

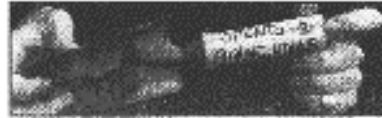
# HANDBOOK FOR ACTION

A guide  
to safely  
removing  
genetically  
modified  
plants from  
release sites  
in Britain.

ES-98

Version 1.0

September 1998



**genetiX  
snowball**

a campaign of nonviolent  
civil responsibility

## INTERNET EDITION

Version 1, compiled April 1999,

by

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# Acclamer



**This handbook intends to warn people of the likely results of a dangerous technology that has grown up too fast and is being used irresponsibly to produce genetically engineered crops which are not needed and which are a bio-hazard - a threat to human health and to the Earth.**

There is a desperate need for citizens to slam on the brakes of this runaway experiment before it's too late. In the face of all responsibility being waived by those in a position to wield it, the responsibility falls on each one of us. We are therefore inviting people to join together to take nonviolent action by safely pulling up genetically engineered crops; to carry out their action openly and to inform the local Environment Agency of the location of the contaminated plants so that they can be destroyed safely without causing any further harm. In the spirit of democracy we are asking people who take part in the genetiX snowball to be prepared to take the consequences of their nonviolent action. We call on those who have embarked on this genetix experiment to stop. We call on those who have allowed it to happen to do at least five years of checking on whether we really need genetically engineered crops and if so, whether they are really safe to grow.

You may be reading this because you want to take part in an action or because you want to help support one. This handbook is an attempt to put together the information you'll need to participate in genetiX snowball, at whatever level feels right for you and your circumstances. Due to time and resource constraints it cannot hope to cover everything in as much detail as we would like; there will probably be some errors - please let us know of mistakes so we can amend the second edition. If you would like more in depth information please refer to the appendix which also has lists of further reading.

We have shamelessly copied and borrowed from other peoples' work without asking them, so as to protect them from possible prosecution. We hope they won't mind. The responsibility for writing and publishing this handbook lies entirely with genetiX snowball. Feel free to reproduce any or all of it without asking us, but please credit us.



September 1998

*Further copies of this handbook can be obtained from\*:*

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## **\* Internet edition addendum**

This version of the genetiX snowball '*Handbook for Action*' was developed from the genetiX snowball website - <http://www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/gs/> The purpose of this was to create an easy to print and distribute version of the handbook from the website version. This has been carried out in case Monsanto, who are currently bringing a legal case against members of genetiX snowball, attempt to extend the injunctions to the website.

***Please distribute this file freely!***

**Paul Mobbs**  
11th April, 1998

# How to use this handbook

We recommend that you read sections 3, 4, 5 and 6 to get essential information about the campaign.

The appendices contain essential or useful reference material and it is worth browsing through to get an idea of what is there. Much of this material will be useful for other campaigns or other issues. The appendices are arranged to correspond with each section in the main body of the text and the numbering follows the same pattern, but is prefixed with an 'A', for easy referencing.

Reaching out widely to a diversity of people to join in a nonviolent action is an ambitious task. If we are serious about wanting to involve people we will need to ensure that everyone is clear about the methods of the campaign and how they can join in. Reading this handbook will hopefully facilitate this process.

*"Don't ever forget the seed is the most important thing in the whole world. I am going to tell you a story. It was during the war and I was doing some drawings in the Bethlehem- Fairfield shipyard near Baltimore. There was a great battleship being made there and while I was looking at it, suddenly I saw at my feet a rubble heap and a little dandelion plant. As I was standing there a puff of wind came and wafted the seed from that dandelion plant right across the big steel ship, and as I looked at it, suddenly I realized there was more power in that one little seed than there was in this great big steel ship, because the steel ship was static. It had no power of growth. But that one tiny dandelion seed had in itself the force of immortality beyond my lifetime, because it held inside that tiny little shell the power of growth. And so I think that when we play with earth and seeds, we do it with a stimulating humility because we know we are playing with the things of this life which are of the most enduring importance".*

From the 'The Philosophy of Gardening' by Clare Leighton. An address given at a horticultural meeting St. Paul, Minnesota, June 1947.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## ***In this section...***

- Motivations
- Inspirations
- How genetiX snowball is organised

"All people, all living things, are part of the earth life, and so are sacred. No one of us stands higher or lower than any other. Only justice can assure balance: only ecological balance can sustain freedom. Only in freedom can .... spirit flourish in its full diversity.

"To honour the sacred is to create conditions in which nourishment, sustenance, habitat, knowledge, freedom, and beauty can thrive. To honour the sacred is to make love possible.

"To this we dedicate our curiosity, our will, our courage, our silences, and our voices. To this we dedicate our lives."

Starhawk, 1993.

## 1.1 Motivations

***genetiX snowball is a campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility aiming to build active resistance to this new gene technology which is unwanted, unnecessary, unsafe and irreversible***

After half a century facing the dangers of the nuclear age and the splitting of the atom, we now find ourselves with a new threat posed by the splitting of the genome through genetic modification. Radioactivity has a "half life", it gradually becomes safer over thousands of years; but gene technology creates a pollution with "multiple life" - it keeps on replicating and cannot be recalled (for more information about this see appendix 1.1). Genetically modified (GM) plants are being released into the environment at deliberate release sites all over Britain.

genetiX snowball is a campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility aiming to build active resistance to this new gene technology which is unwanted, unnecessary, unsafe and irreversible. We want to challenge the sheep-like habit of doing as others do and not stepping out of line. Whilst individuals unthinkingly follow others, or give their consent by their failure to act, our society will never grow out of making war and destroying the Earth

Our democratic system has failed us; government has waived its responsibility to respond to public concern and regulatory bodies are wholly inadequate. Meanwhile transnational corporations hold the reins and pull the strings of power. Profit is being prioritised over the health of people and our environment.

When biotechnology companies refuse to accept liability for the risks of GM; when our legal system becomes devoid of morals and ethics - then we must take responsibility. We believe that one way of taking responsibility is to safely remove a small, symbolic number of GM plants from the ground and



then to encourage others to take similar action.

Since GM crop release sites or 'test field sites' are sometimes several hectares in area, and there are possibly more than 300 in the UK, it is essential to involve lots of people. Each participant in genetiX snowball is asked to invite two or more people to join in the campaign, thus the image of the rolling snowball gradually growing bigger. Hopefully the action should not only perpetuate itself, but also get big enough to effect real democratic change.

We have set some ground rules for the genetiX snowball so that you can decide if this is the kind of campaign you want to join. These ground rules are consistent with our vision of a society which is founded on democracy, social justice and peace.

We are nonviolent because we want to help to create a peaceful world. The use of any kind of violence alienates people, polarises opinion and deflects from the real issues at stake. Taking nonviolent action in a group needs thorough preparation including discussing what each of you may consider to be violence. We need to confront the violence within us and to learn ways of dealing with the violence of others.

Openness and accountability are cornerstones of a real democracy. Multinational companies, and the majority of those involved in the biotechnology industry, are largely unaccountable to the rest of society. They have, for example, taken no steps to accept liability if anything goes wrong with gene technology. We show our openness by writing to the farmer in advance of the action - either the specific farmer, or all farmers hosting GM crops in the county in which we plan to do our action. We show our accountability by leaving personal statements explaining why we have taken nonviolent action.

An intrinsic part of our action is our readiness to accept the consequences of our action as part of our resistance. We recognise that people may well be arrested for participating in this action but by making ourselves vulnerable we are challenging our opponents. It is more difficult and challenging to condemn somebody who is apparently proud of their action, shows no violent resistance and seems undaunted by the consequences. There are however essential roles within each action which have a lower risk of arrest, such as talking with the farmer, police, media and legal support.

We believe that GM plants are a biohazard and we will be decontaminating the test site using safe methods. The measures we are taking are primarily to guard against the spread of genetic pollution which could result in further horizontal gene transfer (see appendix 1.1.3.4).

We have tried to reach a definition of nonviolence and a way of being open and accountable that is appropriate for the circumstances in which genetiX snowball is taking place. We are inviting everyone who takes part in genetiX snowball to sign a pledge agreeing to these groundrules. There are opportunities to experiment within the terms of our pledge and we do not know how circumstances will change in the future so we need to be adaptable.

## 1.2 Inspirations

The genetiX snowball draws inspiration from three sources: the Snowball nonviolence campaign which resisted the presence of US military nuclear arms bases in Britain in the 80s; the Swords into Ploughshares tradition which uses simple hand tools to nonviolently disarm weapons (see appendix 1.2); the many inspiring actions to protect the environment in Britain and throughout the world which have incorporated nonviolent, open and accountable methods.

Hopefully we are combining the best of the original Snowball and the best of Ploughshares with our experience and understanding of environmental actions to produce an action that builds on these

methods and is appropriate for the particular circumstances of genetically modified crops.



## 1.3 How genetiX snowball is organised

Seven people formed a coordinating group based on the "spokes- council" model - each coordinator is in one of five spokes- groups: outreach, support, administration, media and resources. At least one person from each spokes-group attends core- coordination meetings with the other spokes-group coordinators where they can bring up issues relating to their group and make policy decisions in consultation with the other coordinators. Coordinators of each spokes-group work and consult with other people to organise and do the work. The coordinators invited other people to join them in forming an "affinity group" which launched the first snowball action. The coordination group intends to invite new people in once the campaign is up and running reasonably smoothly. All the work is unpaid and we have very limited funds.

The coordination group intends to facilitate the campaign in fulfilling its aims, to be accountable for the overall campaign (but not for the specific actions of individuals or groups) and to serve the needs of existing snowball groups.

## 2. What we want

### *In this section...*

- 2.1 Aims
- 2.2 What we are calling for

*"They say that science is deciphering the information code of life, and that now multinational companies intend to cultivate life in their laboratories, so that it does not run around wild and unharnessed, squandering colour and gaiety with the coming of spring. But life is music. It has its own notes, and its rhythm and cadence, and its melodies. And it is a powerful and playful magic force that moves our heart and our feet, and our very soul. And life, like music, was made to spill over and flow freely, a gift to poor and to the powerful alike. There are a thousand tunes in this world, for those wanting to listen. And each tune is a little piece of the soul of people and - just like life - cannot be cultivated in the laboratory of a multinational company. For this very reason, now that capital wants to appropriate the notes that compose the diverse songs of life, we need to join efforts, and stop it."*

Indigenous People's Biodiversity Network.

### 2.1 Aims & Objectives

The aims of genetiX snowball are as follows:

- To secure from the government the promise to fulfil our request (see below).
- To gradually build up large numbers of people campaigning against GM crops and safely decontaminating release sites containing GM plants until such time as a moratorium is secured.
- To invite people to participate in nonviolent actions which will bring society closer to democracy, social justice and peace with each other and with the Earth.
- To encourage people to question mindless obedience and to move through their fears into a position of shared power balanced with a strong sense of responsibility.
- To increase the number of people actively opposing GM crops until they are proved beyond doubt to be necessary and safe.
- To stimulate debate in all sectors of society about GM crops and their effects on the food chain and the growing corporate control of agriculture.
- To promote methods of food production which are sufficient, safe and healthy; and which minimise adverse effects on biodiversity and the integrity of ecology.

## 2.2 What we are calling for

Many people joined the original snowball campaign because their demands were so reasonable. To be more inclusive, and to involve a wide variety of people we are also making a reasonable request:

1. **A five year moratorium on the deliberate release of GM plants in Britain, except for government sponsored ecological health and safety tests (in enclosed systems); and**
2. **The removal by government agencies, farmers or the biotechnology companies of all GM plants already existing.**

genetiX snowball will be called off when this request is met.



**Prometheus** having received the knowledge of the Gods, attempts to improve upon their work.

Drawn for Reep by Tony Hart

## 3. Making a commitment

### *In this section...*

- 3.1 Ground rules
- 3.2 The Pledge
  - Safety
  - Nonviolence
  - Openness
  - Accepting the consequences

"Until one is committed there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself then providence moves too .... whatever you can do or dream you can begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.'."

Goethe.

### 3.1 Ground rules

*See also introduction.*

The genetiX snowball is committed to safe working, nonviolence, openness and being prepared to accept the consequences of the action. These are ground rules which we see as central to genetiX snowball and it is essential that everyone who takes part makes a serious commitment to follow them by signing the Pledge (see appendix 3.2).

After much discussion, we have come up with a working definition of nonviolence which forms the basis of the pledge. We do not presume this to be either definitive or watertight in a general sense. Maybe your group would find it useful and interesting to explore definitions of nonviolence as a way of informing yourselves of the issues.

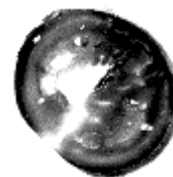
Being open means that you do not hide what you are doing or planning to do. Being accountable simply means that you actively tell people either about what you intend, or what you have already done, when you have done it, and are prepared to take responsibility for your action. Again, in a general sense, there are many ways of being accountable and many possible people to whom you might want to account.

### 3.2 Explanations about the pledge

The Pledge is produced on one page suitable for photocopying in the appendix 3.2.

### 3.2.1 Safety

*- I will put all GM plants pulled up by me into strong polythene bags, seal them with heavy duty tape, mark them with a biohazard symbol, leave them at the site and inform the Environment Agency giving full details of the location.*



Toxic herbicides, sprays or fire should not be used to destroy the plants, because these would damage the wider environment and be a safety hazard. We do not have the expertise or necessary equipment to destroy the GM crops in a safe way. We should not get into thinking that we have to be responsible for clearing everything up; it is okay to ask for help with something we cannot deal with safely. The Environment Agency is responsible for clearing up biohazards.

Bags which contain plants should be sealed and clearly marked with the official biohazard sign; see Appendix 5.12. They should be left at the site and the area office of the Environment Agency (details of your area office are in the local telephone directory) informed that there is a biohazard and given the exact location of the site.

*- I will take appropriate precautions to ensure that no genetically modified plant material on my body or clothing will contaminate any area beyond this site.*

Pollen is microscopic and it could get into your clothing or hair and so be transported on you to a site where it could fertilise wild relatives of the plant. To avoid this you will need to wear protective clothing, shoe covers and gardening gloves.

Before you leave the area take off your protective clothing and bag this up, seal it and mark it as a biohazard in the same way as you have with the GM crops and leave them for collection by the Environment Agency as above.

Point out to anyone else, such as journalists, security guards, police, who enter the contaminated area that they are likely to spread genetic pollution if they walk amongst the GM plants without protective clothing. It is a good idea to cordon off the contaminated area with some brightly coloured tape and biohazard signs. See Appendix 5.12 on preparing equipment for the action.

### 3.2.2 Nonviolence

*- I will remove \_\_\_\_ (no more than 100) individual genetically modified plants on this day. See section 5.7.2 for some ideas about how many GM plants to pull up.*

Our definition of nonviolence goes beyond the relatively passive stance of not hurting anyone either in retaliation or in self defence (being a pacifist). Nonviolence can be active when we take steps to prevent violence from other people by deliberately obstructing or challenging them, yet without hurting them in any way. The safe and careful removal of GM plants is an effective way of preventing danger to people's health and to the environment resulting from cross pollination or horizontal gene transfer. This is an active expression of nonviolence.

*- I will not engage in physical violence or knowingly take part in any action that will cause harm to any living being.*

Violence in this context is any action that can cause psychological or physical damage, and includes actions that can create a panic situation. Fear is usually at the root of violence. Whilst it is impossible to completely rule out causing fear, we should take steps to avoid it and reassure anyone we encounter. Fear can block people, preventing them from being receptive to change. Ridicule and humiliation is a kind of violence which is so easy to fall into when just having a bit of a laugh at someone else's expense degenerates into something rather nasty.

*- I will not carry any weapons.*

Don't take anything with you to your action that may be assumed to be a weapon. Be aware that some of the gardening tools you will need for plant removal could be mistaken to be an offensive weapon; so be careful with the way you handle your tools, e.g. do not point them at anyone or throw them. If anyone outside your group approaches you, put your tools down before you speak with them.

*- I will try to create an atmosphere of calm.*

It is worth discussing this in your group and role playing possible scenarios. Think about the way you move, the way you speak and what you say. All of these things contribute to creating a particular atmosphere.

*- I will try to treat everyone I encounter with respect.*

We want anyone and everyone to be respected for several reasons. Most important of these is that simply being respectful of people is more likely to create the kind of world we all want to live in. We also need to allow for the possibility that we are wrong and carry with us the humility to reflect on this possibility.

Keep in mind that the aims of the campaign are to halt the bad practices of the companies; not to target the companies themselves or to see them as enemies. They are more likely to be receptive to change if the people who work there are treated with respect.

Farmers are likely to be anxious about their land - show respect by following the country code. We have told all the farmers that we will ask people not to bring a dog.

Some people may feel disinclined to show respect for the police. We have had both very good and very bad experiences of the police. Many will respond well to our action and will support us. It doesn't harm to chat with them about the issue, although they are not allowed to have opinions on duty. It is very likely that they will be nervous, so take the trouble to reassure them by explaining what is happening.

If you are charged you will also be encountering court officials. The court is structured in an intimidating way, but some of the staff may be supportive of your action. Don't be intimidated by the court system and don't fall into the trap of thinking of yourself as a criminal. You took responsible nonviolent action and you have the right to defend yourself.

*- I will not take any alcohol or drugs other than for medical reasons.*



The third snowball action on Sunday 16th August 1998 at Sharpe's International seeds, Boothby Graffoe, Lincolnshire, was completely open. The group disclosed the location in advance and started a dialogue with the seed company. (photo Nick Cobbing)

### 3.2.3 Openness

*- I will carry out my genetiX snowball action during daylight on the first or third weekend of every month.*

The reason for this fixed time structure is to give the genetiX snowball some kind of momentum, a possibility to increase in size over time and so that snowballers can choose the best time for their own group. Lots of groups of people all acting at the same time builds a sense of community, shows a unified presence and will carry stories better in the local and national media. The dates are set at weekends to allow the majority of people who work regular hours to participate more easily. It also gives space for people from other campaigns to do other kinds of actions.

We would like to develop a relationship of mutual trust and respect with the farmers and they are more likely to be reassured if they know when to expect us. Our time-frame gives reasonable intervals between actions which gives farmers space between these weekends when they can be sure that genetiX snowball will not be active; this will also be an opening for dialogue.

