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REPOSITORY DOE-FORRESTAL

COLLECTION MARKEY FILES

TRIP REPORT - MAJURO, KILI, JALUIT

BOX No. 5 of 6  
2,8 MARSHALLESE ISLANDS

FOLDER # 5 JUNE 1, 1979 -

Background

On May 12, 1979, I traveled to Majuro to assist the BNL Medical and Whole Body Counting teams and to represent DOE in meetings with Marshall Islands Government officials.

On May 14, Roger Ray and I met with President Amata Kabua and the Ministers of State. The President seemed disturbed that the Marshalls people felt they were not getting all the facts from the U.S. Government as to health problems due to radiation. He cited "57 thyroid problems" in Likiep and made vague references to an official U.S. document which showed high levels of radiation in Bikar and Bokar in the Northern Marshalls. He also said that the birds there were dying and had very little body weight.

The Bikar-Bokar news was rather shocking to us and Roger pointed out that the birds were so thick on Bikar that the helicopters had to fly higher than usual to prevent them from getting caught in the blades. General assurances were given that there were no indications of high levels at Bikar or Likiep and that more complete data would be available in the fall of 1979.

The President also was upset in that he somehow felt that having us meeting the Board of Tobolar (the copra processing plant) and discussing sample taking, could damage the reputation of the plant because the buyers of their oil and copra cake might be scared off by the thought of Bikini copra being processed there. Roger assured him and the Cabinet that our only interest was to understand the process so it could be closely duplicated in the laboratory, and that we wanted to be completely above board in that regard. (A later conversation between the President and myself indicated that the emotional aspect of Bikini copra and the potential impact on their market if it was somehow associated with the Tobolar plant, blotted out this explanation.)

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Whole Body Counting

A boat was made available from the Marshalls Government's Department of R&D and we went to Ejit (10 minutes from downtown Majuro) and met with the elders and leaders. There were about 55 Kilians (Bikinians) living there as part of the resettlement program. They seemed to welcome the chance to be counted and of course saw us as doctors who were there to take care of them. We tried to dispel this notion by explaining what the Whole Body Counting (WBC) was for. Each person over 5 years of age was paid \$10 to provide them with funds to buy meals, take taxis, etc. while in Majuro. The people were returned to Ejit each night and the counting took place from May 15 through 17. The WBC trailer is in bad shape as it suffers from maladies associated with old age and a life of debauchery. While we were successful in getting the air conditioners repaired we did not have the same good fortune with the roof, and deterioration continues. We negotiated for a ship to go to Kili and ended up with the M.V. Marshall Islands which runs on DC current, although the trailer uses AC. While the Marshalls Government made every effort to provide us with a working generator we ended up in the communications station clearing with the people of Kili and Jaluit Atoll the idea of picking up the people at Kili and performing the counting dockside at Jaluit Atoll using regular shorepower. A deal was struck with the people from Kili welcoming a "weekend" in Jaluit, an atoll with amenities and an abundance of fish.

The WBC was performed in this manner. Only 15 people went from Kili to Jaluit for counting purposes. The others said they would welcome being checked but the death of an infant on Kili involved social obligations at Kili. The health aide and his family also stayed because of his duties but indicated if we had a replacement he would have been glad to come. All in all we were well received. The people were in unison as to wanting to know when the Enyu decision would be forthcoming. There was no closeout meeting at Kili. I asked the Acting Magistrate if he wanted one, but due to the funeral ceremony and the fact the many council members were off island he declined after I assured him that the radiation levels in their bodies continued to drop as expected and presented no known danger to the people. He was to have explained this to the other leaders.

In all, 127 persons were counted from Kili, Ejit and Majuro, 81 of whom were present on Bikini in April 1978. I was told by BNL personnel that between the January counting and this latest exercise, all but a handful of people had been counted.

We returned to Majuro on Wednesday, May 23rd, and had a very interesting meeting with the Bikinians on Ejit later that day. There were four major points I emphasized several times:

1. There are no known radiation problems which would cause them health problems because of the time they lived on Bikini after 1972.
2. Enyu data was being very carefully analyzed at the Washington level and any decision would come from the DOI after advice from DOE.
3. The BNL medical team did not examine them because they expected to find health problems due to radiation; rather it was a courtesy examination because BNL was there anyhow to examine Rongelap and Utirik people and to hold a pediatrics clinic.
4. Wherever the Bikinians go, the U.S. Government will stay aware of the state of their health and environment.

The Bikinians wanted us to know:

1. They feel unwanted and need a place to call home.
2. They want the U.S. to keep checking them.

The Brookhaven WBC technical personnel performed in an excellent manner, worked long hours and kept a good rapport with the Bikinians. The participation of Evie Craighead as a translator was invaluable.

