

October 1976

Congressman Ataji Balos
Majuro
Marshall Islands 96960

Dear Congressman Balos:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter to Mr. Peter Coleman, High Commissioner, Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, outlining an extended health care program for people living on Rongelap, Utirik, Bikini and Eniwetok, and proposal for a meeting to discuss these matters as well as various complaints of the people. I know of your concern and appreciation of the importance of the health care of the people of these atolls and earnestly solicit your help and cooperation with regard to the proposals outlined in the enclosed letter.

I would also like to comment on your letter to Dr. Conard of July 30, 1976, concerning genetically-inherited radiation effects in children born of exposed Marshallese parents. To quote from a letter from one of the foremost human geneticists, Dr. J. V. Neel, Professor of Human Genetics at the University of Michigan: "... there is no evidence that genetic change was induced in children born of the exposed Marshallese any more than there is unequivocal evidence of damage in the children born of the exposed Japanese". He pointed out, however, that there are some 15-20 dominantly inherited syndromes that might possibly be related to radiation exposure. Even if one of these occurred, it would be impossible to say it was due to radiation. It is most unlikely that any Marshallese child would develop such a syndrome. Nevertheless, if any child of an exposed Marshallese did, we would be willing to see that their name was placed on the examination list for the hospitalization benefits as outlined in the agreement between ERDA and the Department of Interior regarding PL 5-52.


Also, I know that you will agree with me that the unethical acquisition of our medical records on the Rongelap people by the Japanese has been a most unfortunate occurrence with respect to the wellbeing of these people. Based on these incomplete records, press reports claim that Japanese doctors at Nagasaki allegedly made statements about prognosis for disease in the exposed Rongelap people. Their opinions were either misinterpreted by the press or, if not, were greatly exaggerated and basically untrue. The report, which was published in the News of Micronesia, was most unfortunate since it has unnecessarily caused great anxiety and apprehension among the Rongelap people.

We would appreciate hearing from you with regard to the meeting proposed above.

Sincerely,

James L. Liverman

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