was given to them toward establishing their new home. Although smaller in land area than Bikini, Kili is more fertile and lies in part of the Marshalls that has a more ample rainfall. Agricultural production thus is somewhat easier than in their home island.

Nevertheless, we recognize that the people on Kili have always entertained a desire to return to Bikini. This is a desire with which we sympathize and more than a year ago the High Commissioner and this Department requested the Atomic Energy Commission to make a new survey of Bikini to determine whether or not levels of radio activity are such that the Kili people may safely be returned. This study, which involved a field trip by a scientific team to the atoll in the early part of this year, has not yet been completed and the samples and data gathered have not yet been fully analyzed. It is therefore premature to say whether or not the Kili people might safely be returned to Bikini.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

SEARCHED
SERIALIZED

SEARCHED
SERIALIZED

SEARCHED
SERIALIZED

INDEXED

INDEXED

You may be assured that the problem of these people is very much the concern of the High Commissioner and this Department and we are desirous of giving them every possible assistance. We appreciate the opportunity of commenting on the letters from Mr. and Mrs. Jenkins and are returning them as you requested.

Sincerely yours,



George R. Milner
Acting Director

Enclosures