*- I will be open and truthful about my identity and my actions: I (or someone from my group) will write to the farmer who is host to the GM release site to be decontaminated by me to inform him/her that we intend to decontaminate the GM release site.*

If we are to challenge the biotechnology corporations effectively, their irresponsibility and lack of accountability must be exposed. If we want people to understand the issues and give us their support we need to tell them about what we have done and why, and give information to highlight and explain the issue. Thus we are widening the community of those opposed to GM and bringing the issues into the public domain, where they belong.

We want the actions to be open because we have got nothing to hide and we want to generate an atmosphere of trust. However, we can only be as open and accountable as our circumstances allow. There is a tension between being able to carry out our action unhindered and being able to tell



everyone everything. This is an example of nonviolent action as an experiment in truth; an exploration of the tension between being able to act and being able to tell, with the aim of always reaching towards the truth.

The circumstances of this action are very unpredictable and are likely to change, so we need to be flexible. Therefore we have given a minimal rule of openness which is to write to the farmer who owns the land for your chosen target site. There are varying 'degrees' of openness which you could use to do this - you may want to only write to the specific farmer whose land you intend to visit or you may want to write to all farmers within a given area and keep your specific target a surprise. We have already written to all the farmers, the companies, the police and the Environment Agency outlining what genetix snowball is about.

*- I will provide my own prepared and signed statement giving details about this action and the reasons for it to the police (if I am arrested), the farmer, and the company who has grown the crop.*

Your statement is an opportunity to give your reasons for your action to the company that is carrying out the experiment and the farmer whose land is being used. If you are arrested you should have two copies of your statement handy in your pocket to give to the police on arrest and the second one (in case they lose the first one) to give if you are interviewed - you could read it out at your interview. Your statement will then become evidence which you could use in court. You may want to give a contact address as an opening for dialogue, this will also be an opening for an injunction so you should be prepared for this. We recommend that you do not give a home address to anyone other than the police, but be aware that the police are allowed to pass your home address on to the company.

Before you write your statement it would be a good idea to have thought about whether you will want to use a legal defence in court, should you be arrested and charged. This is important because your statement could provide a good foundation for your defence - see section 6.1.4. It is advisable to leave yourself enough time to prepare your statement rather than leaving it to the night before the action when you might be feeling stressed rather than reflective. Your personal statement should make it less likely that, if you are arrested, you will be charged for anything other than what you yourself have done.

For general interest we have enclosed some of the statements which were used for the first genetix snowball action in the appendix 4.2.

You might also want to give a copy of your statement to the press.

### **3.2.4 Accepting the consequences**

*- I will keep to this pledge throughout the action and any consequences of the action.*

We consider the action as not only the business of getting the GM crops out of the ground, but also anything that happens after you are arrested (if you are arrested), the trial and anything that happens as a consequence of the trial.

## 4. The genetiX snowball begins....

### *In this section...*

- Gathering the snow
- Launching the snowball

#### **The common living dirt**

*The small ears prick on the bushes, furry buds, shoots tender and pale.  
The swamp maples blow scarlet. Colour teases the corner of the eye,  
delicate gold, chartreuse, crimson, mauve speckled, just dashed on.*

*The soil stretches naked. All winter hidden under the down comforter of  
snow, delicious now, rich in the hand as chocolate cake, the fragrant  
busy soil the worm passes through her gut and the beetle swims in like  
a lake.*

*As I kneel to tuck the seeds in careful as stitching, I am in love. You are  
the bed we all sleep on. You are the food we eat, the food we ate, the  
food we will become. We are walking trees rooted in you.*

*You can live thousands of years undressing in the spring your black  
body, your red body, your brown body penetrated by the rain. Here is  
the goddess unveiled, the earth opening her strong thighs.*

*Yet you grow exhausted with bearing too much, too soon, too often, just  
as a woman wears through like an old rug. We have contempt for what  
we spring from. Dirt, we say, you're dirt as if we were not all your  
children.*

*We have lost the simplest gratitude. We lack the knowledge we showed  
ten thousand years past, that you live a goddess but mortal, that what  
we take must be returned, that the poison we drop in you will stunt our  
children's growth.*

*Tending a plot of your flesh binds me as nothing ever could, to the  
seasons, to the will of the plants, clamorous in their green tenderness.  
What calls louder than the cry of a field of corn ready, or trees of ripe  
peaches?*

*I worship on my knees, laying seeds in you, that worship rooted in need,  
in hunger, in kinship, flesh of the planet with my own flesh, a ritual of  
compost, a litany of manure My garden's a chapel, but a meadow*

*gone wild in grass and flower is a cathedral. How you seethe with little  
quick ones, vole, field mouse, shrew and mole in their thousands, rabbit  
and woodchuck. In you rest the jewels of the genes wrapped in seed.*

*Power warps because it means joy in standing over: because it means  
forgetting how we too starve, break like a corn stalk in the wind, how we  
die like the spinach of drought, how what poisons the vole slays us.*

*Because you can die of overwork, because you can die of the fire that  
melts rock, because you can die of the poison that kills the beetle and  
the slug, we must come again to worship you on our knees, the  
common living dirt.*

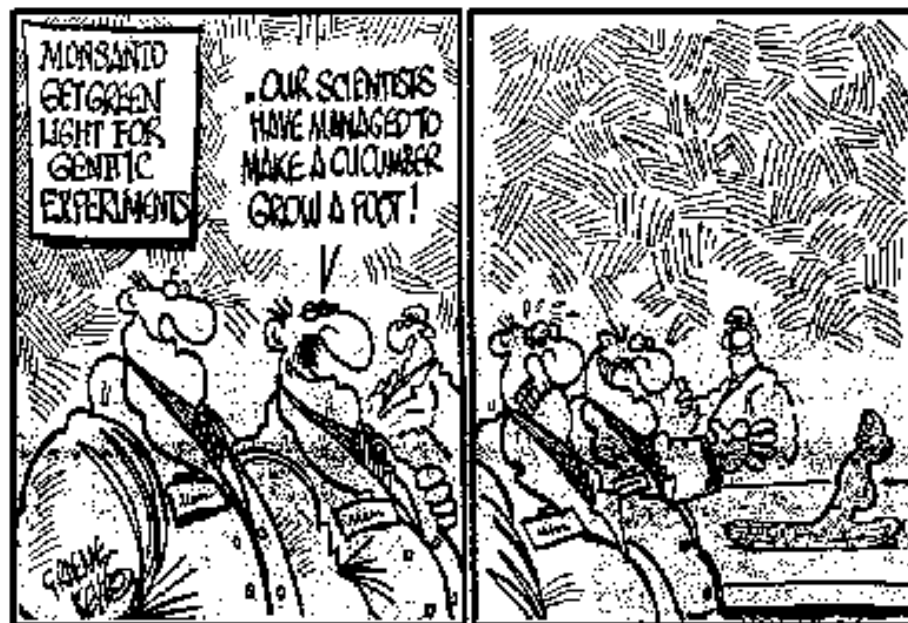
Marge Piercy.

## 4.1 Gathering the snow

The first snowball action was carried out by an affinity group of people which included members of the coordination group. We all worked together on the preparations for the action as well as the action itself.

Before doing the action, we distributed several hundred leaflets giving information about the campaign at public events and through publications. We also wrote to farmers hosting GM release sites, all the companies releasing GM crops, the Thames Valley Police to let them know about the genetiX snowball campaign and the Environment Agency specifically to let them know that there would be bags of biohazard which needed their attention (see letters in section A.4.1.). The letter to the farmers invites them to join the campaign. The letter to the companies asks them to remove the crops themselves. The letter to the police informs them that the companies are committing criminal damage and asks them to investigate this crime. The letter to the Environment Agency asks for their cooperation in helping to remove the GM crops by destroying them safely after they have been dug up. We also prepared all our equipment together: banners, protective clothing, tools which we painted with messages about our action.

The final planning for the action was a bit stressful and hectic at times but working together through all our preparations helped us to build up enough trust in each other to sustain us through the difficult patches.



## 4.2 Launching the snowball

The first snowball action took place at Model Farm, Shirburn, Nr. Watlington, Oxfordshire. We walked to the site carrying a banner, brightly coloured flags, tape to cordon off the area and heavy duty plastic bags marked with the biohazard symbol for the GM plants. As an example of a more sustainable way of producing our food we also took an apple tree to plant at the site.

Five people took the decontaminating role and six others did support work: liaising with and explaining the action to press, farmer and police and recording what was happening. We took known

and trusted press with us to film and take photographs whilst Andrew (press liaison) met other press at a point nearby. The police had decided to meet there too and take advantage of a guide to the action.

The decontaminators used ordinary gardening tools and wore protective suits. Each puller chose a number of plants significant to them; Jo chose to pull up 25 as she is 25 years old, Kathryn pulled 64 for the number of experimental trials currently in progress, Mel wanted to do 74 in memory of her friend Ray who had died recently aged 74, Rowan plucked one plant symbolic of the number of genetiX snowball actions, Zoe chose 99 as she wanted them out of the ground as quickly as possible.

We arrived about five minutes before the police and just about had time to put on our protective clothing and begin digging up the plants. The police were met by Jane and Phil (farmer and police liaison) We felt a man and a woman together would be safe and not intimidating. They introduced themselves and explained who we were and what we were doing. An agent for Monsanto then arrived and gave us a warning to leave the site.

When the police tried to stop us digging one of us explained that we couldn't as we had work to do. A sergeant asked if there was anything they could say that would persuade us to leave the site. Rowan said: "Yes, arrest Monsanto! They're causing criminal damage to other farmer's crops through genetic pollution and we are preventing this by removing Monsanto's GM crops". The police officer went off to speak to his superior. We continued digging up, snapping in half and bagging up the plants. We were asked again to leave, we continued decontaminating.

The police began to arrest us for criminal damage after about 20 minutes. Our action/legal observer busily noted down significant events, the time that they happened and names, numbers or descriptions of people involved. At this point more press arrived and Zoe and Mel both managed interviews with them before being arrested. Jo managed to hold an impromptu press conference with some journalists before being led away. The decontaminators left their signed statements for the farmer and the company and gave copies to the police as they were arrested.

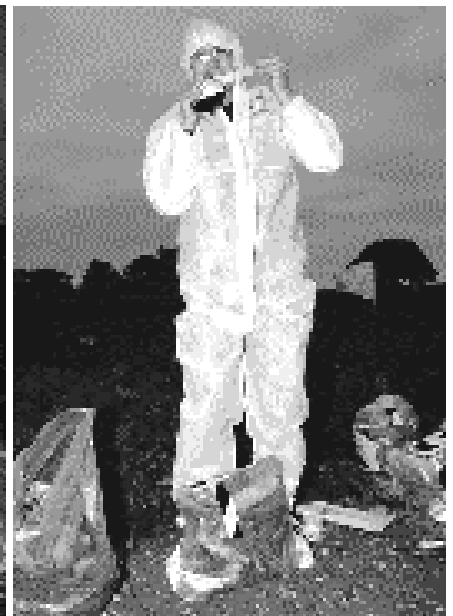


Andrew, Jane and Phil, did further press interviews after the arrests. When they offered the apple tree to the farmer's son who had arrived at the site he refused it. The arrested decontaminators were taken a few miles from the site and released without charge. The police confiscated our tools and the banner.

Twelve days later and just two days before the second snowball action the five decontaminators were

served injunctions by Monsanto. The injunctions are intended to prevent the five from entering Monsanto's release sites or from encouraging other people to decontaminate the sites and also has a damages claim. (See section 6.6 for further details of injunctions).

A video of this action will soon be available, contact the office for details.



Launch action genetiX snowball, 4th July 1998. Jo Hamilton, Zoe Elford, Kathryn Tulip, Melanie Jarman. Photos Nick Cobbing

## 5. Rolling the snowball on

### *In this section...*

- Forming an affinity group
- Group preparation
- Making decisions
- Timelines
- Choosing your GM release site
- Writing to the farmer
- Choices to make
  - Becoming even more open
- Giving the farmer details beforehand
- Giving the company details beforehand
- Giving the police details of the action
- Some additional openness possibilities
  - How many pull-ups can you do?
- Getting support
- Practicing nonviolence
- Reaching into your community
- Generating dialogue and debate
- Roles to share out
- Preparing your equipment
- Media
- The scene of their crime

*"There is a contemporary form of violence to which the idealist fighting for peace by nonviolent methods most easily succumbs: activism and overwork.*

*The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicting concerns, to surrender to too many demands, to commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone and everything is to succumb to violence. More than that, it is cooperation in violence.*

*The frenzy of the activist neutralises his or her own work for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of one's work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful."*

Thomas Merton.

### 5.1 Forming an "affinity group"



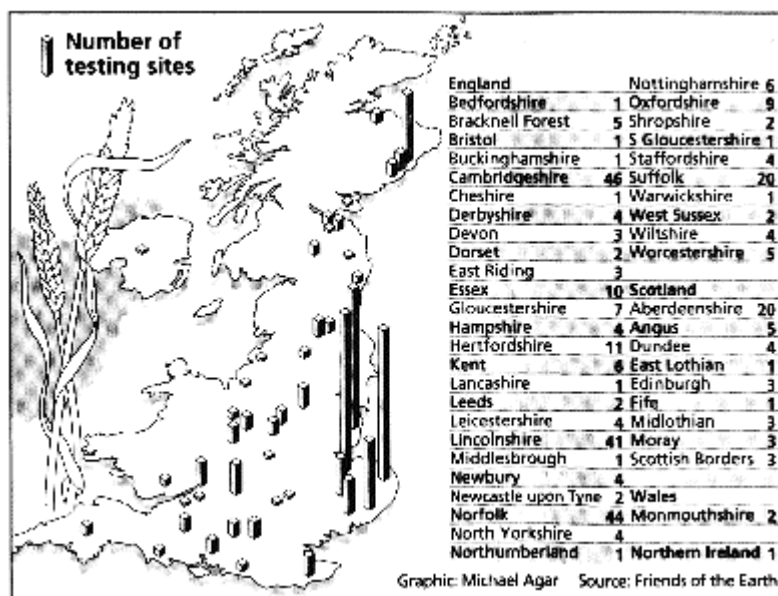
We recommend that you do your action as part of an affinity group. An affinity group is a small group of up to about 15 people who come together to take nonviolent action. They get to know each other's strengths and weaknesses through working together and by making a commitment to supporting each other they can build up trust. This "affinity" makes preparations and decision making easier and sustains everyone through the challenges of taking nonviolent action.

If you have more than fifteen you might want to consider dividing into two groups. (See also section 5.11 on roles). You may already be part of a group who would like to join the campaign. If not, you could start one with friends or people with whom you know you can work well. Otherwise, you could organise a public meeting and invite people to form a group at the end of the meeting.

## 5.2 Group preparation

The first step is for everyone to read the parts of the handbook which are relevant for them. We recommend that everyone reads sections 3, 4, 5 and 6.

Taking nonviolent action can be difficult because we are challenging our own obedience which constrains our beliefs about what is possible. Get to know each other. Talk about how you got involved, the steps which led you this far, your hopes and fears, best and worst case scenarios. Use your time to build up trust and friendship within the group.



Discuss your concerns and worries - of doing the action, of possibly getting arrested, being injuncted or sued for damages, being in the media limelight, how to cope with the responsibility that goes with becoming more powerful. Start making practical preparations where possible. For example, in case you are sued for damages (see section 6.6 for more details), the best way to keep all your assets is to give them away! For useful reading on group process see appendix 5.2.

Establish how much time each person has to contribute; it is important to be realistic and honest about what you can offer so that the group can look for more people if necessary. Be aware that your commitment may be needed for quite some time, before, during and after the action with varying levels of intensity.

## 5.3 Making decisions

Consensus decision making (when everyone in the group agrees with the decision) is a good way to ensure that you go into a risky situation with everyone feeling good about the decisions made. However, there are times when consensus is not appropriate; especially when you are short of time, you have yawning differences in your group, when you don't have enough information, when the issue at hand is trivial. At times like these, defer to experience, take a vote, or for trivial matters - flip a coin. See appendix 5.3 for a guide to consensus decision making.

## 5.4 Timelines

The genetiX snowball actions can happen on the first and third weekends of every month (see section 3.2.3). You will need to consider when is the best time to remove the crops (see appendix 5.5.3). You may also want to invite a trainer for a nonviolent action training session or join in a training in your region. Work out a plan to get more people involved and consider re- visiting the same site on a regular basis. Create a detailed timeline to help you get your preparation work completed with plenty of time. When we evaluated the first snowball action the point which came out most strongly was that we always underestimated the amount of time we would need to complete any task.

## 5.5 Choosing your release site

One of your most urgent tasks to be done - partly because it may take you considerable time - will be to choose and locate your release site. See appendix 5.5.

## 5.6 Writing to the farmer

See also below section on choices to make.

The minimum degree of openness required for genetiX snowball is to write to the farmer before the action. Writing as an initial contact may avoid making the farmer feel threatened, as s/he might be by a knock on the door, or a phone call. Your letter to the farmer could refer to the general genetiX snowball letter which has already been sent (see appendix 4.1) and go on to introduce yourselves as a genetiX snowball group. Explain that as a small group you are planning to do an action on his/her land; remember to explain that you will be nonviolent. You do not necessarily need to give the date or time of your action (remember also that whoever signs the letter could be arrested or injunctioned before or during the action). We recommend that you give a contact address which will not risk yourselves or anyone else with whom you live (it is possible that companies may send a private investigator to monitor your movements). If you are not sure which site you will choose then you could write to all those farmers connected to the most likely sites.

## 5.7 Choices to make

We recommend that you explore the following issues in your group and come to consensus on what you will do. Please let us know what you decide and how it goes so that we can advise others based on your experiences.

### 5.7.1 Becoming even more open

We were very cautious about giving out details of our action beforehand. Our action was the first and we had very little idea what would happen. We had to be ready for nothing at all or all being arrested and remanded for conspiracy before we could do our action. We also had a high media profile which was an extra stress over the need to come up with the goods.



