

# NELSON G E FREE AWARENESS GROUP

## WITNESS BRIEF : ROYAL COMMISSION ON GENETIC ENGINEERING

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### 6 WITNESS BRIEF EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1 Genetic Engineering, as an irreversible self-replicating and expanding transformation of the biosphere, is not subject to controls and decision that are negotiated half-measures. The people, not their employee-representatives, need to make a direct and definitive decision as to whether New Zealand will be forevermore a part of the GE experiment or not. [ A(2),B(n)]
- 2 New Zealand has unique opportunities to produce more and more safe, natural organic products, for which demand will increase proportionally to the spread of GE biotechnology elsewhere. [B(c)]
- 3 If NZ refuses commercial/consumer involvement in GE, it will doubtless face retaliation from the corporate hegemony as exemplified by the WTO and the nations under its sway. Any nation which would compromise health, welfare, justice and liberty for such reasons is neither free nor a democracy. [B(l)]
- 4 In the area of medicine, GE poses its greatest danger of horizontal gene transfer by vaccines and xenotransplantation, where inter-species viral and bacterial mixing of blood and tissue is assured and prolonged. [B (c)]
- 5 The danger of ever-increasing human rights abuses occurring via GE's enormous potential for eugenics applications, is also of grave concern. Quite apart from this, gene therapies and xenotransplantation will powerfully reinforce the irresponsible practise of symptomatic medicine, not only avoiding and denying the true social and environmental causes of disease, but going further and actually blaming the victim for "bad genes".
- 6 Neither the NZ people, nor any general populace, has called for or requested the advent and use of this deep manipulation of the biosphere. The thrust, momentum, mega-resources and largely one-sided global media propaganda barrage behind this venture derive from the vested financial interests of corporations and other institutions and also the private ambitions of the minority directly involved in the R and D arena - (the experts).
- 7 Only by ignoring the concepts of the living, interdependent, intricately woven ecosphere and the holistic thinking which sees humans as only a part of this web (but with the special responsibility of a thinking self-aware steward), can we conceive of GE manipulation of a naturally evolving planet. GE technology is steeped in the 18th Century paradigm of man as conqueror of nature; the mechanist, determinist and reductionist world-view that continues to truly serve only industry and commerce.

8 GE is a turning point for this planet and for human values. If we venture down this technological track there will be no going back. A global experiment of this profundity and scope has never before been imaginable. Why should we engage in it? For whose benefit? Who is promoting it? Can we believe the magnanimous, humanitarian motivations - continually trotted out as its justification? Is it sane to simply allow a revolution of this magnitude in our shared biosphere? These are the questions of consequence which never reach the eyes and ears of the experiments' subjects.

7 **EVIDENCE BY SECTION  
SECTION A: RECOMMENDATIONS**

A (2) **SUMMARY**

9 A binding referendum from a fully informed citizenry on a GE utilising versus GE Free NZ. If NZ desires GE utilisation then a second question would pose the choice of free utilisation versus a strictly enforced moratorium on any product or process until conclusively proven safe by long-term testing.

**RESPONSE**

10 On such a profound issue, the will of the people, after they are thoroughly informed by government, should be ascertained directly by a binding referendum on NZ utilisation versus banning of genetic engineering.

11 In fairness to all parties and utilising the precautionary principle, a first step should be an immediate and strictly enforced moratorium imposed on all forms of genetic engineering and biotechnology, and the presence of its products in NZ. This moratorium should continue on all GE processes and products until they have been conclusively proven safe. The burden and total expense of this proof needs to be placed on the corporations or organisations promoting and applying for GE utilisation, both in funding the original safety research and in funding duplication of results by government laboratories to confirm them as accurate.

Section B **RELEVANT MATTERS**

B(c) **SUMMARY**

12 Disruption of the ecosphere has many precedents in the damage done by far less powerful technologies that have artificially recombined nature.

13 Avoidance of GE would preserve some NZ independence from transnational corporate control of our primary production activities. It would protect existing farmers from unjustly being exposed to cross-infection by GE crops, thereby retaining their choice to be GE free, especially as non GE and organic crops are commanding premium prices as exports.

14 GE biotechnology would not contribute to individual responsibility for health, disease prevention and environmental/social regeneration but, instead, to a continuation of non-holistic, symptomatic, and high priced medical practices.

B(c)i 15 Corporate and other financial interests will be the major beneficiaries of GE utilisation. Environmental and human health risks will be borne by the entire population and proprietary rights will ensure price hikes to consumers.

B(c)ii 16 Animal rights abuse will also dramatically increase.

B(c)

**RESPONSE**

17 It is an historically proven, self-evident law of nature that when man introduces artificial recombinations (or even unusual concentrations) of substances such as never occurred before in the natural world of physical matter and life on this planet, that disruption and dis-ease result. This has also very often been the result of simply introducing exotic species into environments where they did not naturally evolve. The intricate, interrelated workings of the whole ecosphere are torn and thrown off balance and the individual symptoms will always be uncertain and unpredictable as to precisely how and when they will manifest - but manifest they will. We have seen so many of the degenerative mental and physical ailments of the current state of society result from artificial chemicals, radiation and even manipulated values.