#### BNL Medical Program

This seemed to go well for Dr. Pratt and his group although some of the hoped for meetings with Rongelap and Utirik and Bikini people took place more on an individual basis rather than in groups. Many Bikinians from Ejit were also examined although I had departed for Kili and have no specifics.

#### Rongelap and Utirik Per Diem Problems

There are perhaps \$45,000 of unpaid claims under the expired (September 30, 1978) DOE/TTPI agreement and an unknown amount since then that will be picked up under the new proposed agreement which is now being reviewed by the High Commissioner and Marshalls Government.

I had numerous meetings with Chief Secretary Oscar DeBrum, Hospital Administrator Don Wilson, Budget Officer Rodger Cotting, Vice Speaker of the Nitijela Legislature Namo Hermios and Utirik Nitijela Representative Donald Matthews regarding past claims and the proposed

new agreement. By the Hospital Administrator's own admission, the medical records are so bad that it is virtually impossible to submit an accurate claim. The only claims list available is one put together by a defeated politician who was running from Utirik. All of us agreed that this would not be acceptable and the Marshalls Government once more agreed to send us a revised list based on good judgment where medical records were inadequate.

#### Recommendations

##### 1. DOE HIRE AND TRAIN A MARSHALLESE ON MAJURO

The "tarnished" image of DOE in the Marshalls and the mistrust of our motives and personnel should be squarely addressed. The hiring of a Marshallese is certainly not the complete answer but the right person could make a big difference. Now we have no one to answer questions on the medical and environmental programs once DOE or contractor personnel leave the island. A competent person could take over the administration of Rongelap/Utirik per diem claims so as to prevent a mess as described above from recurring. Support arrangements for our personnel could be handled expeditiously. (Bikini copra sat at Air Micronesia for months because they were afraid to ship it without assurance that it was not dangerous.) The Marshallese could have a Marshallese speaking focal point to convey problems either real or imagined. NOTE: This service would have to be provided through contractual arrangements not through a Federal DOE employee. Action: If approved by NV/HQ the Chief Secretary could be asked to gather a list of candidates to interview. The person could be hired, trained (PASO/NV/HQ/BNL/LLL) and established in an office in Majuro. The cost per year is estimated to be about \$20,000. This would include salary and fringes \$12,000, travel \$1,000, office space, vehicle, supplies, misc. \$9,000. PASO to serve as administrative supervisor and focal point for info, in and out.

##### 2. CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL CHANNEL ALL LOGISTIC SUPPORT REQUESTS THROUGH PASO

BNZ personnel in many cases write directly to government officials in the Marshalls requesting meetings, boats, maintenance of equipment, etc. and then are disappointed if they get there and the requests are not honored. This past trip revealed numerous examples:

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- a. The meeting with Rongelap/Utirik people was not set up.
  - b. Sample bottles never arrived in Majuro.
  - c. Small boat support from Ejit to Majuro was not negotiated in advance with a resulting overcharge.
  - d. WBC trailer maintenance not performed.
3. PUBLIC INFORMATION ANNOUNCEMENTS SHOULD BE SENT THROUGH PASO TO MAJURO FOR TRANSLATED BROADCAST ON WSZO, PARTICULARLY FOR BNL MEDICAL VISITS

The people on Rongelap and Utirik would be better prepared for the visits and the few exposed or control persons living places other than Rongelap, Utirik Majuro, or Ebeye would have the opportunity to travel to one of those places for examination. (One control person on Kili very much wanted to be examined.) I committed us to picking up his transportation costs to Majuro and return the next time BNL came there.

4. FUTURE WBC TRIPS BE LAID OUT IN ADVANCE AND INTEGRATED INTO LIKTANUR II SCHEDULE

This trip cost us at least \$7,000 more than it had to by using a Marshalls Government ship. It also used a valuable Marshalls asset again after we were criticized previously for using their ship.

5. DOE PRODUCE A HIGH LEVEL DELEGATION TO INTERFACE, IN THE MARSHALLS, WITH THE LEADERS OF THE MARSHALLS GOVERNMENT

Needless to say this should be well planned, fully coordinated with the President of the Marshall Islands and the High Commissioner, and be geared to presenting an overview on present DOE programs in the Pacific, their evaluation, present scope and future plans if any. The USG is entering into a new, more democratic relationship with the Marshall Islands and to this end, in my view, we should fully enjoin them to our efforts as friends and partners.

Original Signed By  
H. U. BROWN

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Program Liaison Officer

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TRIP REPORT - MAJURO, KILI, JALUIT

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