We hope that groups will experiment with pushing the frontiers of openness out much further than our minimum ground rule. You could contact us to find out what other groups have tried out, and please let us know what you have tried yourselves and the results. The following is a series of possibilities you might want to explore:

#### 5.7.1.1 Giving the farmer more details beforehand, or not

Preparation for the launch snowball action included letters to all farmers with GM release sites. We did not write a special separate letter to the farmer who was hosting the site where we did our action, since he had only just received the general one. One of us did go to visit this farmer and discussed the issue of GM crops, but this was before he had received our letter and before he knew anything about genetiX snowball.

There are pros and cons of giving the farmer more than minimal details before the action, such as the date and time, or of asking to meet with the farmer. You may get a chance to find out a bit about the farmer's circumstances. We changed our initial chosen release site after inadvertently meeting with the owners of a small garden centre which had a release site (which we were checking). They were both older people and seemed to be very upset and threatened by the possibility of the action happening on their land. The situation was made worse by the fact that the release site was close to the farm buildings which meant that they might feel personally threatened. We strongly recommend that you avoid these situations; it may be difficult to reassure them that we are peaceful and we don't want people to feel afraid.

If the farmer is likely to be aggressive it may help to reassure him/her if s/he knows what to expect. People are usually violent because they are afraid, and people are often afraid when they don't know what is happening. On the other hand the farmer may well perceive advance notice of the action as a threat and worry about what might happen.

The farmer may try to prevent you from doing the action. S/he is most likely to tell the company since it is their release site and may also inform the police. It is also possible that the farmer will be there with his gun and his dog!



#### 5.7.1.2 Giving the company more details beforehand, or not

All the companies responsible for GM release sites in Britain have been sent letters from genetiX snowball (see appendix 4.1). Informing the company of your action would give the advantage of creating more openness and give you an opportunity to ask them again to remove the GM crops themselves.

You could ask to meet with the company beforehand to explain why you think their practices of genetically modifying plants are wrong. You could also discuss alternative methods of food production which are ecologically sustainable, safe and secure. In this case you could all be enjoined at the meeting or you may come under pressure from them to change your plans in a "let's talk whilst we continue to contaminate" situation.

The farmer is likely to inform the company, so writing a letter to the company giving the same amount of information as to the farmer may not change the circumstances of your action very much. However, if you give any more information, such as the date and location, the company may hire their own security guards, inform the police or serve an injunction on you before, during or after the action.

#### 5.7.1.3 Giving the police more details of the action, or not

The police are already aware of the genetiX snowball campaign. We wrote to Thames Valley Police (see Appendix 4.1 for our letter) before our action and we also responded to a telephone call. We asked them to investigate the crimes we believe companies are committing, but so far they have not taken legal action against the biotechnology companies. Their attitude during our action was to listen to us first, they gave all the appropriate warnings before arresting us and gave us opportunity to leave of our own accord. They were polite and reasonable and did not use any force at any time. They reported our action to the press as a peaceful action.

We feel there is no need to give the police any further details since we have already informed them about the crimes the biotechnology companies are committing. However, there is an argument for letting them know the date and location; especially if you fear the farmer may be aggressive, in which case you might want the police to be there! On the other hand the police may arrest you for breach of the peace if the farmer is being violent. Yes, they can do this!

The police may try to arrest you as you are arriving and prevent you from reaching the site; however the intention to remove the crops has an importance of its own and if you are released later without charge, then you can simply return and try again.

#### 5.7.1.4 Some additional openness possibilities

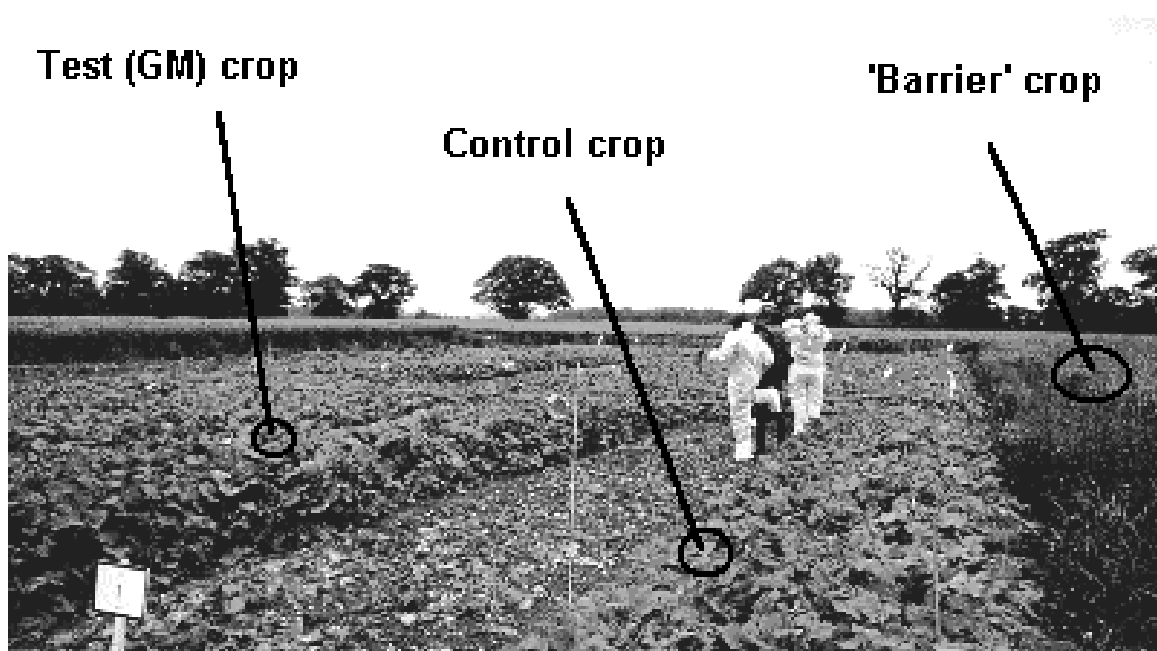
- ❖ you might want to sign letters with all your names (you may all be risking an injunction from the company);
- ❖ you could give out statements of intent before the action.

### **5.7.2 How many "pull-ups" can you do?**

To be a part of the genetiX snowball each individual can pull up anything up to, but no more than, 100 plants. This limit has been set to protect participants and to encourage a sense of unity in our actions.

If we all pull up a similar numbers of plants, we should all be treated equally and no 'unspoken hierarchies' of action or of our abilities will develop. The genetiX snowball is designed so that everyone can take part on an equal basis and so encouraging some people to do more than others could manage would be to go against its principles. In addition, limiting the number of plants we pull up at any one time allows more room for dialogue and opportunities for the companies or farmers to pull up the GM plants themselves.

Arguably, genetiX snowball could be effective in two ways: (a) literally uprooting all the GM plants, or (b) symbolically uprooting all the GM plants. The former could be effective simply because all the plants are gone which in itself has a powerful symbolism. The latter could be effective because the symbolism brings the issue into the public domain; it is here, not in the field, that the action can realise its potential power. Whichever you believe, both methods are possible. genetiX snowball is about ordinary people taking responsibility and encouraging others to do the same; so if you want to get all the plants out of the ground just get more people to join in!



'Test site' at Model Farm, Oxfordshire, scene of the first genetiX snowball on 4th July 1998. Photo Hugh Warwick

We recommend that within your group you discuss what each member feels comfortable doing. You may also want to consider whether it is best if you all pull up the same number of plants so that the risks for all are equal. Here are some ideas of what you or your group could do at the site within the maximum limit of 100 plants:

- ❖ Digging up one plant has a powerful symbolism. Digging up a small number of plants will be over very quickly and will not allow much ritual. In practice it might be difficult to just pull up one when there is a whole field in front of you!
- ❖ You could use a symbolic number to make reference to an event.
- ❖ You could create a "crop circle" or an X shape for added symbolism.
- ❖ Increasing numbers of plants each time; for example, the first action is one plant each then a declaration to do a ten fold increase each time. ie 1, 10, 100. This would be very reasonable since you are allowing time for your opponent to change before you up the stakes.

## 5.8 Getting support

You do not need to be invincible, have all the answers or re-invent the wheel. Contact the genetiX snowball office if you have any problems or need help with anything. There are many other groups working on the issue of GM crops and/or are experienced in either campaigning or taking nonviolent action. You could get help with your work from other campaigns (see Appendix Contacts & Resources), for example, briefing sheets on GM crops and up to date information.

## 5.9 Practising nonviolence

You can get very good information about this without us duplicating what has already been done, see appendix 5.9. We strongly recommend that you follow up our references and organise a nonviolence training for your group. Turning the Tide is a Quaker organisation which specialises in nonviolence training for actions. They do trainings free of charge if you cover their expenses and they have trainers throughout Britain.

## 5.10 Reaching into your community

This is more democratic than a small isolated action which does not make reference to its locality. Some people may not feel able to form a snowball group but will be very keen to help in other ways; you might be able to get help with legal advice, banner making, transport, child minding, making food, conflict mediation. Local people who may be interested in supporting your group include organic farmers, allotment associations, churches and temples, women's groups, health food shops and grocers, local 'green' groups. Tell your friends and colleagues, put up posters, distribute leaflets, hold a meeting, organise a debate - use your imagination...



You will find a poster and leaflet design which you can photocopy to use locally in the appendix 5.12.

### 5.10.1 Generating dialogue and debate

In preparation for the action you could write some letters to voice your concerns about GM. You can get a list of addresses from the genetiX snowball office. You could arrange to meet with representatives of the company responsible for the release, your local supermarket manager, your MP. These letters and meetings will open dialogue with others in a position to influence the issue and give space for them to use their power to stop the GM release site experiments. At least one farmer, in Wiltshire, has cancelled a proposed contract to plant GM crops after hearing about the dangers.

Public meetings and debates are an excellent way of informing people about the arguments around

the issue of GM. You could invite speakers from the various campaigns against GM and from the GM companies. Create displays detailing arguments against GM for people to wander around.



Support Roles, though outside the media spotlight are crucial to a successful action. Shown left-to-right: Film maker, Police Liaison, Farmer Liaison, Action Observer, Photographer. Second genetiX snowball 18th July 1998. Photo: Paul Kingsnorth

## 5.11 Roles to share out

There are a number of tasks which you will need to cover before, during and after the action. Ideally you should have at least five people who are doing essential support work i.e. not doing the hands-on decontaminating. Some support tasks need the attention of at least one person, others can be doubled up. The most likely roles for arrest are obviously the decontaminators; the support members who will be on site are also possible candidates; whereas support members who are off site should be almost completely safe.

- ❖ People to do the decontamination work of pulling up the GM plants. We recommend a minimum of two people. Four people is a good number because you can pair up and work together. Decontaminators will need to write their statements explaining why they intend to take action, what they intend to do and how they will do it - see section 3.2.3.
- ❖ Someone to watch and make notes of how the action is carried out and what happens. If anyone is arrested, this person could act as a witness in court and the notes could be very valuable. You can use these notes if they are signed and dated on the day of the action. See appendix 5.11 for guidance on observing actions.
- ❖ Someone to take photographs and film the action for use by the media.
- ❖ Someone to liaise with the police, to explain what is happening, to reassure and calm any potentially difficult situations.
- ❖ Two people (preferably a man and a woman) to inform the farmer that the action is about to happen or is happening.
- ❖ Someone to support people who have been arrested, to wait at the police station for their release, send them newspapers, chocolate and notes of support whilst they are being held.

- ❖ Someone to stay away from the action and be a contact person near a phone in order to do press work. It is helpful if the group can keep in contact with this person via a mobile phone and keep them updated about what is happening. This person can also contact a solicitor of the group's choice if there are any arrests and contact anyone whom the decontaminators want to be kept in the picture.
- ❖ Everyone who hasn't been arrested should be prepared to give support, both emotional and practical, to anyone who has, throughout the court hearings and through any situations which arise from these. See section 6.1.8 for further details.

## 5.12 Preparing your equipment

All the equipment you take to the action is an opportunity to give a message about your action. You could make a banner or some flags (which are quick and easy to erect). Avoid tools which might give a scary message - like scythes. Brightly coloured headscarves or hats look more friendly than hoods. We decorated our protective clothing and hand tools. We didn't wear masks because we thought they made it very difficult to communicate with people.

See appendix 5.12 for a complete checklist list of equipment and where to obtain things.

## 5.13 Media

See George Monbiot's media guide in appendix 5.13 and press releases from the first snowball action in appendix 4.3.

## 5.14 The scene of their crime

Before the day of the action work out a programme for the day which includes when, how, who and what will happen. Start by going through a checklist of what you need to take (see appendix 5.12), have all your transport details fine tuned and give some thought to each stage of the action.



Prepare for action: gloves, protective clothing and spade. Photo: Nick Cobbing

These plans will be made according to an ideal scenario. However, it is worth going through some contingency plans. There are so many possible scenarios that the best way to deal with them all might be to work out a system for emergency decision making. Practice making decisions quickly and role play some scenarios. What will you do if the bus doesn't show up, if somebody in a crucial role cannot make it at the last minute, if the police are already there when you arrive, if the farmer has harvested the crop?

## 6. Accepting the consequences

### *In this section...*

- If you are arrested....
  - At the police station
  - Searches and possessions
  - In the cell
  - Interviews
  - Fingerprints, photographs and DNA samples
  - Juveniles
  - Outcomes
  - Support at the police station
  - Release
- What you could be charged with
- Preparing for your trial
  - To represent yourself, or not?
  - Defences
  - Evidence and disclosure
  - Going to court
  - Calling witnesses
  - Plea bargaining
- The trial
- Sentencing
- Injunctions and damages claims
- Success

*"My struggle for a truth to stand within must carry into the trial itself, for the deepest, most living truth emerges through intense conflict seeking reconciliation. Truth is not a slab of concrete to rest my life upon, but a luminous force in which I stand and which I discover is sparked into more dazzling light by the conflict of challenge and response."*

James Douglass.

### 6.1 If you are arrested....



You'll be in very good company if you do get arrested, and will be joining a long line of people who have been arrested for their beliefs. The experience of getting arrested is different for everyone. It can be emotionally moving, good fun, spiritually inspiring, extremely scary, empowering or isolating. Your experience is likely to be more positive if you know what to expect and if you prepare your action thoroughly.

The police sometimes give warnings before they arrest you because they don't like filling out the paperwork required if they do arrest you! If you are arrested, you should hear the words: "I am arresting you for ...[they should say an actual offence here]. You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention, when questioned, something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence." However, it may come out as "You're nicked!". We recommend that you do not make any statement when they formally arrest you, other than to refer them to your prepared written statement and give them a copy - make sure that they make a note that you have given them your prepared statement. Save the other copy for the interview in case they lose the first one.

## **6.1.1 At the police station**

When you arrive at the station you'll be "booked in" by the custody/desk sergeant. They will ask you loads of questions, the only thing you have to tell them is your name and address. The address that you give should be verifiable or they won't let you out on bail. They may phone or send someone to the address you give to check that you do live there. They will also ask you for your date of birth and lots of other questions but you don't legally have to give any more information. We strongly recommend that you say nothing else with a few exceptions such as special dietary needs like being vegetarian, vegan, GM free food, or if you need medication, see also below section 6.1.4 on interviews. Tell the police (and have it recorded on your custody record) that you give them full permission to disclose any information about your arrest to your contact person but to nobody else.

You are entitled to see a solicitor and also to have someone informed of your arrest. You can ask for your chosen solicitor at any point during your custody. You should have the number of your chosen solicitor written in biro on your arm so you don't lose it during the action. The police must take reasonable steps to get them there as soon as possible or at least get them on the telephone. You should be able to speak to them in private. All legal advice in the police station is free whatever your financial position. You should also be allowed to let someone know that you have been arrested, sometimes they let you make the call yourself, but this is at their discretion.

You will be entitled to consult a copy of the PACE Codes of Practice. You may also be allowed (this is only a PACE recommendation) writing materials. If you don't decide to ask for any of these things immediately you can change your mind later. However, you may have trouble getting their attention later on, as calls from cells are often ignored.

## **6.1.2 Searches and possessions**

The custody sergeant can authorise a search, including a strip search (the latter only if they have reasonable suspicion that you are concealing a weapon or class A drug). So, be sure not to carry things on the action that could get you into trouble. They can search you for anything which could cause injury, damage property, interfere with evidence or assist in escape e.g. shoelaces, belts, lighters and matches. It is only on these grounds, or on the grounds that they might constitute evidence, that the custody sergeant can retain clothes or personal effects although in practice they often keep everything. Anything taken off you should be meticulously listed and put into a sealed bag in your presence. You will then be asked to sign the list to say it is correct. Check it and sign immediately below the last item so they cannot add anything.

## **6.1.3 In the cell**

They will then put you in a cell. This can be the boring bit but you could read your book (take one with you to the action), exercise, write, sleep, meditate, sing (take a song sheet with you), etc. Large numbers of arrestees together can be good fun with people singing and talking.

The police will normally only hold you until they obtain enough evidence to charge you. In the case of the genetiX snowball action you will probably be arrested with plenty of "evidence" of your alleged "crime". You could be released within a couple of hours, but be prepared to be held for longer and possibly overnight. They are allowed to hold you without taking you before a magistrate for up to 36 hours, although they would not normally want to keep you this long.

Whilst you are in your cell, and provided they have agreed to let you have pencil and paper, it is a good idea to make notes about the action and your arrest whilst the details are still fresh in your mind,



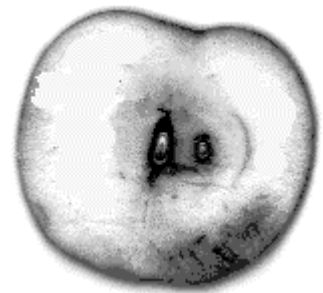
then sign and date the notes. You are allowed to refer to these contemporaneous notes in court.

### 6.1.4 Interviews

They may decide to interview you in an attempt to get more evidence. If this happens, have your solicitor present. Remember that you are NOT obliged to say anything and that you DO still have the right to silence. The only change since the Criminal Justice Act (CJA) in 1994 is that if you do not mention a fact in your interview, that you later rely on at trial, the court can draw "adverse inferences" from this. We would strongly recommend, however, that you say nothing other than to refer them to your ready-prepared personal statement (so avoiding the possibility that they might "lose" it), or to actually read out your statement in the interview. This is for two reasons: if you make any kind of statement verbally or in writing that gives them "better evidence" they will be able to use this instead of the one that you have so carefully prepared; secondly, you may find that you get led into saying things that you regret, you may accidentally implicate other people, even if you are very experienced you may find it difficult to withstand questions once you have started talking, and if you answer some questions but not others they can make inferences from this. Your prepared written statement, made in quiet reflection, is more likely to reflect your reasons for taking nonviolent action than one which is made under pressure during a police interview. The best place for you to speak about your action is during the court case.

