



UNITED STATES
ENERGY RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

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Mr. Oscar de Brum
District Administrator
Marshall Islands District
Trust Territory of the
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Majuro, Marshall Islands 96960

REPOSITORY DOE/PASO
COLLECTION DOE/NV
BOX No. 1228 "ERDA #3"
BIO-MED, Dr. CONRAD
FOLDER 01 THRU 12/1976

Dear Oscar,

This will confirm and amplify my comments to you in Honolulu in answer to your letter to me of July 20, 1976.

I recognize your concern about the Bikini food crops which are now beginning to mature and which do represent a temptation to the Bikini residents. First, though, let me put your mind at ease by reminding you of something we have said repeatedly in discussing the results of our radiation studies in the Northern Marshalls. When we recommend restrictions on the diet of the people, we base these recommendations upon the assumption that people will spend an entire lifetime in the location that is being studied and that essentially their entire diet will be grown there. Quite obviously this is not now the case at Bikini, nor would it be for some years even if you imposed no further restrictions on resettlement. Thus the fact that there has been occasional consumption of breadfruit and pandanus on Bikini Island should not lead you to concern for the health of the people there.

On the other hand, I think we must both be concerned about this as an indication of the effectiveness of voluntary restrictions. If the people are informed of our recommendations and understand them, but then proceed to ignore them, then perhaps recommendations made direct to the people should not be assumed to be effective. What then can we do?



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The surest way of preventing people from eating breadfruit and pandanus grown on Bikini Island is to see that they are not grown there. This of course would mean destroying the trees that are there now and going back every few years to destroy any new ones which have been planted. Such action I assume would be your responsibility as District Administrator. The only reason for continuing to grow these trees on Bikini Island would be to help with our agricultural research program which we hope some day will help to solve some of the food chain problems. But if that activity causes you an administrative headache, causes your Distad Representative concern, or indirectly leads to apprehension on the part of the people, we would find other ways to obtain the information we need (the farm at Engebi, for example). By the way, ERDA does not have a test garden at Bikini, although we have at times asked for samples of growing foods to be saved for laboratory analysis. If these can be harvested before they ripen and then dried and saved for the next visit of our research vessel, they will certainly provide valuable information. To repeat, though, we would rather give up that limited benefit than cause you difficulty or concern.

Your idea of planting mature or established trees on Enyu seems a good one to me.

You have asked whether I might use my "good offices" to assist in arranging an airlift of trees to Bikini and surely I would like to help with that. The best suggestion I have right now is that the next time we charter a C-54 from Kwajalein to Bikini we would request that a small amount of cargo space be reserved for transplant trees. Our next such charter will probably occur in about mid-October, and if arrangements can be made in time to have a small number of trees prepared for shipment and on hand at Kwajalein, I will be glad to ask KMR to assist. For this purpose you might have Murph Ownbey work direct with Ted Murawski, the Global representative who looks after our needs at Kwajalein. I will see that Ted is appropriately instructed.

One other thought we might consider: You do have some mature trees on Bikini Island. If these could be transplanted to Enyu I would expect that they would very soon be producing relatively uncontaminated fruit.

Mr. Oscar de Brum

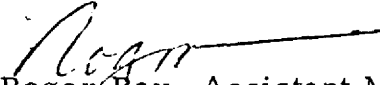
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Within a fairly short time (a year or so) after transplanting, their fruit should be perfectly acceptable in the people's diet. It would seem to me that, done at the right season, transplanting the short distance from Bikini to Enyu should have a good chance of success. I would be pleased to arrange for our LCU to assist with that project on some future Bikini visit.

Please let me know your reaction to these thoughts.

Sincerely,


Roger Ray, Assistant Manager
for Environment & Safety

cc: W. J. Stanley, Dir., PASO



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