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UNITED STATES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20545

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Mr. Stanley Carpenter
Director of Territorial Affairs
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Dear Mr. Carpenter:

As a result of our visit to Enewetak and Bikini Atolls and the difficulty the Defense Nuclear Agency (DNA) is experiencing in obtaining cleanup funds, we would like to call several items to your attention.

We believe it is essential to verify that the radiation doses to the returning Bikini people do indeed fall within the predictions and that they do not exceed Federal standards. In view of the complexity of the radiation protection measures necessary for safe resettlement of Bikini Atoll, we see a need for our respective offices to maintain a closer working relationship. We urge that future rehabilitation plans such as development of a proposed Bikini master plan be coordinated with us in advance of implementation.

For some time we have been concerned that recommendations on Bikini rehabilitation (that called for construction of the first housing and planting of immediate food crops on Eneu Island) were not strictly followed. Instead houses were built on Bikini Island and there appears to be a prospect of more home construction on Bikini Island. While we do not believe there is an immediate problem with external radiation doses exceeding standards for people living on Bikini Island in the houses already constructed along the lagoon road, there are two other considerations that can have an impact on total dose levels. First, we are unable to predict the full effect of use of significant amounts of locally produced food such as pandanus and breadfruit that will contribute to internal dose. Second, with space on each Wato near the lagoon shore already occupied by existing housing, future construction must necessarily be on land nearer the interior of the island, an area known to have higher external radiation levels than the shore areas. It is conceivable that the combination of living in the island interior and eating foods grown on Bikini Island could result in annual doses higher than predicted by our earlier studies.

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Depending upon the results of our periodic radiation surveys at both Bikini and Enewetak, and the determination of uptake of radioactivity by food crops, there is a possibility that restrictions may have to be placed on the use of foods such as pandanus, breadfruit, papaya and bananas which are now being cultivated on Bikini Island. We recommend that any additional housing be constructed on Eneu, or if this is not feasible, that any further construction on Bikini Island be deferred until the radiological consequences can be evaluated.

On July 12, 1970, in our letter to Mr. Coleman, we recommended that clean coral aggregate from a supply stored on Peter-Oboe be used for house construction on Bikini Atoll. In May 1972, we confirmed that aggregate having low radioactivity levels from Peter-Oboe was being used for houses under construction on Bikini Island at that time. However, during this recent visit, Ted Mitchell said the construction contractor had informed him that aggregate from Bikini Island was being used for house construction. We reaffirm the earlier recommendation that coral aggregate with low radioactivity levels from Peter-Oboe should be used in constructing buildings at Bikini Atoll. Other sources should not be used until they have been checked for radioactivity. Furthermore, if some houses on Bikini Island were indeed constructed with coral aggregate taken from Bikini Island, we should know which houses are involved so that additional radiation monitoring can be done inside these houses. Depending upon the results of these measurements, additional recommendations may be necessary.

We observed that many of the recently planted coconut trees on Bikini Island have shown little growth over this past year, and have turned yellow. I hope that some agricultural specialist can examine the condition of these trees and that steps can be taken to improve the situation.

Finally, the basis for AEC's earlier position on the early return of a group to Japtan, was predicated in a large measure on early commencement of cleanup activities. We assumed that the buildup of facilities and the other associated support would facilitate implementing the more specific considerations contained in Dr. Liverman's letter of July 18, 1974. In view of the current funding

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difficulty, we strongly recommend that you re-evaluate the advisability of an early return to Japtan. Under any circumstances we believe that return of people to Japtan prior to cleanup is an action which can be considered to have a potential for environmental impact and should be discussed in the Environmental Impact Statement.

We will be pleased to assist you in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Martin B. Biles, Director
Division of Operational Safety

cc: W. W. Gay, MA
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M. Gates, Mgr., NV
Lt. Gen. W. D. Johnson, DNA

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