### 6.1.5 Fingerprints, photographs and DNA samples

They are entitled to fingerprint and photograph you, but only after you have been charged. They can also take DNA samples from you, although with campaigners on minor charges, this is unusual. You can ask for the records to be destroyed if you are acquitted or if they decide not to prosecute but you must apply within 5 days of acquittal/decision not to prosecute.



### 6.1.6 Juveniles

People under 17 who are arrested are classed as "juvenile", and there are slightly different procedures. The main one is that the person responsible for them should be informed about what is happening, and nothing should happen to them at the police station in the absence of an "appropriate adult" (e.g. parent or guardian).

### 6.1.7 Outcomes

There are several things that the police can then decide to do with you.

They may release you without charge and that'll be the end of the case against you.

They may offer you a caution if it is a minor offence. The police do this to avoid the hassle, expense and paperwork of going to court. They also do it in cases where they do not have enough evidence to prosecute, in order to get a result, if this is the case and you refuse a caution then they will usually

drop the case. Accepting the caution means that you have said that you are guilty. It is not a criminal conviction (although it does have to be disclosed in the same circumstances as a conviction e.g. job applications) but it will stay on your record for three years, and may be taken into account if you get arrested again. Think carefully about the possibility of being offered a caution before the action and discuss it in your affinity group. It may be pragmatic to accept one, especially if you don't want to risk going to court and getting a conviction, but you will lose the opportunity to test your defence and bring the issues to the public.

If the police want to take the matter further they will charge you (the possible charges are dealt with in section 6.2). Once charged you may then be released on bail to appear in the Magistrates court at a later date. If you have no verifiable address or they think you may commit further offences they may hold you on remand until the next sitting of the Magistrates.

### **6.1.8 Support at the police station**

Your affinity group can make a huge difference to the experience of being held in custody. They can inform the genetiX snowball office about your arrest. They can try to get contact with you, although this depends on the friendliness of the desk sergeant. You may be able to receive books, letters (the police will read them), tobacco and possibly food. It is very reassuring to know that there are supporters watching out for you at the police station and it is good to get a warm welcome back when you are released and a lift home. Your supporters can make sure that anyone who has witnessed your arrest writes a witness statement; if witnesses have to leave early they could at least leave their contact details.

### **6.1.9 Release**

When you are released from police custody they should return all your possessions except those to be used in evidence. You should get a receipt for anything they keep as evidence. Once you are out, please phone the person you informed that you had been arrested and also contact the snowball office to let us know what happened. The police are under no obligation to transport you back to where you were arrested, but there's no harm in asking! You should try and have a bit of money on you when you go on the action for this reason.

## **6.2 What you could be charged with**

Criminal damage - section 1 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971: You commit this offence if you, without lawful excuse, destroy or damage property belonging to another, intending to destroy or damage the property or being reckless as to whether the property would be damaged or destroyed.

Where the value of the damage is less than £5,000 then the case must be heard in the Magistrate's Court and the maximum sentence is three months in prison or a fine of up to £2,500 and a compensation order of up to £5,000. Where the value of the damage is greater than £5,000 then you can choose whether the case is heard in the Magistrates or Crown Court; in the Crown Court the maximum sentence is ten years in prison or an unlimited fine and a compensation order equivalent to the amount of the damage.



Breach of the peace or behaviour likely to cause a breach of the peace: This is not a criminal offence but a civil wrong. It occurs when an act is done or threatened to be done which either actually harms, or is likely to harm, or puts someone in fear of harm, to themselves, to others or to property. It must be characterised by violence or threat of violence. This violence can come either from you or from others reacting to your actions. The only possible penalty is a bind over which is not a criminal conviction: see later for more about bind-overs.

Obstructing a police officer (section 51 of the Police Act 1964): You commit this offence if you resist or wilfully obstruct a constable in the execution of their duty e.g. ignoring their instructions, stopping them doing something, deliberately misleading them. This is not an arrestable offence but you may well be arrested for it (giving you a chance to sue the police later on) as it is a convenient means of removing protesters from the site of an action. Maximum sentence 1 month in prison or fine of £1,000.

Public Order Act offences: The Public Order Act 1986 lists a series of progressively more serious offences, the least serious and most regularly used is section 5 (disorderly conduct). To be guilty of this you must have used threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or displayed a sign which is threatening, abusive or insulting within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress. Maximum sentence fine of £1,000.

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 sections 68 and 69: To have committed aggravated trespass (section 68) you must have trespassed on land (not highways or footpaths) in the open air with the intention of disrupting or obstructing or intimidating someone from going about their lawful activity. Maximum sentence three months in prison or fine of up to £2,500.

To have committed an offence under section 69 you must have refused to obey the instructions of the police to leave land on which they believe you will commit aggravated trespass. Maximum sentence three months in prison or fine of up to £2,500.

## 6.3 Preparing for trial

Your affinity group should gather the names of witnesses or their statements at the time of your arrest and the group should speak to a sympathetic solicitor before the action who can then be on standby in case they are needed to attend the police station. You will already have prepared a statement about your intention to do the action which will be part of the evidence in your case. We recommend that you also write a further statement about the action and the circumstances of your arrest as soon after your arrest as possible.



### 6.3.1 To represent yourself, or not?

There are many advantages to representing yourself in court rather than having a solicitor act on your behalf. For one thing your motivations are different and this will have a bearing on the outcome; a legal representative will be aiming primarily to get you let off; this is all well and good but they may want to leave out some of your most valuable evidence in order to avoid trying the Magistrate's patience, or they may try to win your case on a legal technicality. If you represent yourself you can bring all your evidence about the dangers of GM food as part of a legal defence. You might also want to run a defence based on morals rather than the law, in which case you are likely to lose on the legal

front but you might be upholding a principle that is more important than law. A legal representative cannot do this. In addition you may not be eligible for Legal Aid, but cannot afford, or do not wish, to spend money on a solicitor. Defending yourself can also be very empowering for yourself and inspiring for those who are supporting you in court. You don't have to be an eloquent speaker to be able to carry it off; being obviously nervous or vulnerable does not detract from your sincerity and sometimes the most inspiring defences have been very simple. Conversely, a legal defence can be very "clever", yet lack passion and conviction. It is important however to be aware that a Magistrate may not let you present a full moral defence if s/he does not want you to use the courtroom as a soapbox.

McKenzie friends: Unrepresented defendants are entitled to bring a friend into court to help and advise. These people, known as McKenzie friends, need not be legally qualified. Some Magistrates are still unaware of the right to have a friend in court to help you and you should make sure that you go into court with details of the relevant Court of Appeal cases- *McKenzie v McKenzie*, 1970 and *Regina v Leicester City Justices ex parte Barrow*, 1991. Your adviser can take notes and discretely interrupt you in order to help you with cross examination of prosecution witnesses. The friend is not allowed to conduct the cross examination or to address the court on your behalf.

For an excellent (and inspiring) guide to defending yourself, read "How to defend yourself in court" by Michael Randle (see appendix 7.3). Also talk with other people who have defended themselves as they may have some very good tips - ask us for contacts.

If you want a solicitor to represent you, you will have to formally instruct them, which means tell them that you want them to run a legal defence on your behalf. You can instruct either the Solicitor who saw you at the police station or any other criminal solicitor. Contact them as soon as you are released from custody.

## 6.3.2 Defences

We have at least two potential defences:

- A. We believe we are acting with lawful excuse (section 5(2)(b) of the Criminal Damage Act 1971) as (a) we believe we are destroying GM crops in order to protect property (neighbouring land and crops) belonging to another person, (b) we believe the property to be in immediate need of protection, because of the risks of horizontal gene transfer (see section 3) and (c) we believe that our act (pulling up the GM crops) in order to protect the neighbouring property is reasonable having regard to all the circumstances.
- B. We believe that it is the companies which have planted GM crops who have committed an offence. It is a defence under section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 to use reasonable force to prevent a crime. This is the defence which was used successfully by Seeds of Hope Ploughshares. In that case the damage caused by the women to the Hawk jets was argued to be reasonable force in the prevention of the crime of genocide. In our case we can argue that destruction of the GM crops is reasonable force in order to prevent the farmer/companies committing the offence of criminal damage themselves. We can argue that the farmer/company is being reckless as to the risk of damage to neighbouring farm land, animals and crops as a consequence of horizontal gene transfer from the release sites.

These defences are untested at present but we may be acquitted.

### 6.3.3 Evidence and Disclosure

If you have instructed a solicitor, you should have a meeting with them to discuss your case. Your solicitor will send off to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for "advance disclosure" this is a dossier of the CPS case against you. This will include all the prosecution witness statements. If the police have a video of your arrest and want to show it in court, then you are entitled to see it in advance of the hearing. You should either be sent a copy, or will need to go to the police station to see it. If you are representing yourself then you will need to do all of this yourself.

You will need to gather your own evidence and prepare your defence. If you are being represented, then your solicitor should do all this under your instruction. Make sure they do it thoroughly. Give the solicitor the addresses of any witnesses so they can contact them to interview and prepare them for the trial. Find any videos and photos which may help your case; but be aware that some photos (e.g. of you decontaminating the release site) could also be adopted by the prosecution and may over-ride the possibility of you using your personal statement. The genetiX snowball office will be able to provide you with a skeleton defence to the charge of criminal damage and advise you on the outcome of other snowballers' court cases as the campaign grows.

In the magistrates court a solicitor can present your case, but most cannot in a Crown Court, and so they have to instruct a barrister. Your solicitor may also instruct a barrister for your magistrates court case, especially if they are overloaded with cases. Barristers are usually more eloquent, but won't have an in-depth knowledge of your case. Ask your solicitor for a "Conference" (meeting) with your barrister before the case so you can brief them on what you want them to say.

### 6.3.4. Going to court

If you are bailed or summonsed to court, your first appearance is known as the "plea hearing". Here you will enter your plea - guilty or not guilty. If you live some distance from the court you can often get the clerk to enter a plea of not guilty on your behalf at this hearing so that you don't need to attend. If you plead guilty, they may sentence you immediately. If you plead not guilty, a date will be set for the next court hearing (the pre-trial review). If you are in any doubt, plead not guilty as you can always change it later. If you plead guilty you may get a lesser sentence (and have to pay less prosecution costs) than if you plead not guilty and are convicted.

Courts, and the legal ritual, are designed to intimidate the defendant. If you have never been to court before, it may be worth popping in before your trial to listen in and get a feel for what goes on and help you feel more confident about your own case. There is always a Public Gallery in Magistrates Courts (usually just a row of chairs along a wall) and you are perfectly entitled to sit in. The Magistrates have had no legal training, and will have a Clerk to advise them on the law. There are usually three magistrates. You may, however, especially for cases which contain a lot of technical legal argument, get a Stipendiary Magistrate (often known as a "Stipe"). These are ex-barristers or solicitors with extensive legal knowledge. They sit by themselves with the Clerk.

The Magistrates will sit up on a platform, which is designed to make you feel small. You will be in a defendant's box, and your solicitor (if you have one) sits at a bench at the front, with the CPS lawyer. You should ask to sit with your solicitor or if you are representing yourself ask to sit at the front bench so that you do not have to juggle all the papers in your lap. Magistrates and the CPS will speak in "legalese" and talk to you as if you know everything about the legal system. The best advice we can give is not to be intimidated by it and to ask them to explain in plain English if you do not understand.

The Pre-trial review will be your next visit to the courts. This is when you and the CPS go through all the evidence, from each side, discuss any disputes, and list which witnesses to call. The intention of this is to streamline the trial and save time and expense. This is your opportunity to state your case

as to why you should be able to call your witnesses e.g. expert witnesses to speak about GM crops and their health or environmental impacts. You may not be allowed to present some evidence or call one/all of your witnesses if the Court dismisses the evidence as "irrelevant".

### **6.3.5 Calling witnesses**

You will need to decide which witnesses can best help your case. Examples are scientists, police officers, the farmer or farm workers, the biotech company, your legal/action observer, other people who saw what happened as well as character witnesses. If you call friendly witnesses you will be able to talk to them before the hearing and get an idea of what they will say in court and you can discuss the questions the CPS might put to them in cross examination. You may need to serve them with a witness summons if they are working, so that they can get time off work. If you call "hostile" witnesses you will need to serve them with a witness summons as otherwise they will have no legal obligation to attend the hearing. You will have no real idea of what they are going to say in court and they may play straight into the hands of the prosecution. You may however be able to cross examine biotech company representatives and this may bring out some very interesting information, for example you could ask what safety tests they have carried out on this particular plant/gene combination or what specific allergy tests they have conducted.

### **6.3.6 Plea Bargaining**

The CPS may try and do a deal with you. They may offer to drop a serious charge in return for you pleading guilty to a lesser one. This is "plea bargaining". They usually do it just before a court case, or on the actual day of the trial. Minor charges may be dropped in return for you accepting a bind-over (this is not a criminal conviction - see below). Plea bargains may be offered if they are not confident of their chance of getting a conviction; or they may offer you a "bind over" to reduce pressure on the court's time.

## **6.4 The Trial**

Formal trials can be daunting, if you are not prepared, but the procedure is quite simple. Firstly, the prosecution gives a brief outline of their case, and the circumstances of your arrest. They then call their witnesses (usually the arresting officer and a few others), and examine them, by asking them questions about their evidence, under oath. After the prosecution has finished, your solicitor (or you, if you represent yourself) will get the chance to cross-examine them. This is your chance to discredit the witnesses and challenge their evidence against you. The prosecution then get a chance to re-examine.

After this, you or your solicitor could argue that there is "no case to answer", meaning that the prosecution do not have sufficient evidence to convict you, and invite the magistrates to throw the case out. If this is not accepted, you will then have the opportunity to go into the witness box and either present your case, or be examined by your solicitor. You could choose not to do this, if you think you might incriminate yourself by your own words or during cross-examination, or you may choose not to participate in the legal system if you think it is corrupt, but the magistrates may draw inferences if you do not go in the witness box. You will be asked to make an oath on the bible (or other "recognised" holy book), or make a non-religious affirmation to tell the truth. Afterwards the prosecution can cross-examine you. You can then be re-examined by your solicitor or make a further representation yourself. Keep calm and just reiterate the facts. You could ask for a break, although magistrates are less likely to grant this than a Crown Court Judge. Your witnesses are then called,

one by one, to be examined by you, then cross-examined by the prosecution, and then re-examined by your side. Witnesses of fact, but not expert witnesses, have to sit outside until called into court to give evidence.

After this, the prosecution sums up their case then you sum up your case to the magistrates in what are known as closing speeches. Then the magistrates will probably adjourn, returning to give the verdict. If you win, you can apply for your costs (travel, witness costs, accommodation etc.).



Rowan Tilly asks policeman to arrest Monsanto, the owners of the GM plants at Model Farm, Oxfordshire, 4th July, 1998. Photo Hugh Warwick

## 6.5 Sentencing

We don't know yet what the sentence is likely to be if you are found guilty. As the amount of decontamination will be fairly small we anticipate that Snowballers will be fined rather than receiving custodial sentences, but we cannot be certain. You may also have to pay the costs of the trial, between £330 to £3100 a day. The smaller your criminal record the lighter the penalty. With all offences, there is a maximum penalty set in place. This gives an indication of how serious the offence is, not what you are likely to get, so don't be too alarmed by the maximum.

If you are found guilty, the magistrate will probably sentence you immediately. You are allowed to make a statement in mitigation. This is your opportunity to explain how the consequences might impact on you and any dependants, or your job or financial circumstances, if you were given a heavy sentence. You can also point to your respectful and nonviolent behaviour as evidence of what a good person you are. If you want to appeal for a light sentence then you should have your mitigation prepared in advance. If the magistrate has been moved by your defence but has still found you guilty s/he may give you a light sentence. A way to demonstrate your protest at a verdict is to refuse to enter into any mitigation.

**Absolute Discharges:** This means that you still have a conviction but no separate penalty.

**Bind-overs:**

You can be bound over even if you have not been found guilty of an offence. These are often offered to people charged with a Breach of the Peace before the hearing in order to save Court time. Magistrates also dole them out as a light punishment for other offences. A Binding-Over Order is an ancient power given to magistrates and has been left over from the Middle Ages. It is basically a promise that you "will be of good behaviour and will keep the

Queen's Peace". This really means that you promise not to get arrested for a set time period (usually 6 or 12 months). If you do, and get convicted, you will forfeit a sum of money (usually around £100). A bind-over stays on your record but is not itself a criminal conviction. If you refuse to accept a bind-over, the magistrates have the power to send you to prison for up to 6 months. However, if you are imprisoned, you can agree to accept the bind-over at any time and get out of jail.

**Fines:**

Despite the fact that maximum fines for the offences are high it is unlikely that Snowballers will receive such large fines. You will however need to be prepared for that possibility. Before the magistrates impose a fine you will be asked to fill in a form stating details of your income. If you are on the dole the Magistrates may order the fine to be paid by deduction of a sum of money, about £35[[check]] a week, directly from it. If you are working then they can contact your employer to deduct money and pay it to the Court on your behalf. We advise you to refuse to do this, if you are planning not to pay your fine, but please note it will constitute a contempt of court for which you might be further punished although we don't know of anyone who has had problems with this. See below for more information on non-payment of fines

**Conditional Discharges:** Magistrates are quite fond of these. If you are given one it means that if you get arrested again within a given time (usually 6 months to 2 years), and are subsequently convicted, you may be re-sentenced for the original offence.

**Community Service and Custodial Sentences (Prison):** If magistrates or a judge are considering a Community Service Order or a custodial sentence (sending you to prison), your case will be adjourned for a few weeks, for a probation officer to prepare a Pre-Sentence Report for the judge or Magistrates. It is unlikely but you may be remanded in custody during this time.

Community Service means that you will be ordered to do certain tasks for the community for a set time (20 to 240 hours). You have to consent to the order, which is supervised by the Probation Service. If you don't do it, you go back to court, and will probably get more hours added, or be sent to prison. There are usually some "environmental" and outdoors jobs which you could ask to do. You may meet some interesting people whilst doing it.

