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October 11, 1965

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN SLABORG  
COMMISSIONER PALFREY  
COMMISSIONER RANNEY  
COMMISSIONER TAFT

(Signed) John V. Vinciguerra for

THROUGH GENERAL MANAGER

SUBJECT: RECENT INFORMATION ON THYROID DISEASE IN THE  
MARSHALLESE ISLANDS

Dr. Robert A. Conard of the Medical Department, Brookhaven National Laboratory, has just returned from an interim visit to the Marshall Islands to check on possible further development of thyroid abnormalities in the Rongelapese accidentally exposed to fallout on March 1, 1954. He was accompanied by Dr. J. E. Ball, a consultant thyroid specialist of the National Institutes of Health.

It will be recalled that, as of mid-summer, benign nodules had been found in a total of five adolescents exposed at ages of two to seven years; one adult female, forty-one years old, had been found to have a malignant nodule. All successfully underwent surgery for removal of the abnormal tissue. Attached is a copy of our July 12, 1965, memorandum to you describing the successful surgery for two children and the adult.

During the current August examination, nodules were found in three additional adolescents and two adults. The contours of the thyroids of two more adolescents, two young adults, and one man approaching middle age were sufficiently different from normal to cause Drs. Conard and Ball to describe them as questionable.

To summarize, there are now eleven of eighty-two Marshallese with definite abnormalities of their thyroid tissues and five more are considered questionably so.

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The non-exposed control population continues to be free of nodular thyroid disease. This extremely high incidence of thyroid disease in the exposed population must be considered the result of their exposure to fallout. Dr. Conard and his group will return to Rongelap in February 1966. Meanwhile, therapy with synthetic thyroid hormone has been instituted in an effort to control further nodule formation. Surgery is being arranged for the five new cases of nodular thyroid disease.

You will be kept informed as this develops further. Obviously, there are many aspects to these findings which will excite both medical and lay interests.

DOE ARCHIVES

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

Attachment:  
Memo dated 7/12/65

cc: GM (2)  
Socy (2)  
AGMRD  
RMA  
ADMHR

RMA

ADA

10/10/65

HAS stamp  
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ADMHR

DIRECTOR

AGMRD

GM

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