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CONARD NAMED TO MONITOR BIKINIANS

The Atomic Energy Commission has named Dr. Robert A. Conard of its Brookhaven National Laboratory to conduct routine medical surveillance of the people of Bikini as they return to their home atoll.

Bikini atoll was the site of 23 nuclear tests between 1946 and 1958. The Bikinians were moved from the atoll in 1946 before testing began. In August 1968, President Johnson announced that the Bikinians would be able to return to their homeland and directed the Department of Defense, the Department of the Interior and the Atomic Energy Commission to cooperate in preparing for the return.

In naming Dr. Conard, the AEC is following through on a recommendation of its Ad Hoc Consultant Committee which, in 1968, declared the atoll once more safe for human habitation. The Committee's finding was based on a 1967 scientific survey of the atoll which measured sources of potential internal and external radiation exposure.

The Committee also recommended, as a reasonable precaution, that a routine surveillance of the Bikinians be set up even before their return and that continual checks be made on their radiation exposure status after they are back on the atoll.

Dr. Conard has 15 years of experience in working with the people of the Marshall Islands which include Bikini. He was also a member of the Ad Hoc Committee.

He has explained his role as that of a monitor. "Everyone has a certain amount of both natural and artificial radioactivity present in his body and all of us are exposed to various levels of external background radiation.

(more)

"Though there probably will be some measurable increase in the radioactive body burden of the Bikinians after they have returned and are living on the atoll, it will be very low and is not expected to cause any medical problems," Dr. Conard said.

Dr. Conard has just returned from the Marshalls. While there he visited Kili Island where the former Bikinians now live, and began his baseline studies on about half of the first Bikinian work party which will be going back to help rehabilitate the atoll. The Bikinians are not expected to move back in large numbers for several years.

The Department of the Interior which is responsible for the Marshall Islands, expects the full rehabilitation of Bikini, including rebuilding the village and replanting the coconut groves, to take about six years. Cleanup of the heavy undergrowth and radioactive scrap has begun already under direction of the Department of Defense, Defense Atomic Support Agency with assistance from the AEC and the Trust Territory government.

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(NOTE TO EDITORS AND CORRESPONDENTS: Similar information also is being issued by the Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, New York.)

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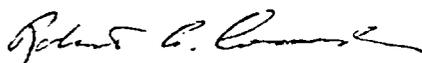
June 28, 1978

Mrs. Ruth G. Van Cleve
Director, Office of Territorial Affairs
U.S. Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mrs. Van Cleve:

I am enclosing a brief trip report of our annual medical survey last March-April. I have reported what happened at Bikini and hope this will help set the record straight regarding statements made at the Congressional hearings. If there is any further information you need, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,


Robert A. Conard, M.D.

bwa/encl.

A TRIP REPORT OF THE ANNUAL MEDICAL SURVEY
IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS - MARCH 25-APRIL 25, 1978

During the period from March 25-April 25, 1978, the islands of Majuro, Ebeye, Utirik, Rongelap and Bikini were visited by the BNL team for medical examinations of the Marshallese exposed to radioactive fallout in 1954 and unexposed populations in the study group including, in addition, people residing at Bikini. 8 physicians and 11 other medical personnel, including a practitioner, nurse and three technicians from the Trust Territory Health Services, comprised the medical team. In addition, a group of 4 others from BNL accompanied the medical team for the purpose of carrying out environmental and personnel radiological monitoring at Utirik, Rongelap and Bikini islands. We were most fortunate in obtaining the services of specialists in several medical fields for the survey, including a gynecologist, endocrinologist (thyroid specialist), tropical medicine specialist, internist, pediatrician and ophthalmologist. The voluntary assistance of these physicians (without pay) contributed a great deal to the success of the survey. The Rongelap, Utirik and Bikini people were all cordial, friendly, and most cooperative. They had parties for the group and presented gifts of shells and native handicraft.

Examinations included medical histories and complete physical examinations, with examinations of the blood and urine. Blood samples were brought back for more sophisticated analyses at U.S. laboratories. Emphasis was placed on studies for possible late effects of radiation exposure, particularly with regard to the thyroid and malignancies of other organs. In view of the thyroid problems in the exposed populations, examinations of the thyroid were also carried out in a number of unexposed Rongelap and Utirik people as part of a study to determine the incidence of thyroid tumors in unexposed Marshallese people. In the outer islands, in addition to regular examinations, "sick call" was held daily. Treatment was administered to the degree possible under field conditions and in some cases patients were referred to the Trust Territory Health Services for hospitalization at their medical centers.

