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ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION

1961 SURVEY OF THE MARSHALLESE

Note by the Acting Secretary

The General Manager has requested that the attached memorandum from the Director of Biology and Medicine be circulated for the information of the Commission.

Harold D. Anamosa
Acting Secretary

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : A. R. Iuedecke
General Manager

DATE: May 17, 1961

FROM : C. L. Dunham, M.D., Director 
Division of Biology and Medicine

SUBJECT: 1961 SURVEY OF THE MARSHALLESE

SYMBOL: ADMHR: HDB

It is a pleasure to report that Dr. Robert A. Conard, Brookhaven National Laboratory, has completed the annual survey of the Rongelap people during March 1961 and found them to be essentially the same as in the preceding survey. All of the data collected have not yet been analyzed, but it is reasonable to say they are not showing clinical evidence of chronic radiation effects other than negligible residual color changes of the skin. The following two paragraphs are excerpted from Dr. Conard's trip report dated April 18, 1961.

"The medical data have not been analyzed yet but it can be stated that there were no apparent illnesses or disabilities related to radiation effects and the general state of nutrition was generally good and about the same as it had been noted in the past years. There had been no deaths during the past year in the exposed population. In the comparison [control] population an anencephalic baby was born which caused quite an impression on the people, and one young boy had died of pneumonia. The people had the usual complaints about various effects of their radiation environment, but their cooperation was excellent.

". . . Dr. Macdonald and I attended a meeting with the Rongelap people in the Council House and we told him about the intended examinations. The people voiced continued concern about the effects of fallout on their Atoll and on themselves. I did not feel that their concern was any greater this year than expressed in similar meetings with the people during the past years. A chief complaint was that they were not getting enough to eat and felt weak. Dr. Macdonald told them that the Trust Territory policy was, "--No work, no eat--." This matter was

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not pursued since it concerned administrative policy of the Trust Territory. Some of the other complaints concerned poisoning by fish (an old complaint). They claim that certain fish have a black spot in their abdomen which they believe is related to radioactivity and causes the sickness. They are still disgruntled that they are not allowed to eat the coconut crabs which is forbidden because of the high concentration of Strontium⁹⁰. They complained that the coconuts were small and referred to certain changes in the coconut and pandanus trees which they believe are due to fallout. There was a complaint that I had not heard before, that several people had gotten inflammation and blistering of the mouth from eating arrowroot flour. This latter complaint was probably due to improper preparation of the flour which is known to produce such symptoms. I heard no mention of the suit against the United States Government. (Dr. Macdonald had showed me a report of the United Nations team's visit to Rongelap. The complaints voiced to this group were about the same as described above.)"

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