Going to prison is a big psychological step. There is a separate section on prison below.



July 30th 1998 outside the High Court. Court appearances are a good media opportunity.  
Photo:Rob Todd



## 6.6 Injunctions and damages claims

*'The moment when a feeling enters the body - is political. This touch is political'.*

Adrienne Rich

Participation in the genetiX snowball campaign carries a risk of being enjoined or of having a claim for damages made against you. These are civil cases, not criminal. Injunctions and damages claims are used by government and corporations to intimidate and discourage people from exercising their right to protest. These types of legal proceedings have become known as Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPS). Court case preparation and court hearings are very time consuming. This time and energy drain could if you are not careful divert you from campaigning against GM plants. This is of course exactly what the corporations would want.

An injunction might ban you from entering onto certain test field sites, pulling up plants or encouraging others to do so. It is usually part of a larger case which includes a claim for damages. The claim for compensation by the company is likely to include a demand for the material value of the plants you have pulled up, but may also include claims for damage to commercial and business interests. For example a Monsanto damages claim against the five women who pulled up GM plants on the first snowball action claimed "damages for unlawful interference with business and commercial interests" and "damages for conspiracy". The threat of damages and court costs is used to drive a wedge between people with assets and those without.

The first thing you're likely to know about an injunction is when a burly agent of the court knocks on your door with a large bundle of paperwork (give us a ring and we'll put you in touch with someone who can help you make sense of them). These papers will include a summons to attend the court and they may also include an injunction order which has been made against you "ex- parte", this means in your absence. If an "ex-parte" injunction has been made against you the court will have set a hearing date (usually in 1-2 weeks time) to give you a chance to defend yourself against the injunction.

You can represent yourself in court, you could get legal representation from a friendly solicitor or barrister or you could have a MacKenzie friend (a knowledgeable unpaid legal advisor) to assist you. If you challenge the injunction and lose, you are likely to face large court costs. Another option is to negotiate with the company to agree terms for the injunction that you are happy with and stay out of court thus avoiding costs. If you ignore the Court hearing the company will get the injunction terms they want and probably also get court costs against you.

If you breach the terms of an injunction and evidence of this is obtained by the company then you may be served with committal papers which call you back to court. At this hearing the company may ask for your committal to prison. The judge decides on what, if any, sentence you should get. The maximum prison sentence is two years, although this is unlikely. You could also be given a suspended sentence, this means that you have to abide by the terms of the injunction or face that sentence plus an additional sentence for the second breach. You will also need to decide whether to defend the damages claim or not. We suggest that you contact the genetiX snowball office for an update on the case of the five women, and details of helpful solicitors.

You could of course avoid breaking an injunction order by focusing your attention on crops being developed by one of the other biotechnology companies. You might then acquire a string of injunction orders and damages claims.

These types of High Court cases are big campaign publicity opportunities. Big bully multinational

corporations trying to silence nonviolent campaigners is a David and Goliath situation and a great press opportunity.

If you are planning to take nonviolent direct action against GM crops and you do have material assets it may be worth seeking legal advice on your options. Disposing of your assets into other people's names well before taking action may be enough, but there is a risk that the assets could still be recovered by the court. Moving assets once proceedings have started is much more risky. The safest course of action is to sell up everything and get cash which is untraceable.

## 6.7 Success

We might win, i.e. stop GM deliberate releases. You might win your court case. There will almost certainly be some successes, even if only minor ones, although our achievements may be quite difficult to measure. Success brings a heady spacey feeling, lots of adrenaline, lots of pressure and afterwards can be an anti- climax. Enjoy, but take care of yourself and each other.

Every snowball is a celebration



Third genetiX snowball action, Sunday 16th August 1998. Photo: Nick Cobbing

## 7. Continuing the resistance

### *In this section...*

- Non payment of fines
- Prison and moving through fear
  - Preparation for prison
  - On the inside
    - Arriving
    - In prison
    - The cell
    - Survival strategies
  - Release
- Prisoner support

*"I am here to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen. The only course open to you, the Judge, is either to resign your post and thus disassociate yourself from evil, if you feel that the law you are called upon to administer is an evil and that in reality I am innocent; or to inflict on me the severest penalty, if you believe that the system and the law you are assisting to administer are good for the people of this country and that my activity is therefore injurious to the public wealth"*

Mahatma Gandhi

*".... At the conclusion of his trial, he is described as leaving the courtroom with a radiant smile. The judge had struck, and truth exploded within."*

James Douglass in a commentary on Gandhi.

A willingness to accept consequences of punishment doesn't mean that we think we have done anything wrong. We can accept the punishment and persist with our resistance if we believe we are right. If we are getting lots of public support and the snowball is rolling on then there is every reason for keeping up the pressure.

### 7.1 Non payment of fines

Many people decide to continue their resistance by not paying their fines. If you don't keep up with payments, you will eventually be summonsed back to court. If you say that you can't pay as the fine and payment rate are too high, then they may give you another chance, and set the fine again at a lower rate of payment.

**Bailiffs:** The court can hand the debt over to a firm of bailiffs, whose responsibility it is to collect the debt. You will be notified that this has happened. The court order is called a "distress warrant". You will receive threatening letters from the bailiffs, saying that they will call around at your property within the next few days, unless you contact them to arrange payment. This may be all that happens, as they hope to intimidate you into paying. If bailiffs do call at your home, they cannot force entry. They can enter through open doors or windows, including upstairs ones via a ladder. They can push past

you if you open the door, and they are good at talking their way in - they may ask to just use the phone. Once they're in, you are very compromised. They can take anything and force entry on subsequent visits. If they take property which does not belong to you, then you have to go to court and prove that it belongs to someone else.

A possible strategy for dealing with bailiffs is to hold a public auction and sell all your worldly goods to your friends for a low price, such as one penny each. You should advertise the auction in the local paper and you can invite all your friends for an auction party. Make sure you put a sticker on each item sold with the name and address of the buyer. When the bailiffs arrive show them the advert for the auction and explain that all your personal effects have been sold; they are unlikely to take anything with a sticker on, if they do, you have a very good legal case for getting everything back to its rightful owner!

If you continue to refuse to pay and they can't get any money or goods out of you, you may eventually be sent to prison for "wilful" non-payment. They may instead hand out a Community Service order or insist on deducting the fine from your income. If you are on welfare benefits the court can dock your benefit at source, deducting on a weekly basis. Currently, if your fine, plus court costs, total less than £100 you will be sentenced to 5 days in prison, if less than £200 you will be sentenced to seven days. If your fine and costs total above £200 but less than £500 then you will get fourteen days.

If you do not answer the summons to court, you will have a warrant issued for your arrest. When arrested, you may be sent to prison unless you pay the whole amount. If you take money into court with you, they can take it off you to pay the fine.

## 7.2 Prison and moving through fear

<i>"No prison can contain the freedom that we gain when we move through fear"</i>
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Shannon Smy
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Prison is the state's toughest sanction. The main function of any kind of punishment, is to make citizens internalise control - so that they become their own jailers. A prison is designed above all for the people that are not inside it, using the people who are physically locked away as a threat to the rest of us.

Many people have resisted injustice by taking nonviolent action mindful of the consequences, even in the face of dismissal, slander, restitution, or imprisonment. In this sense, the punishment is the most important part of civil responsibility. The fear of personal consequences often prevents us from stopping violence and creating a more just society. Paradoxically, the way to break this paralysis is to take the consequences of the action even if this means punishment. When people challenge this they remove the prison from inside their own heads and expose it as a constant inhibiting threat in our society.

We may never be able to overcome fear, but we can learn to move through it. Jo Wilson, who hammered a Hawk warplane in 1996 and was remanded in prison, said that she never did learn to overcome her fear, but it was possible to learn to "feel the fear and do it anyway". She said that the courage to carry out her action came from careful preparation and knowing that she was supported by her affinity group. She insists that she is not an unusually courageous person. Where there is fear there is power (and where there is power there is responsibility).

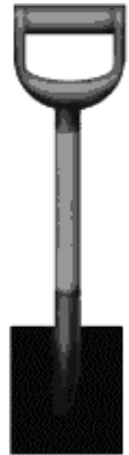
Henry David Thoreau expressed this principle for effective civil disobedience in 1849:

*"Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also in prison. The proper place today, the only place which Massachusetts has provided for her freer and less desponding spirits, is in her prisons....[It is] the only house in a slave State in which a free man can abide with honour. If any think that their influence would be lost there, and their voices no longer afflict the ear of the state, that they would not be as an enemy within its walls, they do not know by how much truth is stronger than error, nor how much more eloquently and effectively he can combat injustice who has experienced a little in his own person"*

It is possible that some snowballers who refuse to pay their fines will be given prison sentences. Whether or not you intend to take this stand, it is important to be aware of the possibility of going to prison before you do the action, just in case. You will need well organised support from people on the outside. We suggest you talk about prison together with the other members of your affinity group.

Some people cope very well in prison and learn a lot from it. Others hate the experience and take a long time to recover. This depends on individual experiences inside. Take time to prepare yourself, think about what prison will mean, and how you will cope emotionally.

There are some excellent organisations set up to help people inside (see Contacts & Resources appendix). We include just basic information which should be relevant to most prisons.



## 7.2.1 Preparation for prison

If you think there is a possibility of being sent to prison, don't hope for the best and go unprepared, pack before you go to court just in case. Warn friends and family that you might be imprisoned, so they aren't shocked and can help you prepare. Make sure at least one person comes to court with you.

Arrange to have one person (a close friend or relative or someone in your affinity group) who can act as your central point of contact whilst you are inside. They will need to be reliable and easy to contact. Messages and information can be passed via them, so information doesn't go astray. One person arranging visits will avoid double-booking.

## 7.2.2 On the inside

### 7.2.2.1 Arriving

You will probably be taken from the court and held in the court cells. Everyone destined for prison will be loaded up, usually at the end of the day, in a minibus or van. When you arrive, you may be put into a room and booked in one at a time. You will be strip searched. When you are booked in they may take valuables like credit cards, railcards and jewellery. If you are a convicted male prisoner, your clothes will be taken, and you'll be given a uniform. Anything taken from you should be kept safe until your release.

#### 7.2.2.2 In prison



Make sure they know your dietary, health and religious requirements as soon as you get in. Vegetarian food is usually available, but tell them if you are vegan (to be sure you get a vegan diet you should join the Vegan Society before you do the action) or require a GM free diet, as they will have to prepare special food. The issue of GM free diets is still being fought, one woman got it, but only after five days on hunger strike, the more people who ask for this the sooner it will happen.

They should give you "The Prisoners Information Book" when you get in. It contains most things you need to know about your rights and entitlements as a prisoner. You could send off for it in advance (see appendix 7.3) to help you prepare. If your rights are being ignored or conditions are awful get your supporters to contact your MP and the Prison Reform Trust or other prisoners support group (see appendix 7.3 for further details).

You will be examined by a doctor on arrival, who will ask you (amongst other things) whether you are depressed or suicidal. They do it to everyone. Many women in prison are on medication to "cope", but consequently get screwed-up and become dependent.

#### 7.2.2.3 The cell

You will probably be sharing a cell with other people. This is the interesting part! You can learn a lot, and many prisoners will be keen to talk, although others may want to keep themselves to themselves. Inmates may be quite interested in you, as "political prisoners" are quite novel. You are unlikely to find trouble unless you go looking for it: buggery in the showers for "new boys", or constant brutal bullying, are thankfully rare. However, be prepared to see things like mental instability, depression, pornography, drug abuse and aggression. If you have any problems, then try and get moved. Ask for a single cell if you want your own space and get your name on a waiting list. If you are a nonsmoker you shouldn't be put in with smokers but be prepared for a battle over it. You may be moved around from cell to cell for no apparent reason. Most cells have a flush toilet and washbasin. In older men's prisons the toilet may be replaced by a bucket!

Once a week you will get "canteen". This is when you can go to the prison shop and buy all the things that you need - phonecards, stamps, paper, pens, tobacco, matches, shampoo, snacks, etc. You will be given a few pounds "wages" a week, and this will be the only opportunity that you get to spend it. If you get a job (e.g. cleaning, cooking, serving food) you will get more to spend. There may be a limit on how much you can spend each week.

Every day you should get a chance to "exercise", in fact you have a right to half an hour a day, but it often doesn't happen. This may be the only chance you get to go outside, as you can sometimes be locked in your cell for up to 23 hours a day. The exercise yard is also a good place to meet other prisoners. "Association" is when you can mix with other prisoners on your wing for a few hours and play pool, watch TV, have a shower, etc.

Visiting rules vary for remand and convicted prisoners and between prisons. You are usually allowed three to four visitors at a time. Remand prisoners are generally entitled to one visit every day. Convicted prisoners must get one visit each month (but sometimes get two). All visitors are searched

as they go in.

You probably won't be told what the rules are, but you will be told off for breaking them. You might also find that the rules change according to who is in charge, the mood of the staff, the weather, or almost any reason. Its best if you do not try to make sense of this; you are in a topsy turvy world that has no logic. The best thing is to try to pick up the routine and take your cues from other prisoners who know the ropes. 20

Prison staff ("screws") may be quite approachable, but can be megalomaniacs, and often like shouting. You will mostly be treated like a troublesome adolescent, regardless of your behaviour.

To do lots of things, you'll have to put in an "App" (an Application Form to the Governor). People cannot send you in a radio or batteries for example, if you haven't put in an App.

#### 7.2.2.4 Survival strategies

Here are some strategies that we have heard used to good effect by various prisoners. Pick and mix to suit your temperament.

The good sheep approach: Being polite and obedient and generally keeping your head down. Escapism: Don't dwell on the fact that you're locked up. Read trashy novels. Watch trash TV. Listen to the radio. Sleep.

Get busy: Do some campaigning and outreach for genetiX snowball. Read those books that you've been dying to read for ages, write letters, write a diary, get in touch with old friends, devise a cell exercise work-out, get to know your cell mates better.

Prison resistance: Some people find organising and participating in prison resistance very effective. Make complaints, support prisoners who are being picked on, go on hunger strike. Be careful with this - the repercussions can be harsh!

Take every opportunity to get out of your cell (e.g. gym, library, chapel, classes). Prison can be quite interesting. Getting angry and bitter will just set you on an awful slope of depression and bottomless anger. Just forget about the doors and adapt. Save yourself, your anger and your energy for when you get back outside.

### **7.2.3 Release**

Nearly all criminal sentences are automatically halved if you have "been good". Also, they don't release people at the weekend, so you will be out on Friday morning if your release date falls on a Saturday or Sunday. Getting out of prison can be disorienting, especially after a long sentence; this can be more difficult than being in prison because support tends to drop away and everyone thinks you are okay because you are out. Try to prepare yourself for release; make sure you will have a secure, friendly place to recover on your release, perhaps a holiday or some quiet time to get used to being out. You may want your loved ones near you, or you may want lots of solitude.

## 7.3 Prisoner support

Prison is designed to isolate, and can be brutal, traumatic and damaging. Even if someone is having an okay time inside, it is important that they are not forgotten, and that their resistance is recognised.

Prepare a list of who you want informed. Some people may prefer to be less conspicuous in prison. If you get loads of mail, and others in your cell don't get any, it may cause resentment. If you want lots of letters, your supporters will need to network your address and prisoner number as soon as possible by every means available.

When inside, it is easy to feel isolated so supporters should try and counter that by maximising contact with the prisoner. Find out what helps people inside keep their morale up. Enclosing a book of stamps is really helpful. Ask the prison if you can send money to the prisoner. If you send something, mention it in your letter, so that the prisoner will know if it gets "confiscated".

Some people like letters to be cheerful and chatty; let them know what's going on outside and what actions have been happening. Be aware, however, that the prison authorities read everything, so avoid anything compromising. Fan mail which states "I think you are so brave - I could never do what you did" are generally not appreciated. Letters offering loads of useful advice are also quite annoying! Photos of beautiful places may be welcomed since one of the hardest things is staring at blank walls.



## 8. Keeping the snowball rolling....



Your genetiX snowball action is not completed until you have invited more people to take nonviolent action by pulling up GM crops and at least two people have taken up your invitation. You will have the experience of the field to share with them. If each person in your group was to form one more new group to take action you will give the snowball an extra boost. Invite anyone you know, organise a public meeting, share your experiences with the audience and organise a follow-up meeting to start another group.

So now it is up to you to write the rest of this section. We will be printing a second edition of this handbook, making any necessary changes. We would love to have your contributions for this section for the next edition. Happy snowballing rolling over to you....

### *All power to the allotments...*

All power to the allotments  
humanity is born free  
but everywhere is in supermarket chains  
buying 14.7cm long carrots  
stripped of dirt, geography, effort, labour  
stripped of content, context, joy and flavour  
buying 14.7cm long carrots  
stripped of carrothood



No! This Can Not Be So!  
This Can Not Be Right



Carrots have rights  
essential, self-evident Carrot Rights  
to be accepted in their diversity  
encouraged in their deviancy  
to be eased and shaken from their familiar earth  
with inefficient and unprofitable gratitude

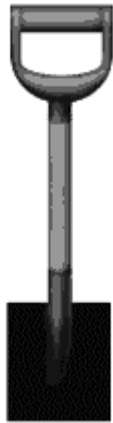
to be greeted by the eyes that have  
followed them from seed to seedling to maturity  
to be welcomed by the eyes that will eat them  
only thus  
only thus will we see the demise  
of the 14.7cm long carrotless carrot  
and  
carrot by carrot by carrot  
shall we pull the synthetic rugs from under  
the well-heeled feet of the Super Market Masters



So

More Power to Our Elbows!  
& All Power to the Allotments!  
power comes from the water barrel  
of an allotment shed  
power comes from the meeting  
of rain and earth and sun  
power comes from the blade of a spade  
the turning of a fork  
the rhythm of a hoe

power comes from the raw materials and means of  
production -  
seed, earth, trowel, spade, watering can -  
being in the hands of the proud and sweaty producer  
in generous, toiling, filthy, happy hands  
connected to generous, toiling, supple wrists  
connected to generous, weathered forearms  
connected to generous, toiling, unsung elbows



Yes! More Power to Our Elbows!  
& All Power to the Allotments!  
from each according to their agility  
to each according to their taste  
this land yields food fit for a  
not a king nor a slave  
but fit for a human being  
this land levels pretension  
this land plays host to the revolutions of the seasons  
this land cradles  
roots that undermine  
this land is shadowed  
by the joy of leaf and flower and fruit  
this land is an earthy barricade  
against the fascism  
of conformist  
uniformist uninformat bourgeois counter-revolutionary  
counter-evolutionary petite bourgeois imperialist  
materialist xenophobic terraphobic petty petite  
bourgeois  
consumerist illusionist confusionist reactionary  
refractionary petty petty petty bourgeois  
fascistically lit super market vegetable displays

this land is an earthy barricade  
this land is an earthy serenade  
this land is an earthy cascade  
of root, fruit, shoot, leaf, flower  
of pod of sod of  
fodder for stomach, heart and soul  
Comrades in spades!  
Let a hundred courgette flowers bloom!  
let allotments roll higgledy piggledy across the land  
like a harlequin's haphazard cloak of earthy hues  
Comrades in spades  
we have nothing to lose  
but our neonic, demonic, necrophiliac, necrophobic  
supermarket chains!  
More Power to our Elbows!  
All Power to the Allotments!  
More Power to our Elbows!  
All Power to the Allotments!  
More Power to our Elbows!  
All Power to the Allotments!