18 New Zealand has a manifold opportunity in the avoidance of GE and its products. Firstly, instead of buying into expensive, high-tech options owned and monopolised by transnational corporations and becoming just another homogenous, nondescript minnow in the globalised whirlpool, NZ, by avoiding GE infection (and also cleaning up its chemically dependent farming practices), would become a premier source of uncontaminated primary production for export and domestic use. Not only would NZ be a healthier and wealthier nation, but NZ would provide a true service to the import needs of other peoples who are increasingly demanding and paying premium prices for guaranteed safe food.

19 Secondly by avoiding the deployment of GE in medicine, NZ would pull back from another major step into commercialised and irresponsible “pseudo-healing”. Mental illness and major degenerative diseases and many minor diseases have been clearly linked to environmental, economic and social degradation. To proceed with high-profit, high-tech fixes for these problems is to be in continual denial of the true aetiology and prevention of disease.  
20 Thirdly, NZ could be once again, as in the nuclear-free debate, a source of empowerment and inspiration to peoples around the world, oppressed and damaged by the continuing ravages of financial priorities.

B(c) i 21 The benefits of using GE are monetary and will accrue to those financially interested in the promulgation of this technology, i.e. corporations and other patent holders, grant-seeking researchers and universities, attorneys, politicians and other investors plus the medical industry and food processing industry generally.

22 The benefits of avoiding GE will be felt by all New Zealanders in the safety of not incorporating exotic proteins and viruses in their bodies; peace of mind concerning long-term consequences of such infection and its potential horizontal gene transfer, and in the safeguarding of the natural integrity of NZ’s ecosystems.

23 Organic farmers will not be compromised or put out of business by cross-pollinating infection.

24 Those in the tourism industry will be able to continue promoting NZ as a pristine environment unique in the world.

25 New Zealanders in general and all farmers will benefit in not having the seed source of their food controlled by corporate patent monopoly.

B(c)ii 26 The risks of using GE biotechnology will be borne by all New Zealanders in the unpredictable forms of disruption which are certain to occur over time in their bodies and their ecosystems. As the environment and population become progressively infected, individual choice in the avoidance of this technology will disappear.

- 27 The lower the income of a New Zealander, the more he or she will feel the sting of monopoly patent control of both food and medicine.
- 28 I also include the animals as a disadvantaged group who will be ruthlessly and arrogantly ravaged and dismembered as a living resource for this technology.
- 29 The group disadvantaged by the avoidance of this technology are all those who have invested in biotech and the corporate decision-makers who have put major resources into GE research, development and promotion in the hopes of massive returns in profit and control.

**B(d) SUMMARY**

- 29 International legal obligations incurred undemocratically are not binding on sovereign citizens.

**RESPONSE**

- 30 New Zealand citizens need feel no international legal obligation to disadvantage themselves or incur self-harm with regard to GE. NZ's entanglements in democracy and sovereignty destroying treaties, agreements and organisations (such as GATT, APEC, WTO) have been negotiated virtually in secret by unelected bureaucrats with no public consultation.

**B(e) SUMMARY**

- 31 Damage to public and environmental health by commercial interests is so chaotic and widespread that perpetrators can rarely be identified. However lawsuits involving GE are still likely.

**RESPONSE**

- 32 As in toxic chemical and radiation damage to people and environment, the damage is cumulative, synergistic and occurs over the long term. Commerce and industry have been largely protected by these factors which create huge difficulties in pinpointing which products, processes and wastes are responsible for which diseases – with the burden of proof usually falling on the victim. In most cases, the practitioners of GE will similarly be exonerated by default when GE contributes to and amplifies the chaotic range of human, animal and plant disease. In any case, if NZ society was to add GE to its health burdens, it would in all likelihood still precipitate enough personal and class action lawsuits to make the patent attorneys envious.

**B(f) SUMMARY**

- 33 Property rights in the commons of life are ethically untenable and unjustifiable.

**RESPONSE**

- 34 It is, in my opinion, the most severe perversion of justice, ethics and any rational concept of property law, to grant anyone of any nation intellectual property rights of any kind based on their tinkering with or “discovery” of life forms which are the common heritage of all peoples. To allow any person or organisation to usurp ownership of life-forms which they did not and could not create (but have merely toyed with in a relatively superficial though dangerous way) is indicative of the true intent and motivation behind TRIPS, GATT and similar transnational schemes.

**B(h) SUMMARY**

35 A human health or ecological catastrophe is an unfortunate way to acquire perspective and wisdom.

**RESPONSE**

36 Global developments can impact decisions in ironic ways. We can only hope that it does not take the wake-up call of a GE environmental catastrophe overseas to open our eyes in the way that Three Mile Island and Chernobyl impacted on the course of nuclear proliferation.

**B(i) SUMMARY**

37 NZ has the opportunity to fill a niche market in pure/safe primary products to a growing world demand. It also has an opportunity to become a unique natural world heritage environment contrasting with many other tourist destinations.

