

The Honorable Peter Coleman, Acting High Commissioner  
Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands  
Saipan, Mariana Islands 96950

Dear Mr. Coleman,

As you know there have been certain complaints about health care by the people living at Rongelap and Utirik Atolls. ERDA has sponsored and strongly supported the team of physicians carrying out special medical examinations on these people over the past 22 years. It is our belief that most of the present complaints are based on misunderstandings and that it should be possible to clarify and resolve the issues to everyone's satisfaction. The purpose of this letter is to solicit your advice and assistance with regard to organizing a meeting with the people to discuss their complaints. We understand that Dr. Knudsen has informally discussed with you and Mr. Oscar DeBrum a proposal for such a meeting, and that your reaction was favorable; also that Mr. DeBrum suggested that the meeting should be held with the people on their islands and that it would be possible for you to furnish a ship for that purpose. We suggest that participants include representatives from BNL, ERDA, DOI, TT and certain Marshallese representatives from the Congress of Micronesia. We would like to propose the date of January 6 for a rendezvous at Kwajalein and allow at least two days at Kwajalein for preliminary discussions before departing for the outer islands. We understand that in view of the meeting of the Congress of Micronesia in January it may not be possible for the Congressman to accompany the group to Rongelap and Utirik. However, it is hoped that they might meet with the group at Kwajalein before departure for the outer islands to discuss the meetings with the people.

Some of the people's complaints center around the fact that some of the unexposed people feel left out of the examination program conducted by the medical team. The Utirik unexposed and some of the Rongelap unexposed people have not been included in the regular examinations since there has been no likelihood of any detectable radiation effects in them. All of these people, however, have had the opportunity to be examined and treated both at the time of the annual medical surveys and on the quarterly visits of the Resident Physician. It is proposed that the BNL medical team with the support of the Health Services of the TT institute a special program to systematically examine and treat all the people including children, living on these two atolls, who wish to be examined. The people would then have the assurance that all of them are entitled to be part of the examination program. The exposed Rongelap and Utirik people and the unexposed Rongelap control group, as in the past, would receive special examinations for radiation effects and this group (which does not include children of exposed or other unexposed people) would be entitled to the benefits of Congress of Micronesia's PL 5-52 as outlined in the agreement between ERDA/DOI/TT.


ERDA would continue to be responsible for treatment of radiation-related diseases that develop in the exposed people. This includes specialized examination and treatment when necessary in hospitals outside the Trust Territory. All other treatment of individuals living on Rongelap and Utirik that cannot be accomplished by the examining medical team when on the island would continue to be the responsibility of the Health Services of the Trust Territory.

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Since time is very short for the proposed date of the meeting we would appreciate hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

James L. Liverman

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