Stephen Hancock (available for performances: 01865  
770833; [stephen@gn.apc.org](mailto:stephen@gn.apc.org))

Elder Stubbs Festival, Oxford, Saturday 31st August  
1996



# A 1 Introduction to the Campaign

## *In this section...*

- The effects and implications of GM plants
  - The unpredictable effects of GM
  - Risks of GM foods to human health
    - Toxic and allergenic effects
    - New and more virulent viruses
    - Resistance to antibiotics
  - Risks to the environment and biodiversity
    - Increasing use of pesticides
    - Gene pollution and super weeds
    - Plants with built-in insecticide
    - Bees and polluted honey
    - Soil bacteria and horizontal gene transfer
  - Food security and hunger
  - Patents and biopiracy
  - Ethics and morals
    - Further reading
- Inspirations

## A1.1 The effects and implications of genetically modified plants

*"History celebrates the battlefields whereon we meet our death, but scorns to speak of the ploughed fields whereby we thrive; it knows the names of king's bastards, but cannot tell us the origin of wheat. That is the way of human folly."*

Jean Henri Fabre

This appendix gives a brief introduction to the genetic modification of food crops. For further information please refer to the reading list at the end of this appendix.

### A1.1.1 The unpredictable effects of genetic modification

The proponents of genetic modification of food crops claim that it is safe, more precise and a natural extension of traditional cross-breeding methods and that all they are doing is giving nature a helping hand.

This is not the case - genetic engineering permits the transfer of genes between totally unrelated organisms, circumventing natural species barriers e.g. the introduction of a fish gene, the "antifreeze" gene of the arctic flounder, into tomatoes and strawberries. This crossing of species barriers is something that would never happen by traditional breeding methods.

The method of introduction of the new gene is not at all precise. The new gene is randomly incorporated (spliced) into the plant's own DNA, it could end up anywhere, next to any gene or even within one of the plant's own genes. Genes do not work in isolation and the activity of each gene is affected by its neighbours. The random splicing of the new gene into the plant may then cause a totally unpredictable disturbance to the normal function and regulation of the plant's own genes. For example in an experiment to turn white flowering petunias red, a gene for the colour red, together with an antibiotic resistance gene, was transferred from maize to the petunia. The petunia turned red but also grew more leaves and shoots, had lower fertility and was more resistant to fungi. None of these additional effects was predictable. Further the introduced gene may not work in the same way in its new host. The antifreeze gene in the arctic flounder has evolved to work with the other genes in that fish - there is no way to predict whether it will work in exactly the same way with no unwanted side effects in the tomato or strawberry where it will be in a new environment surrounded by the plant's genes.

There are many unanswered questions about the basic science behind the technology of genetic engineering and many believe that until we have answers to these questions genetic engineering should be kept in the laboratory. Others, principally the biotechnology companies and the government are anxious to push the technology forward before these questions are answered, paying no heed to the fact that once released into the environment, genetic mistakes cannot be recalled, cleaned up or allowed to decay but will be passed on to future generations indefinitely.



***"What makes genetic engineering biotechnology dangerous, in the first instance, is that it is an unprecedented, close alliance between two great powers that can make or break the world; science and commerce."*** Dr Mae-Wan Ho, geneticist

### **A1.1.2 Risks of genetically modified foods to human health**

Although there has so far been limited exposure of humans to GM foods there is already evidence of risks to human health.

#### A1.1.2.1 Toxic and allergenic effects

Due to the unpredictable pattern of gene expression and function there is the potential for the production of unexpected proteins and novel toxins in GM food crops.

For example, when a gene from the brazil nut was introduced into the soybean, people allergic to brazil nuts were also found to be allergic to the GM soya. Fortunately allergies to brazil nut proteins were well known and were tested for leading to the swift withdrawal of the GM soya. It is however possible that unknown allergens could be developed unintentionally in GM foods as tests for allergenicity are targeted at known allergens and are not designed to reveal new allergens. Food allergies are increasing, the development of GM foods with the potential for the presence of novel proteins will only exacerbate the problem.

In 1989 there was an epidemic of a new disease, eosinophilia myalgia syndrome. The disease was traced to the consumption of a food supplement derived from bacteria genetically engineered to overproduce the aminoacid, L-tryptophan. The excessive amounts of L-tryptophan in the bacterial

cells led to the formation of a novel toxin, which contaminated the final product. Of 5,000 people who contracted the disease, 37 died and 1,500 are permanently disabled.

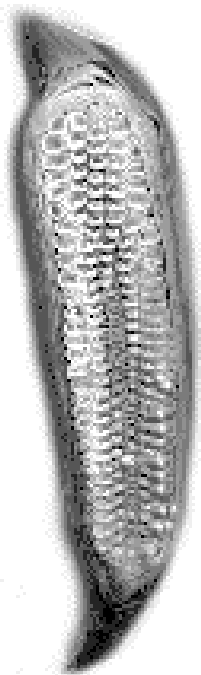


A GM yeast engineered for better fermentation of beer and bread was found to have abnormally high levels of a metabolite, methyl glyoxal, a chemical known to cause damage to DNA. The scientists who carried out this work believe that the risk assessments required by the present regulatory system, which are based on the principle of substantial equivalence (i.e. that the new food, even though it is GM, is substantially the same as foods already available for consumption), would not have required testing for the DNA damaging chemical, even though it has the potential to cause cancers.

***"The unexpected production of toxic substances has now been observed in genetically engineered bacteria, yeast, plants, and animals with the problem remaining undetected until a major health hazard has arisen. Moreover, genetically engineered foods may produce an immediate effect or it could take years for full toxicity to come to light."*** Dr Michael Antoniou MA, PhD. Senior Lecturer in Molecular Pathology, London.

#### A1.1.2.2 New and more virulent viruses

Genetic modification of food crops involves the transfer of a foreign gene into the host plant cell by a carrier, known as a vector, such as a virus or bacteria. While natural vectors generally respect species barriers, the artificial vectors made by genetic engineers are designed to break through these barriers, thus greatly enhancing the potential for creating new and possibly more virulent viral and bacterial pathogens which can in turn infect humans and animals.



#### A1.1.2.3 Resistance to antibiotics

As the process for adding new genes to host plant cells is random, genetic engineers add "marker" genes at the same time so that they can tell which plant cells have been genetically modified. The commonest marker gene used is an antibiotic resistance gene. Instead of removing the gene after the research stage the scientists have left it in the host plant cells and a number of GM crops currently on trial contain the antibiotic resistance gene. There is growing concern that the use of antibiotic resistance marker genes in GM crops will exacerbate the already serious problem of antibiotic resistant infectious disease, for example by the spread of antibiotic resistance to human and animal gut microorganisms after eating GM crops.

### **A1.1.3 Risks to the environment and the effect on biodiversity**

#### A1.1.3.1 Increasing use of pesticides

The main focus of the biotechnology companies so far has been on the creation of crops resistant to herbicides, particularly glyphosate (e.g. Monsanto's Round-up Ready Soya) and glufosinate (e.g. AgrEvo's glufosinate resistant oil seed rape). This approach is flawed at a fundamental level as the production of herbicide resistant GM crops encourages farmers to look upon the use of herbicides as the first choice for weed control, rather than as one of a number of options. Monsanto has applied in several countries for a relaxation in environmental legislation to allow a 200 fold increase in glyphosate residues in soya, an indication that Monsanto acknowledge, contrary to their recent advertising campaign, that the use of GM crops will increase herbicide usage. Increased use of herbicides will mean not only higher residues in food but also serious losses of weeds within crops, around field edges and in hedgerows, all very important food sources for wildlife. The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, together with other conservation bodies, is calling for a moratorium on commercial growing of GM herbicide tolerant crops because of their concerns about the effects of increased herbicide usage on food sources for birds.

#### A1.1.3.2 Gene pollution and super weeds

Genes move between plants by cross-pollination - a process known as horizontal gene transfer. GM oil seed rape has been shown to cross-pollinate with ordinary oil seed rape growing 2.5 km away from the GM crop. It is highly likely then, that when GM oil seed rape is planted on a large scale all oil seed rape will rapidly become contaminated with the modified genes. Organic standards do not allow GM materials in organic produce and so farmers will be unable to grow organic oil seed rape. Oil seed rape, including GM oil seed rape, also cross-pollinates very easily with wild relatives such as wild turnip and wild radish. These wild relatives will become herbicide resistant where they cross-pollinate with GM oil seed rape with a herbicide resistance gene, creating "super weeds".



#### A1.1.3.3 Plants with built-in insecticide

Some crops have been designed to be resistant to pests by the incorporation of genes which produce proteins which are toxic to insects. For example Novartis have produced a GM maize plant with genes for the production of Bt toxin. Bt toxin is a very effective bio-pesticide used by organic farmers on a "one-off" basis to kill insect pests. In GM crops with the Bt gene, the gene is never switched off and so the plant produces low levels of Bt continuously. This is a very effective way to put an adaptive pressure on the insect pests to become resistant to Bt, thereby creating "super bugs" and removing from organic farmers the use of a very effective pesticide. In addition, the newly incorporated toxins may be harmful to beneficial insects either directly or indirectly. For example, green lacewings, beneficial predators that fed on cornborers which had in turn fed on Novartis' Bt maize, showed increased mortality when compared to cornborers that had fed on conventional maize. Trials for GM potatoes modified with a gene from snowdrops which produced a toxin against greenflies were stopped when it was found that when the poisoned greenflies were fed to beneficial ladybirds: the female ladybirds laid up to 30 per cent less eggs than usual and died after only half of their normal life expectancy.

#### A1.1.3.4 Bees and polluted honey

Honey bees are the primary pollinators of oil seed rape and it is likely that honey from a hive close to a GM oil seed rape field will contain large amounts of GM pollen. This GM pollen may introduce into the honey as yet unknown proteins that could have toxic or allergenic effects on humans and bees. Beekeepers producing honey from a hive close to a GM crop field will not be able to claim that their honey is organic because of the high risk that it will contain GM pollen. It has been shown that bees feeding on GM pest resistant crops have their life-span reduced.

#### A1.1.3.5 Soil bacteria and horizontal gene transfer

Natural transformation, the ability of bacteria to actively take up free DNA, is a method by which plant DNA can be transferred to bacteria. Around 40 species of bacteria, some of which are soil or water borne, are known to have the ability for natural transformation. It has been shown in scientific experiments that horizontal gene transfer from GM plants (in that case GM sugarbeet) to bacteria can occur. It is likely then that gene pollution will spread for many miles around GM crop fields, carried by soil and water borne bacteria.

### **A1.1.4 Food security and hunger**

***"Ironically while the poor go hungry, it is the hunger of the poor which is used to justify the agricultural strategies which deepen their hunger"*** Vandana Shiva

Proponents of genetic modification argue that it will allow us to feed the world's hungry. This is not only misleading but also ignores some of the disastrous effects which may arise from widespread reliance on GM. Malnutrition and hunger are caused by complex political and economic factors around access to food: GM is more likely to exacerbate these than alleviate them. The introduction of GM crop monocultures, with their genetic uniformity are vulnerable to pests and disease outbreaks: genetically diverse crops contain a proportion of plants that are likely to have some degree of resistance. Many countries' agricultural systems recognise this and already possess the genetic resources to guarantee a sustainable food supply.

The actual types of food being grown by the biotechnology companies demonstrate that increasing food availability is not high on their agenda. Most of the food products from transgenic crops have been marketed to consumers in affluent industrialised countries, eg, Monsanto's high-starch 'quick fry' potato for the fast food market. These crops rarely fit in with traditional local diets or the plans of local farmers. GM applications are also spreading the cultivation of non-food crops such as cotton or tobacco. More of these will not increase food availability or alleviate starvation in the Third World.

The technological shifts which biotechnology implies will further bring economic losses and resultant food insecurity for many Third World countries as agricultural production is transferred into laboratories and factories in the industrialised world. The story of vanilla demonstrates this. Vanilla is a major export crop for Madagascar, the Comoro Islands and Reunion which between them account for over 98% of the world's vanilla production. In Madagascar, over 70 000 small holders are involved in the growing of vanilla and the crop accounts for 10% of the country's export earnings. This trade is threatened, as vanilla can now be produced by taking plant tissue and growing it under tissue culture conditions. Ultimately, food insecurity and hunger will not be solved by gene technology whilst structural, cultural and political factors around food production and distribution remain unresolved.

### A1.1.5 Patents and biopiracy

Current forecasts suggest that in less than two years' time the market for genetically modified foods in the UK alone will be worth around £9billion. In the area of food production, the main profits for biotechnology companies are generated from the sale of patented GM seed.

#### Undermining autonomy

Traditional farming practices involve farmers retaining seeds from the harvest of one year's crop for planting in the following year. However, with GM seed, farmers have to make substantial royalty payments to multinational companies if they keep seed for replanting, even if the crop happens to be native to their particular country. This system of patents undermines the autonomy of Third World farmers whilst imposing monopoly control over some of the world's most important food crops.

#### From common to corporate ownership

Patent legislation could severely restrict the traditional uses of plants in the Third World. The neem tree, for example, has been used for centuries in India as a source of insecticide, providing an economically and environmentally friendly form of crop protection. Chemical companies in the USA have taken out a series of patents on neem based products effectively taking ownership out of the common sphere and into the corporate.

#### Biopiracy



The world's poorest nations account for around 95.7% of the world's genetic resources. Many of the biotech 'inventions' which patents claim are not inventions at all but are based on locally developed biodiversity and knowledge. This biopiracy has been compared to colonialism, "Corporations continue to practice the colonialism on which they were founded. This time it is directed, not at distant countries, but at life itself. They have found rich new worlds to raid: the genetic wealth of diverse species, the work of farmers and indigenous people and the intellectual wealth that they have accumulated and handed down over millennia" Helena Paul. Ismail Serageldin, chairman of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, speaking at the World Food Summit in November 1996, feared that biotechnology patents, largely owned by industrialised nations, could create a 'scientific apartheid' which locks 80% of people in the developing world out of scientific advances.

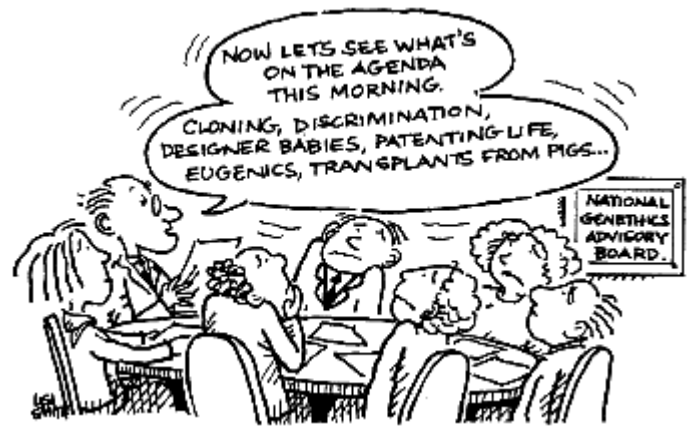
### A1.1.6 Ethics and morals

Stephen Nottingham's book 'Eat Your Genes' identifies three key issues around the ethics and morality of GM foods. These are (i) ethical concerns about the transfer of particular genes (ii) whether genetic modification increases the suffering of animals and (iii) whether life can be owned.



The first of these raises questions around the transfer of human genes to animals raised as food; the transfer of genes from animals whose flesh is forbidden to certain religious groups to animals that are permitted as food; and the transfer of animal genes to crop plants.

On the second, genetic modification extends current arguments around traditional livestock breeding. These are that changes in food production are detrimental to animal welfare and animals are being treated as profit inducing commodities.



The third issue, whether life can be owned, raises several profound questions. Can life be treated merely as a commodity? Can it be reduced to strings of DNA with industrial applications? Should unaccountable corporations, whose existence is based on the profit motive not social concern, own the biological underpinnings of life? And anyway, what is wrong with life and nature as we know it?

Science is not neutral and value-free: the direction in which it is driven depends upon conscious choice.

*"[Consumers] do not even know what a gene is... Often my young son wants to cross the road when it is dangerous. Sometimes you just have to tell people what is best for them."*

Janet Bainbridge, chair of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (Britain's GMO regulation committee):

## Further reading

- Antonio, Michael.:
  - **Breaking the Chain.** Living Earth No 197, January/March 1998.
  - **Substantial Equivalence A Licence to Kill?** Nutritional Therapy Today vol. 7, No. 3, p 5.
- Friends of the Earth. **Genetically Engineered Oil Seed Rape.** Briefing Sheet, 1997.
- Nottingham, Stephen. **Eat Your Genes.** Zed Books, London, 1998.
- Resurgence magazine No. 188 May/June 1998 **The Gene Debate - a special issue focusing on GE** with articles by Alan Simpson MP, Alistair McIntosh and Ricarda Steinbrecher, copies available at £3.00 from Resurgence, Ford House Hartland, Bideford, North Devon, EX39 6EE.
- Scrinis, Gyorgy. **Colonizing the Seed: Genetic Engineering and Techno-Industrial Agriculture.** Friends of the Earth, Melbourne, 1995.
- Shiva, Vandana. **Betting on Biodiversity.** Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, New Delhi, 1998.