**RESPONSE**

38 NZ could be the premier supplier of safe, natural organic food and other products to the world by avoiding the use of GE biotechnology. This would put NZ in a strong economic position based on supplying unique primary products to a growing demand, versus joining the pack as an insignificant competitor with our prices externally controlled by the global market. A non-GE infected New Zealand could also become known as a world heritage environment, where the bioscape as it has naturally evolved still exists.

**B(j) SUMMARY**

39 Public interest and understanding of GE biotechnology has already been limited and manipulated. In spite of this, high levels of concern already exist in the areas of most obvious immediate impact such as food.

**RESPONSE**

40 Public interest in GE has largely been manipulated, propagandised, or subdued by commercial interests and their influence over (and fraternity with), corporate owned and controlled mass media. It is therefore misleading to appraise the amount of public interest and the form it has taken based on the largely spin-doctored information, disinformation or omissions it has been subject to. However the current state of public perception might be summed up as follows:

J(i) 41 Intuitive unease with mutated food, knee-jerk belief in the latest touted miracle high-tech quick fix of gene therapy and xenotransplantation as it serves their own needs, and a general feeling that they as consumers should have a choice.

J(ii) 42 Though the mass media has repeatedly slanted the debate towards assurances of safety for the environment/biosphere, the public has heard smatterings of other views and is probably largely confused unless personal initiative is used to delve deeper into alternative sources of information.

- J(iii) 43 The public has been subjected to heavy propaganda in the economic area creating a belief that NZ will suffer economically and be left behind in the dark ages if GE is not embraced in at least the areas of research, innovation, business development and exports with the possible exception of food.
- J(iv) 44 Certain segments of the public and many Maori people already have serious ethical and cultural concerns in spite of media whitewash of the issues.

B(k) **SUMMARY**

45 Key issues surrounding the use of GE are enumerated below:

**RESPONSE**

46 Ethical Issues

- Ownership of life forms
- Animal rights and xenotransplantation
- Reinforcement of non-holistic, symptomatic, non-preventative medical practice.
- Reinforcement of outdated paradigms: fragmented, determinist, mechanist and reductionist world views.
- Reckless and premature imposition of new technology by corporate interests on citizens without consultation, open channels of information, debate and consent or effective government regulatory intervention.
- Potential burgeoning of eugenics.

47 Cultural Issues

- Indigenous peoples' rights and their power of veto over the tampering with indigenous flora, fauna and environment.
- Spiritual frameworks and belief systems regarding nature and man's relationship to it.

48 Environmental Issues

- Pollution which reproduces itself exponentially.
- Horizontal gene transfer – the high potential for mutating existing disease organisms and genetic recombinations unleashing new epidemics.
- Introduction of exotic species onto the planet in spite of disastrous past experience with merely inappropriate geographic translocations of species which later become pests.

49 Social Issues

- Subversion of free information, democratic choice and rule of the majority by the minority elite financial interests which promote GE.
- Subversion of national sovereignty by international agreements pressuring a free people to accept GE under threat of economic sanctions ostensibly to eliminate “obstructions to free trade.”

50 Economic Issues

If GE is utilised:

- There will be an irreparable loss of the opportunity to specialise in safe and natural/organic primary production exports; rising prices of medicine, food and

other primary products as patents and proprietary seizure of all that was formerly public domain and generic allow monopoly/cartel price-fixing to become the norm.

- New Zealand primary production, by taking the GE path, will lose any unique advantages in global trading, making its currency and economy even more subject to global financial manipulation.

**B(l) SUMMARY**

- 51 Trade sanctions and other international pressures are likely if GE is banned in New Zealand. Yet this would be a modest price to pay for sovereignty, self-determination and setting an important example for world democracy.

**RESPONSE**

- 52 If New Zealand refuses to join the GE club it will very likely be facing trade sanctions and enormous political pressure, both overt and covert, however facing such aggression is not a deciding factor for any people who value liberty and justice.

**B(n) SUMMARY**

- 53 Statutory and regulatory processes are dismally unsatisfactory and ineffective in protecting New Zealand from potential effects of GE.

**RESPONSE**

- 54 The current regulatory frameworks and agencies are exceptionally ineffective in implementing a truly precautionary approach, e.g. unlabelled GE foodstuffs throughout our shops, environmental bacterial/viral release of GE products via human and animal excretory waste, field trial “containment” which does not obviate pollen drift, “voluntary” moratoriums etc. The statutory and regulatory processes to date have been far more corporate and researcher friendly than properly addressing human/democratic rights and public health and welfare.

- 55 That which is required is addressing the primary question: Do the people after being fully informed of all view points on the issues, want this technology? On an issue of this profound impact this can only be properly done via a binding referendum asking –  
**“Shall New Zealand be GE free?”** If the people desire GE, it is the duty of statutory and regulatory branches of government to conclusively ascertain the safety of any and all applications of GE technology, at industries expense, before allowing any citizen to be subjected to risk. This can only be accomplished via a strictly-enforced moratorium with financial and criminal penalties such as are imposed for infringements of customs regulations – this to remain in effect until the safety of any particular application is conclusively proven.