



Working for Health

Gene activists

Street demonstration

Theo Simon

I think the most disturbing thing to me about GM technology in plants is it's going to affect the natural balance for the rest of time, it's going to alter the natural world once and for all, and yet we're not consulted, and even if we say no, then it seems it's going to go ahead anyway.

Street demonstration

Shannon Smy

I've tried all the other forms of action, I've tried writing letters, I tried contacting all the supermarkets, it didn't make any difference that I'd written to my MP, it was still being grown, and still no-one was listening to me, and it was too important an issue. There has to come a point when you say no.

Mae-wan Ho, (Reader in Biology, Open University)

It's a resistance movement against the biotech corporations trying to impose their agenda, corporate agenda on society. Well even though I'm a reader in biology, and also a very active researcher, I took time out to join this debate.

Street demonstration

Mae-wan Ho

Scientists have a very important role to play. They should start getting engaged in the social process. They should start asking themselves, you know, what is my responsibility as a scientist? I realise that there was a lot of misinformation and disinformation around, and that there was a real need for good quality scientific information to go out to the public, and also to the policy makers. I have engaged in debates and talks at the UN, at the EU, at the, you know, national level right down to local grass roots communities.

Mae-wan Ho speaking at demonstration

I'm here on behalf of more than one hundred real independent scientists.

Shannon Smy

About three years ago now Theo was telling me all about genetic engineering and I didn't know hardly anything about it, and Mae-wan Ho was speaking, and I went along to see her, and that was when I really realised how important this subject was, and how dangerous it was as a technology.

Mae-wan Ho speaking at demonstration

Mae-wan Ho

My position is that it's very important to question not only the technology but the science. Is there anything wrong with the science, and in my opinion, yes, because it is reductionist, and it doesn't really capture the organic interconnections that are really in nature.

Theo Simon

We do know that the material we're dealing with, because it is the building blocks of life, it's very, in its very nature it probably has health implications.

Shannon Smy

There is an increase in allergies and there is an increase in antibiotic resistance, there's an increase in diseases like tuberculosis, and we don't know why and we're not going to know why, and they coincide with the introduction of this technology in America and in our country, and I'm really worried about it.

Theo Simon

The biotech industry had taken a direction from PR companies in Europe, from Burson Marsteller and others. The advice was you don't tell anyone about it, you don't talk about it, refuse to get involved in debates on television, don't have any public discussion, and then you might get away with it, and that was the basic gist of the advice. So we knew this was the situation, we had to burst that bubble, we had to make it something that would be talked about. So we thought well, if we get on the roof of their PR company, and take off our clothes and go look, here we are, there's a genetics cover-up going on, maybe that will start something going, you know. We said we're up here because there's this cover-up going on, and this is the naked truth, and we'll come down once we've received an assurance that the products won't lead to any damage to human health in the future, that if there is any they'll accept liability and pay compensation, and they weren't prepared to give that assurance.

Shannon Smy

I've been astonished at the way people have taken this to their hearts, and decided to act, and delighted to have been part of a campaign that has proved so successful, and about a year ago Iceland supermarket decided that they were going to ban genetically engineered food from all their own brand products, and it was the best marketing decision they've ever made in their lives, and since then every single supermarket in the country I think, bar one, has now banned genetically engineered food from their own brands. People have decided that they don't want to eat it, they've made that really clear to the supermarkets, to the governments, and it's been withdrawn from the food, but you can't avoid the pollen. If it's been grown in our country, then it's there, and we've got to stop that.

Theo Simon

This place where we are now, this is the site of a farm-sized trial of GM oil seed rape, and that this will be coming up in the spring.

Shannon Smy

We all have to realise that if we don't want it to be in our food chain then we've got to stop it being grown in our country, and if the Government isn't prepared to do that, then we have to be.