- Steinbrecher, Ricarda. **From Green to Gene Revolution: The Environmental Risks of Genetically Engineered Crops.** The Ecologist, Vol. 26, No 6, p273-281.
- Mae-Wan Ho.
  - **Genetic Engineering Dreams or Nightmares?** Gateway Books, 1998.
  - **The Unholy Alliance,** The Ecologist Vol. 27 No.4, July/August 1997.
- Greenpeace. **Genetic Engineering: Too Good to go Wrong?** London, 1998.
- Women's Environmental Network (WEN) Campaigns and Information Pack. **Test Tube Harvest Campaign,** Women's Environmental Network, 87 Worship Street, London EC2A 2BE. Tel: 0171 247 3327. Available from September 1998; individual briefings and leaflets available now.

## A1.2 Inspirations

The original Snowball campaign took place in the mid 80s and involved nearly 3000 people at over 42 different places in Britain. All participants agreed to a nonviolence code, wrote a personal statement and contacted the relevant authorities before cutting a single strand of perimeter fence wire, in the presence of police.

This symbolic action led to over 2000 arrests and minor court cases in which the defendants explained their actions to court officials, magistrates, the press and members of the general public. Some 1000 participants chose to refuse to pay their fines imposed for their actions and served short prison sentences. The activists came from a broad cross-section of society including vicars, ex-RAF servicemen, Sunday school teachers, health authority workers, mothers and fathers - ordinary people taking extraordinary action. After their action each person tried to find two or three more people who could take part, and so the snowball grew large enough to achieve its aims.

The Swords into Ploughshares tradition began in the US in 1980 when eight people who used hammers to disarm nuclear warheads. They were inspired by an Old Testament prophecy:

***"They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."*** (Isaiah 2:4).

To date there have been over 60 ploughshare actions, which take nonviolence to mean the careful disarming of weapons, being accountable for the action taken and accepting the consequences of their action; consequently they are arrested and imprisoned. The actions usually arise out of community and also aspire to openness, democracy, and to moving through fear and challenging obedience. There is usually a strong sense of spirituality; not all activists are Christian (although many are) but have also been Buddhist, Jewish, pantheistic, etc., and plenty have been atheists. Actions have taken place in the USA, Australia, Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Britain.

In Britain there have been three ploughshare actions of which Seeds of Hope Ploughshares is the latest; and there is a fourth - Trident Ploughshares 2000 - currently under way. Perhaps the most "well-known" action took place in Britain in 1996. This was the Seeds of Hope - East Timor Ploughshares in which four women used hammers to disarm a Hawk warplane which was to be exported to Indonesia. The four women were acquitted in a landmark trial by a jury who recognised that the women had good reason to take such drastic action - the warplanes were to be used in genocidal attacks against the people of East Timor.

We are especially moved by the Ploughshares people's commitment to nonviolence and democracy;

the humility in their readiness to invite judgement and to be continuously self-critical; and their courage to take action as a witness in a world which is largely sterile in spiritual terms.

Thus we have spent several months studying and evaluating Ploughshares philosophy and the methods they use and have drawn heavily from them. The key difference between our methods and Ploughshares methods is that we do not intend to cause large amounts of "damage" by a small group of people. Rather we want to involve large numbers of people in doing small amounts of the work needed to make Britain GM free.



The beginning of the first Snowball at USAF Sculthorpe on 1st October 1994

## Further reading: motivations and inspirations

The following books are available from the Quaker Bookshop, Friends House, 173 to 177 Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ.

- Douglass, James W. **Resistance and Contemplation: The way of liberation: the yin and yang of nonviolent life.** Doubleday, New York 1972.
- Hengren, Per. **Path of Resistance: The Practice of Civil Disobedience.** New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, USA, 1993. A very useful handbook on civil disobedience covering, amongst other things, nonviolence, affinity groups, accountability and overcoming fear.
- Laffin, Art and Montgomery, Anne Eds. **Swords Into Ploughshares: nonviolent direct action for disarmament...peace...social justice.** Rose Hill Books 1996. Brief details of all Ploughshares actions to date of publication together with essays written by ploughshares activists about the movement and/or their own actions.
- **Ploughshares Support Network Newsletter.** The Daily Hammer. Box X,111 Magdalen Road, Oxford, OX4 1RQ. Tel: 01865 714036.
- Starhawk. **The Fifth Sacred Thing.** Thorsons, London, 1997.

- Thoreau, Henry David **An essay on Civil Disobedience**. Penguin Classics. London 1986.
- Zelter, Angie and Bhardwaj, Arya, Eds. **Snowball: The story of a nonviolent civil disobedience campaign in Britain**. Ghandi-in-action, 1991. Sets out the history of the original snowball campaign together with the personal statements and writings of many of those who took part.

#### Inspirational viewing by video

- Goodwin, Neil. **Seeds of Hope**. Available from Ploughshares Support Network, Box X, 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford. OX4 1RQ. Presents the inside story of how a group of women disarmed a warplane as an enactment of the prophecy to beat swords into ploughshares. Personal testimony and dramatic reconstruction!
- **genetiX snowball - The Video**. Available soon from the genetiX snowball office.
- **Undercurrents** produce several action packed videos documenting direct action including genetiX actions. Available from 16b Cherwell Street, Oxford. OX4 1BG.
- Also watch **Gandhi** for nonviolence, **The Dead Poets' Society** for challenging obedience and **Terminator II** for action packed disarmament! Available from most video stores.



## A3.2 The pledge

See the following page for a single-sheet version of the pledge to photocopy.

# genetiX snowball pledge

## Safety

- I will put all GM plants pulled up by me into strong polythene bags, seal them with heavy duty tape, mark them with a biohazard symbol, leave them at the site and inform the Environment Agency giving full details of the location.
- I will take appropriate precautions to ensure that no genetically modified plant material on my body or clothing will contaminate any area beyond this site.

## Nonviolence

- I will remove ..... (no more than 100) individual genetically modified plants on this day.
- I will not engage in physical violence or knowingly take part in any action that will cause harm to any living being.
- I will not carry any weapons.
- I will try to create an atmosphere of calm.
- I will try to treat everyone I encounter with respect.
- I will not take any alcohol or drugs other than for medical reasons.

## Openness

- I will carry out my genetiX snowball action during daylight at  
..... (location) on  
.....(date: this being the the first or third weekend of every month).
- I will be open and truthful about my identity and my actions: I (or someone from my group) will write to the farmer who is host to the GM release site to be decontaminated by me to inform him/her that we intend to decontaminate the GM site.
- I will provide my own prepared and signed statement giving details about this action and the reasons for it to the police (if I am arrested), the farmer, and the company who has grown the crop.
- I will accept the consequences of my action.

## Accepting the consequences

- I will keep to this pledge throughout the action and any consequences of the action.

Signed: .....

Date:.....

Your name (please use capital letters): .....

Correspondence address: .....

.....

## A4 The genetiX snowball begins...

### *In this section...*

Letters sent before the action by genetiX snowball

Personal statements

Press preparations

## Letters sent before the action by genetiX snowball

### Letter to farmers hosting deliberate release sites

23 June 1998

Dear Sir,

We understand from the GMO public Register that there is a genetically modified (GM) plant test field site on your land. We are concerned about the deliberate release of these GM plants; and question both the need for and safety of these crops in terms of food security and the environment. I enclose articles by Dr. Michael Antoniou and Dr. Ricarda Steinbrecher, both genetic scientists, setting out some of the arguments against GM plants. We understand that there will also be an article by Dr Antonio in this weeks Farmers Weekly.

Over the last two years many respected individuals, including some MPs, and non-governmental organisations have been campaigning for a moratorium on deliberate releases of genetically modified plants into the environment. The public has not been adequately consulted over this issue in spite of the risks it poses; this month a Mori poll shows that 77% of the public believe there should be a ban on growing GM crops and food in Britain. We believe there are serious implications for agriculture and our economy. In addition, the companies involved in producing these GM plants have not agreed to accept liability if anything goes wrong. We believe that this represents a failure of the democratic process and it is time for ordinary citizens to take responsibility where the government has failed us.

We are launching the genetiX snowball campaign on 4 July 1998. The campaign invites people to take responsibility for the government's failings and to join together into small groups to safely and nonviolently remove a small number of the GM plants from the ground. The GM plants will then be safely bagged up and left at the site; we will then contact the local environmental health officer, whose responsibility it is to remove and safely dispose of biohazards and toxic waste.

The actions are due to take place on the first and third weekend of every month. We have made it a condition of joining genetiX snowball that all participants make a serious commitment to nonviolence; by this we mean that there will be no violence and participants will treat those they encounter with respect. Additionally all actions will be taken openly and accountably; nobody will be hiding their identity and actions will take place in daylight.

The campaign also asks participants to respect the farmer's land and property and to "follow the country code". For example, we will insist that participants keep to footpaths as far as possible, leave gates as they find them, and not to bring dogs.

We will also be informing the police about the campaign in general and sending them information describing these nonviolent actions.

We appreciate that many farmers understand the need to protect the integrity of the natural world and recognise

their role as stewards of the land. We also appreciate the hard reality of the financial costs which fall on farmers as they try to fulfil this role as well as providing food. We realise that you may lose money if you withdraw your support for these GM plant trials; therefore we are asking participants of genetiX snowball to lobby for compensation from the government for any financial losses you might incur\*.

We are calling for a five year moratorium on the deliberate release of genetically modified (GM) plants in Britain, except for government sponsored ecological health and safety tests (in enclosed systems); and the removal of all GM crops already existing. We enclose a copy of our leaflet for your information and interest.

We look forward to hearing from you and would be interested to hear what your position is on this issue. We also invite you to join with our campaign by cancelling your agreement with the company responsible for the GM plants on your land (as has already been done by Wiltshire farmer, Peter Lemmon), or by safely removing the GM plants yourself.

Yours faithfully,

Kathryn Tulip

on behalf of genetiX snowball

\* Please note that we are actually asking participants to lobby for compensation from the companies, not the government, since we feel that taxpayers should not have to incur this cost.

### Letter to all biotechnology companies responsible for GM release sites in Britain from genetiX snowball

29 June 1998

Dear Madam/Sir,

We are a small group of individuals who have come together over our concern about the release of genetically modified (GM) plants into the environment at test field sites and the introduction of these plants in our food. We are campaigning against GM plants because we believe:

- GM crops are not wanted in Britain - 77% of the public want GM crops to be banned (Mori poll, June 1998);
- GM crops are not necessary - there are better and safer solutions for feeding the world;- GM crops are a threat to the ecological integrity of the environment;
- GM crops are a threat to food safety;
- GM crops are a threat to food security;
- the science on which GM is based is being prematurely applied and is being abused in its application for GM;
- the risks of GM crops are currently being carried by the public because biotechnology companies such as yourselves refuse to accept liability if something goes wrong;
- an agriculture based on GM crops will increase monocultures and intensification of farming, both of which are detrimental to ecology;
- since profit is the primary motive of production, then the development of GM crops by corporations is dependent on patenting of genes and plants; this is a further step to disempowering local people, undermining and appropriating local farming knowledge and traditions;
- GM crops reduce self determination of the small farmer, especially in "developing countries", for

example, India, Ethiopia, Eastern Europe;

- GM crops increase dependency on a few large corporations who are accountable only to their shareholders;

We further believe that the introduction of GM plants is undemocratic; GM has been sneaked into our lives without our permission, even though the implications and the dangers of GM are enormous.

There is evidence (The Independent, 7-4-98; New Scientist, 4-4- 98) that biotechnology companies are failing to adhere to government regulations. It seems clear that the Health and Safety Executive is doubtful of ever being able to convict companies which break the regulations.

We believe that the release of GM plants into the environment in test field sites is illegal since genetic material can escape into plants belonging to other farmers through cross pollination or horizontal gene transfer. This means that you are causing criminal damage to the plants of other farmers and creating a public health risk.

We know that many individuals and organisations have tried to persuade you to remove all GM plants from our food and the environment. It has become evident that you are not willing to do this. Since the democratic process is failing to respond to the wishes of the public and the regulatory process cannot deal with this threat to our health and to the environment, we feel we must take responsibility for countering the dangers of GM crops ourselves. We must take action because your company is breaking the law and threatening human health; we must take action immediately since many GM plants are beginning to flower and will be spreading their pollen.

In early July we are launching genetiX snowball - a campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility - to begin the process of decontaminating the GM test field sites in Britain. We will work together in small groups to safely remove GM plants from the ground.

In order to join the campaign all participants must sign a pledge to be open and accountable about their identity and actions, to be nonviolent and respectful towards anyone they encounter. All actions will take place in daylight. Participants will take appropriate precautions to prevent the spread of genetic pollution by wearing protective clothing. The GM plants and contaminated clothing will be sealed in strong polythene bags clearly marked as a biohazard and we will call on the local Environment Agency, whose responsibility it is to dispose of biohazards, to remove the bags. We have notified farmers of the campaign and invited them to join us.

genetiX snowball is calling for a five year moratorium on the deliberate release of GM plants in Britain, except for government sponsored ecological health and safety tests (in enclosed systems); and the removal and safe destruction of all GM crops already existing.

We are asking you again to please remove all your GM plants from test field sites in Britain.

Yours faithfully,

Rowan Tilly

on behalf of genetiX snowball

### Letter to Police from genetiX snowball

27 June 1998

Dear Chief Constable,

We are concerned about the deliberate release of genetically modified (GM) plants into the environment because of the dangers to human health and to the integrity of the natural world. Therefore we will be launching a campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility called genetiX snowball in July. This campaign invites people to



join together into small groups to safely and nonviolently remove a small number of GM plants from a GM test field site.

In addition to the dangers outlined above we further believe: that the government is not responding to mass public opposition to GM crops and food; that GM crop technology is unnecessary and there is no evidence to suggest that it will fulfil its promise to feed the world; that the companies involved in producing these GM plants have not agreed to accept liability if anything goes wrong. This represents a failure of the democratic process and we believe that it is time for ordinary citizens to take responsibility where the government has failed us.

We believe the action we are taking is lawful and see no need for police presence at any of these actions. However, it is possible that in the event of a genetiX snowball action in your area you will be contacted by the owner of the land on which the test field site is located. We would like to assure you in advance that our actions will be peaceful and nonviolent and will take place in an atmosphere of calm and respect. The campaign will also be asking participants to respect the farmer's land and property and to "follow the country code". For example, we will insist that participants keep to footpaths as far as possible, leave gates as they find them, and not to bring dogs.

Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the Snowball Pledge which we are asking all participants to sign. All actions will be taken openly and accountably; nobody will be hiding their identity and actions will take place in daylight.

genetiX snowball has already written to farmers with a GM test field site on their land to introduce and outline the campaign. We are also contacting the local Environment Agency asking them to remove and safely dispose of the GM plants since it is their responsibility to dispose of biohazards and toxic waste.

We further believe that biotechnology companies are committing the offence of criminal damage as they are being reckless as to the risk of damage to neighbouring farm land, animals and crops as a consequence of genetic pollution (horizontal gene transfer) from the GM test field sites. We are asking you as agents of the law to request the Environment Agency to safely dispose of the GM plants at test sites in your area pending an investigation of this crime (please let us know the crime number). Should you require further details of the perpetrators of this crime we can send you full details of the offending companies and will be happy to help with your enquiries.

We are sure that participants would be happy to talk about the issues involved should you be called to be present during a genetiX snowball action.

Yours faithfully,

Rowan Tilly

on behalf of genetiX snowball

### Letter to Environment Agency from genetiX snowball

Dear Sir/Madam,

We understand from the GMO public register that there are more than 300 genetically modified (GM) plant test field sites in Britain. We are concerned about this deliberate release of GM plants into the environment because of the dangers to human health and to the integrity of the natural world.

We will therefore be launching a campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility called genetiX snowball on 4th July 1998 with an action at a test field site in the Home Counties. Further actions are due to take place on the first and third weekends of every month. The campaign invites people to join together into small groups to

safely and nonviolently remove a small number of GM plants from a test field site. All actions will be taken openly and accountably; nobody will be hiding their identity and actions will take place in daylight.

Because of our concerns about the dangers of GM plants, we wish to guard against the further spread of genetic pollution from the test field sites which could arise from our actions and we will therefore be taking safety precautions which we believe are appropriate to dealing with a biohazard. We will wear disposable protective clothing, shoes and gloves throughout the actions. We will be placing the removed GM plants and our clothing in plastic bags which we will seal and label with the biohazard symbol. We will leave the GM plants and clothing at the site. We will then contact the nearest area office of the Environment Agency to give details of their exact location and ask that the biohazard be removed and disposed of safely.

We will contact the appropriate area office of the Environment Agency after our action as we understand it is their responsibility to remove and safely dispose of biohazards which are contaminating land within their area. We are contacting you in advance of our action so that you will have time to put in place appropriate procedures to deal with this biohazard in your region. We look forward to hearing from you with details of the plans you have made for the safe disposal of the GM plants.

Yours faithfully,

Kathryn Tulip

on behalf of genetiX snowball

## Personal Statements used for the launch genetiX snowball action

### Personal statement of Rowan Tilly

*"The chemical weed killers are a bright new toy. They work in a spectacular way; they give a giddy sense of power over nature to those who wield them, and as for the long- range and less obvious effects - these are easily brushed aside as the baseless imaginings of pessimists. The 'agricultural engineers' speak blithely of 'chemical ploughing' in a world that is urged to beat its ploughshares into spray guns."* Rachel Carson, 1962

I am motivated by a longing for peace on Earth and with the Earth. I have informed myself of the arguments both for and against genetic engineering by reading widely and consulting with genetic scientists. It is clear to me that genetically manipulated (GM) crops represent a real and terrible danger to our health, the environment, to the way our society operates, now, and even more so in the future.