Health care of the people living on Bikini has remained a responsibility of the Trust Territory and the BNL medical team has, in the past, only carried out "sick call" when transiting the island as a "Good Samaritan" gesture. However, on arrival at Bikini this year, since the medical team was to remain for two days on the island, in addition to "sick calls", the people were invited to come aboard ship for complete medical examinations (including blood work) if they wished. Almost one hundred percent of the people opted to have the examinations, and all of the children and babies were examined by the pediatrician. They appeared to be extremely grateful for this opportunity.

The number of people examined on the various islands was as follows:

Island	Exposed	Unexposed	
		Adults	Children
Majuro	22	31	
Ebeye	40	72	
Utirik	64	72	137
Rongelap	24	64	109
Bikini	1	64	72

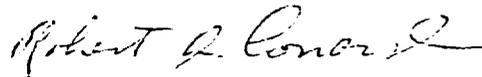
In addition, a number of thyroid examinations were done on people not in the regular study group.

Medical findings will be reported separately. From preliminary examination of the findings, however, a few general statements may be made. Among the exposed people, no new nodules of the thyroid were discovered in the Rongelap group, though one new Utirik individual had a tumor of the gland. Several thyroid nodules requiring surgery were found in unexposed people also. No cancer was evident by clinical examination. Further tests for hypothyroidism, which had been detected previously in some of the exposed Rongelap people, were carried out and the results are being analyzed. Nutrition and health status of the people in the outer islands, including Bikini, was generally satisfactory and about the same as seen in previous years. As pointed out, a number of ailments required further treatment or hospitalization and these cases were referred to the Trust Territory Health Services.

At Bikini, in addition to the medical examinations, whole body gamma spectrographic analyses were carried out by the special BNL group accompanying the medical team under Mr. R. Miltenberger. The majority of the 144 people living on Bikini were counted. In addition, urine samples were collected for later radiochemical analyses. Before departure of the medical team, preliminary analysis of the gamma spectrographic data indicated a twofold or more increase in ^{137}Cs levels in the people compared with findings of a year ago. The spokesman for the Bikini people was Harold (the school teacher), who also was Acting Magistrate. I spoke to him about arranging a village meeting, but in view of the examination schedule he did not think it was necessary. (In the past we had held meetings with the people and informed them of the findings regarding their radiological status and answered questions.) Before departure of the medical group I informed Harold that preliminary data indicated increased body burdens of ^{137}Cs in the people and told him it seemed apparent the people had been eating fruits grown on the island (particularly pandanus, breadfruit and coconuts). He admitted that this was true and pointed out that due to leaking water cisterns there had been a water shortage and people had been eating more coconuts. I asked if they had been eating any of the coconuts from Enue island. He said they got them from that island about once a month. I suggested they eat more coconuts from Enue in view of the lower levels of radioactivity on that island, rather than eating the coconuts grown on Bikini. When the medical team left the island after two days, Mr. N. Greenhouse arrived to join the group in the radiological studies. They remained several days more on the island.

When I arrived at Kwajalein, I learned that Mr. Winkel, High Commissioner, and Mr. Ray from DOE were in Majuro to meet with the Kili Council. I talked to Mr. Ray by telephone and informed him of the preliminary findings on Bikini. I told him I believed the increase in body burdens of ^{137}Cs in the Bikinians was

possibly related to the people eating more coconuts on Bikini, which may have been aggravated by the water shortage on the island.



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BROOKHAVEN NATIONAL LABORATORY

June 28 19 28

Memo to Joe Deal Dept. *Living*

I have contacted Nat Deunhander and he will send Mrs. Van Clow a brief statement about what he said to the Bimini people - with copies to you -

Bob C.

from Dept.
Form 112B

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TO (Name and unit) <i>Ther...</i>	INITIALS DATE	REMARKS		
TO (Name and unit)	INITIALS DATE	REMARKS		
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PHONE NO.	DATE <i>July 11</i>			