

Box 232  
 Kwajalein, Marshall Islands 96555  
 May 10, 1976

Steve Muller  
 Editor  
 Loan Ebeye Rainin  
 Ebeye, Marshall Islands

Dear Mr. Editor:

It was very interesting for me to read the story by J.A. in the April 30, 1976 issue of the paper. The facts of what it was like at Rongelap on the morning of March 1, 1954 are new to me.

However, there were some statements in the story which were incorrect and I would like to explain.

When the people were brought to Kwajalein after that day, they were told to bathe in the lagoon 3 times a day. This bathing was important treatment to remove the radiation powder from their skin and hair. It was this powder touching their skin which caused the blisters like from a burn to appear on their bodies.

The doctors who examined the people at Kwajalein found it important to take small amounts of blood from the people and test it to see if the radiation had affected it. The blood was not simply poured away.

Since 1954 a team of doctors for ERDA ( the new name for AEC), lead by Dr. Robert Conard of Brookhaven National Laboratory, has examined the Rongelap and Utirik people each year. Some people at Utirik were also affected by the radiation from the bomb test on March 1, 1954. There now is a doctor who lives at Kwajalein who visits Rongelap and Utirik 4 times a year to examine the people. The doctors have found the people to be generally healthy. They have found no poison from the bomb to be still in the bodies of the people. Radiation causes sickness it is true. Some types of sickness occurred right away like the burns and losing of hair. Other types occurred slowly and did not appear for many years like the thyroid nodules. There is no longer any radiation poison in their bodies now causing sickness.

It is not true that from 1954 until 1965 no medicine was available. It was only in 1963 that the doctors first learned that the radiation had caused injury to the thyroid glands of the people. The injury was so slow that it took 9 years for the swelling to appear in the people's necks.

Synthroid is not a drug to cure the people. It is a drug that prevents thyroid nodules from developing. It is not true that the people will die if they stop taking Synthroid. It is not true their lives will be shortened if they forget it for 1 day.

I thank J.A. for his story. I hope this letter explains some mistakes. Thank you.

*Donald A. Roberts, MD 5009063*