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STATEMENT OF EMMETT M. RICE, ACTING DIRECTOR OF TERRITORIAL AFFAIRS, ON LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE AN EX GRATIA PAYMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF BIKINI, BEFORE THE HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRITORIAL AND INSULAR AFFAIRS, MARCH 24, 1975.

Mr. Chairman:

We understand that two bills, H.R. 5158 and H.R. 5215, have been introduced to provide for an ex gratia payment to the people of Bikini in recognition of the hardship suffered due to displacement from their home atoll since 1946. The bills are identical except that H.R. 5158 would authorize \$3,000,000, whereas H.R. 5215, the administration proposal would authorize \$2,270,000. We, of course support H.R. 5215.

In 1946, as many of you know from history, all the Bikini people were removed from their home atoll to provide the United States with a nuclear test site. After being moved several times, they were finally settled on the island of Kili which has a land area of one-third of a square mile. Life on Kili has always been difficult for the Bikinians. They were accustomed to a lagoon at home which yielded fish and provided a protected anchorage. Kili has no lagoon. At one point, a typhoon whipped the sea to flood stage destroying crops and polluting the fresh water supply. Food shortages have been a common occurrence and high seas often prevent field trip vessels from delivering foodstuffs and loading copra--the Bikinians only cash crop. In short, the past 29 years have been ones of hardship for the displaced Bikinians.

The people of Enewetak have lived through a parallel experience, but with one exception. In July 1969, the United States Government paid \$1,020,000, ex gratia, to the people of Enewetak in recognition of the hardships faced, the longstanding removal from their home atoll; and the fact that their ultimate return was not then viewed as possible in the near future. Despite plans for returning the people to Enewetak, the people of Enewetak will not be deprived of the funds received in 1969.

It is felt that the people of Bikini should be treated in like manner as the people of Enewetak. Thus, after the people of Bikini petitioned for an ex gratia payment in April 1974, they received a favorable response from the Departments of the Interior and Defense which determined that such a payment should be made. We recommend a payment, ex gratia, of \$2,270,000 to be held in trust for the people by a trustee approved by the Bikinians and the High Commissioner of the Trust Territory.