I am campaigning against GM crops because of my beliefs as follows:

- GM crops are not wanted in Britain - 77% of the public want GM crops to be banned (Mori poll, June 1998);
- GM crops are not necessary - there are better and safer solutions for feeding the world;
- GM crops are a threat to the ecological integrity of the environment;
- GM crops are a threat to food safety;
- GM crops are a threat to food security;
- the science on which GM is based is being prematurely applied and abused in its application for GM;
- all the risks of GM crops are currently being carried solely by the public because biotechnology companies refuse to accept liability if something goes wrong;

- an agriculture based on GM crops will increase monocultures and intensification of farming, both of which are detrimental to ecology;
- since profit is the primary motive of production, then the development of GM crops by corporations is dependent on patenting of genes and plants; this is a further step to disempowering local people, undermining and appropriating local farming knowledge and traditions;
- GM crops reduce self determination of farmers, especially in "developing countries", for example, India, Ethiopia, Eastern Europe;
- GM crops increase dependency on a few large corporations who are accountable only to their shareholders.

GM plants have been released into the environment in test field sites all over Britain without the consent of the public. There is evidence that biotechnology companies are failing to adhere to government regulations which are intended to prevent the spread of genetic pollution. It seems clear that the Health and Safety Executive is doubtful of ever being able to convict companies which break the regulations.

I believe that the release of GM plants into the environment in test field sites is illegal since genetic material can escape into plants belonging to other farmers through cross pollination or horizontal gene transfer. This means that the biotechnology companies responsible for these releases are causing criminal damage to the plants of other farmers as well as creating a public health risk.

The splitting of the atom heralded the dawning of the nuclear age; the energy unleashed has left in its wake disasters which have threatened all of life on Earth, and continues to cause havoc. At the same time, we have seen the devastation wreaked on the Earth's ecology and on human health by the use of chemical cocktails which have polluted the land and water. Now with the splitting of the gene, we are at the brink of the age of virtual nature; the sanctity of life is reduced to market controlled components to be engineered under the direction of corporations rather than governments, to work for profit rather than the greater well-being of humankind.

In 1962 Rachel Carson, herself a genetic biologist, blew the whistle on the use of chemical pesticides used for agriculture with her book *Silent Spring*. In this passage she could almost have been talking about genetic engineering:

"Along with the possibility of the extinction of mankind by nuclear war, the central problem of our age has therefore become the contamination of man's total environment with such substances of incredible potential for harm - substances that accumulate in the tissues of plants and animals and even penetrate the germ cells to shatter or alter the very material of heredity upon which the shape of the future depends. "Some would-be architects of our future look towards a time when it will be possible to alter the human germ plasm by design. But we may easily be doing so now by inadvertence, for many chemicals, like radiation, bring about gene mutations. It is ironic to think that man might determine his own future by something so seemingly trivial as the choice of an insect spray." *Silent Spring* was instrumental in the banning of the dangerous pesticide DDT, and has become a classic. It also marked the development of a new ecological consciousness which has firmly established the environment as a central issue of concern.

Countless disasters have surely been averted because so many ordinary people sounded the alarm so loudly that our governments could no longer continue to ignore their call. As the generation born into the nuclear / chemical age we are indebted to people like Rachel Carson. Now it is our turn.

In the last two years I have campaigned against GM crops and the patenting of life - genes, human body parts, animals and plants. I have come to realise that although campaigning is an essential part of democracy, there are limits to what can be achieved when our own nation's democratic process has broken down. When we are no longer being represented over an issue that is endangering our health and the environment right now and for future generations; when our legal system fails us, we have not only a right, but a responsibility to participate actively in democracy ourselves. I can do this by bearing witness to the dangers of genetically engineered crops in an effort to reach for and expose the truth, to sound a warning and to prevent harm. My witness follows a path well trodden by many who have witnessed before: the Chipko movement of India, who wrapped their

bodies around trees to protect their forests, Karen Silkwood who was murdered whilst attempting to expose nuclear contamination. Primarily I draw inspiration from those who have followed the Swords into Ploughshares tradition.

The Swords into Ploughshares tradition began in the US in 1980 by eight people who used hammers to disarm nuclear warheads. They were inspired by an Old Testament prophecy: "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4). Many Ploughshares people practice nonviolence as an act of witness - an expression of their spirituality and truth; not all activists are Christian, although plenty are; some follow spiritual practices such as Buddhism, Judaism and pantheism.

To date there have been more than 60 ploughshare actions, mostly in the USA. Perhaps the most well-known action was in 1996, the third to take place in Britain. This was the Seeds of Hope - East Timor Ploughshares in which four women used hammers to disarm a Hawk warplane which was to be exported to Indonesia. The four women were acquitted in a landmark trial by a jury who recognised that the women had good reason to take such drastic action - the warplanes were to be used in genocidal attacks against the people of East Timor.

I am moved by the Ploughshares people's commitment to nonviolence and true democracy; the humility in their readiness to invite judgement and to be continuously self-critical; and their courage to take action as a witness in a society which is largely sterile in spiritual terms.

I also want to challenge the sheep-like habit of doing as others do, not stepping out of line, otherwise known as mindless obedience. As long as individuals unthinkingly do as others do, or give their consent through their failure to act, our society will never grow out of making war and destroying the Earth. Our society is helpless only to the extent that people believe themselves to be powerless to act.

I intend to take part in an act of nonviolent civil responsibility as part of a small group of people who are launching the genetiX snowball campaign. In daylight on 4 July 1998 I will be pulling up just one GM plant to mark the beginning of the snowball - our action will hopefully be the first of many more acts of nonviolent civil responsibility. My witness is an active expression of nonviolence. This means that I intend to peacefully render the GM crops harmless in a controlled manner so that there is no risk of harming any other living being. Anything which damages the Earth or her inhabitants, or threatens future generations, is inherently violent and should not exist as "property". The safe removal of GM crops is a legitimate step towards preventing these crops from risking our health and destroying the natural ecology. I intend to publicly testify as to the dangers of these GM crops and am willing to take the consequences of my action. This act of witness is an expression of my love for the Earth and for humankind.

I have made a commitment to nonviolence, safety and openness. I will try to create an atmosphere of calm and will treat everyone I encounter with respect. I will take appropriate precautions to prevent the spread of genetic pollution by wearing protective clothing. The GM plants and contaminated clothing will be sealed in strong polythene bags clearly marked as a biohazard and I will be calling on the local Environment Agency, whose responsibility it is to dispose of biohazards, to remove the bags.

These methods are consistent with my vision of a society which is founded on democracy, social justice and peace.

Along with others in my group, I will be helping to plant an apple tree as a symbol of the tree of life, natural creation, abundance and diversity. This is a celebration of thousands of years of traditional knowledge gained by those who have worked the land to provide generations of people with good wholesome food. It is a call for safe farming methods which are accessible to all farmers, not just those who can afford the patent royalties; and safe crops for all people as a basic need which must - and can - be met. Britain has hundreds of different kinds of apples, each different in size, flavour, colour, texture, each adapted to its locality. Our enjoyment of this diversity over the centuries goes beyond the complex biochemistry that makes an apple. We enjoy apples which ripen through the summer to grace our harvest festival in autumn and to gladden our hearts with cider through the dark winter months. But the humble apple tree has already been subjected to genetic modification aiming to give us long-lasting designer apples with prescribed and uniform characteristics. We steal from the fruits of the

tree of life at our peril.

English Nature, co-ordinator of the responses of the statutory bodies charged by government with the protection of the wildlife of Britain, have called for a five year moratorium on commercial releases of GM crops in Britain until scientific research has been completed, and more evidence has been gathered to ascertain whether GM crops are a danger to the environment. So far the government has ignored its own advisory body. Therefore, as part of genetiX snowball, I call for the following:

A five year moratorium on the deliberate release of GM plants in Britain, except for government sponsored ecological health and safety tests (in enclosed systems); and the removal of all GM crops already existing.

genetiX snowball will be called off when a moratorium has been declared.

I hope that my witness will reach far enough to speak truth to power and deep enough to speak truth to hearts. But I can only carry truth as far and as deep as this one small action will reach. Therefore I invite people to help roll the snowball on further. It is only by passing on our seeds of hope, our hammers and garden forks, our shared fears and strengths, that our visions will ever be realised.

## Personal statement of Zoe Elford 4 July 1998

*"I am not sure we are in the driving seat...we cannot stop as the UK government, these crops that have already been approved in the EU, from being planted"* - Jeff Rooker UK Government Food Minister, April 1998

"There are moments and issues in history where Parliament is inadequate and it falls to the people themselves to act. With the case of genetic engineering and the granting of patents on life I believe we have reached one of those historic moments." - Alan Simpson MP for Nottingham.

The juggernaut of genetic engineering speeds ahead at an astounding rate, so fast that few even see it fly past. The situation under which genetic engineering is imposed on us is constructed to be invisible to the average eye but daily consumed and ingested without knowledge, without consent. The stuff pours in as imports and is planted all over Britain.

No one possesses the know-how to assess the effects of releasing genetically engineered organisms into an endlessly complex and intricate ecosystem. Not one of us can predict the toll this technology may have on human health. The risks are simply too great and we must follow the precautionary principle ourselves as governments have failed to do so. This journey we have been taken on - where will it take us?

The road is clear, the bollards of regulations, the pelican crossing of public debate, the speed limits of public distrust and scientific uncertainty all flattened by the hit and run of the supersonic genetic scramblers. Waved on through by the US administration and fuel injected by domestic and EU political will, the windows are washed to a high sheen by the PR machine.

But not all are seduced by the gloss. What if, like me, you catch a glimpse of the probable destination and decide you don't want to be taken on the trip?. If the British government can't do any traffic control then we must take it upon ourselves to act responsibly; this legitimate course of action has been taken in order to avert a disaster I see waiting to happen.

Today I act openly and accountably. Today I act as a brake. For this road is too treacherous with too many pot holes forming beneath us and the black ice of genetic pollution never far away. I won't stand by and watch for the inevitable crash and I won't sit in the car knowing the driver is over the limit. The back seat driver has piped up, scythe in hand.

Today with only non violence in my mind and in my heart I will take out of the ground 99 genetically

engineered plants. In ensuring their safe disposal I will be working towards ensuring a millennium free from genetically engineered food. This possibility is brought nearer and nearer as more and more citizens take action to protect their food supply, the environment and assert their right to determine what they put in their bodies.

Governments have been wheel clamped by the vested interests of multi national corporations. In the absence of governments acting appropriately in accordance with the wishes of the electorate and its own countryside organisational advisers it is the average folk who are left with the responsibility to take the wheel. We will drive to a place where the needs of the majority can be safeguarded and the integrity of the ecosystem left alone.

I invite others to join me in putting on the brakes of this run away experiment. We are able to move the central reservation closer into the fast lane - the grotesque juggernaut of genetic engineering can be crashed. I invite others to tread this road of non violent civil responsibility, to continue taking up the genetechnology road and to plant for a real future, to act for democracy, for diversity and to restore a land lush with fields free of genetic pollution and food free of genetic contamination. We are rapidly close to the end of nature, to losing the natural world to multinational corporations and governments complicit in their myopic, manic scheme. We can still win it back. After all, anything we love can be saved.

## A4.3 Press preparations

### Pre-action press release

genetiXsnowball -A campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility

One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS Tel: 0161 834 0295 Fax: 0161 8348187

Wednesday 1 July 1998

Immediate Release

### PRESS RELEASE

Middle England takes direct action against genetically engineered crops on Saturday July 4th 1998

photo-opportunity

On Saturday July 4th 1998, five women will launch the first round of 'genetiX snowball', a campaign of mass nonviolent 'civil responsibility', when they will openly pull up genetically engineered (GE) crops at an undisclosed 'test field site' in the home counties. Taking its inspiration from the peace movement's 'snowball' campaign of the 1980's, in which more than 2,000 people were arrested, each snowball participant will invite two others to join the next round of action, potentially increasing participation exponentially.

Although the location of the launch action remains undisclosed, it is in one of the home counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire or Oxfordshire. Farmers hosting test field sites in these counties have been contacted by letter to inform them of the campaign, reassure them, and invite them to join. The test field sites are rented by agrochemical companies. It is hoped the companies or farmers will engage in dialogue and voluntarily remove the crops. The police are also to be informed as to the peaceful nature of the action.

Each of the women will carry and leave at the site a personal statement explaining the reasons for her action. As an act of 'civil responsibility', as opposed to 'civil disobedience' the action expresses the women's conviction that the GE crops are liable to cause criminal damage to other crops, through cross pollination or gene transfer and therefore people have the obligation of pulling them up. The women are willing to risk arrest and justify their actions in a court of law. These actions will happen on the first and third Saturdays of the month and each person will remove a maximum of one hundred plants. The campaign puts the emphasis on involving many

people to ensure the genetiX snowball is genuinely participatory and democratic. The GE plants will be placed in clearly labelled and sealed bags for disposal by the authorities. Participants will wear protective clothing and take safety measures to ensure genetic pollution will not spread from the site.

GenetiX snowball is calling for a five year moratorium on the release of GE crops into the environment pending further research and public consultation. The government's own statutory bodies have been calling for a similar moratorium.

Rowan Tilly, one of the five women snowballers said,

"These GE crops are an assault on our food and the environment. In the face of all responsibility being waived by those in a position to wield it, the responsibility falls on us"

ENDS

Editors Notes

Contacts: Press liaison and onsite press liaison contact Andrew Wood on 0973 953 446 or page 07654 247 502

[1] Press will be met at the Thornhill Park and Ride, Oxford at 10.00 a.m. and be escorted to the test field site. The Park and Ride is clearly signed as you approach Oxford on the A40 about 6 1/2 miles from the M40/ A40 junction. At the Park and Ride look for the telephone box immediately next to the bus stop. Andrew Wood, press liaison for the first genetiX snowball action will be meeting press at this point with further details and escort them to the site. The photo-opportunity will be complete by 11.00 a.m. See map below for directions

[2] The five women undertaking the action are Rowan Tilly, Jo Hamilton, Melanie Jarman, Kathryn Tulip and Zoe Elford. They are available for interview prior to the action by arrangement.

[3] The test field sites vary in size but are generally 300 sq. metres and are rented by agrochemical companies such as Monsanto. There are 10 test field sites in the three home counties and over 300 in Britain.

[4] There has been no public consultation with the British people as to whether to allow genetically engineered crops to be grown in Britain. A recent MORI poll commissioned by the Observer showed 77% of those surveyed didn't want GE crops in this country. Monsanto, one of the largest GE agrochemical companies has recently started a £1 million advertising campaign promoting GE crops.

## Post-action press release

genetiXsnowball -A campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility  
One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS Tel: 0161 834 0295 Fax: 0161 8348187

Monday 6th July 1998

Immediate Release

## PRESS RELEASE

### First arrests in Britain for pulling up Genetically Engineered crops

Five women, who openly declared their intention to pull up genetically engineered plants at a test field site were arrested for criminal damage on Saturday 4th July 1998 after pulling up almost 200 GE plants at Model Farm, Watlington in Oxfordshire. Thames Valley Police later released the women nearby as the owners of the GE crops, Monsanto, decided not to press charges in line with their public relations policy of minimum

unfavourable press coverage.

Despite the waiting police presence, consisting of over two dozen officers, a helicopter, numerous police vans and land rovers, they did not initially stop the five women pulling up the crops.

A spokesperson for Monsanto whose GE crop was grown at the site was also waiting at the site to meet the press. Police confiscated some of the women's gardening tools and a number of banners.

The women had openly declared their intention to pull up the GE plants in letters to the farmer, the company and the police. Representatives from genetiX snowball had also met with the farmer, Mr Parker about two weeks ago. The women carried personal statements of their reasons for taking the action and a pledge committing them to nonviolence, accountability and respect for human life and the environment. Copies were left at the site.

The women wore protective clothing and took measures to ensure none of the GE material was spread from the site. The GE plants were sealed in bags marked with the biohazard symbol. A letter has been sent to the Environment Agency asking them to safely dispose of the material.

Saturday's action marked the launch of genetiX snowball - a campaign of nonviolent responsibility. Several groups around the country have taken up the invitation to host the second round of genetiX snowball. Further actions are expected on the third and first Saturdays of the month and each person will remove a maximum of one hundred plants. The campaign puts the emphasis on involving many people to be genuinely participatory and democratic. GenetiX snowball is calling for a five year moratorium on the release of GE crops into the environment pending further research and public consultation.

Kathryn Tulip the first of the women to be arrested said in her personal statement,

'I hope that my actions will encourage other ordinary people to join with us to take responsibility for stopping this technology from destroying our environment and endangering our food and our health'.

ENDS

Editors Notes

Contact details Andrew Wood (press liaison) 0973 953446 or page 07654 247502

[1]According to the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions and the Genetically Modified Organisms public register, the plants are genetically engineered oil seed rape developed to be tolerant to the total herbicide glyphosphate.

[2]Monsanto were formerly advised by Public Relations agency Burson Marstella to 'stay off the killing fields' and adopt measures to reduce the opportunity for unfavourable press. Not pressing charges potentially therefore reduces the stories news value.

[3]July 4th is American Independence Day. Many biotechnology companies, like Monsanto for example are huge US transnational corporations. Saturday's launch celebrated Independence Day.

[4]The women had openly declared their intention to pull up the crops. See release from genetiX Snowball 'Middle England to take direct action by pulling up Genetically Engineered crops' dated 24 June 1998 and 1 July 1998. Also see Press Association wires of similar period.

[5]The genetiX snowball campaign follows in the tradition of the peace movements Snowball campaign of the late 1980's. Over three thousand people participate, there were two thousand arrests and one thousand people went to prison.

[6]The five women arrested were Rowan Tilly (40, furniture- maker), Kathryn Tulip (39, solicitor and former



toxicologist), Zoe Elford (27, genetics campaigner), Melanie Jarman (27, freelance journalist) and Jo Hamilton (25, music teacher). They are available for interview - please call Andrew Wood, press liaison on 0973 953 446 or page 07654 247 502

[7] The Thames Valley Press Info line has a report on what they describe as a "peaceful action". Call 01426 932 012

Picture Editor notes

Photographs available from Nick Cobbing, respected freelance photographer whose work has been published in the Guardian, Observer and Time Out. Call 0973 642 103

Photographs also available from Imagenet on 0541 522333 or David Hoffman on 0181 981 5041.

Video footage of entire action, including the women actually digging, on DVC format available from Zoe Broughton, credited film maker whose work has been broadcast nationally. Call 0961 181 576

## **Press Pack (outline)**

genetiX snowball

A campaign of nonviolent civil responsibility

One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS Tel: 0161 834 0295 Fax: 0161 834 8187

genetiX snowball launch 4th July 1998

## **Press briefing and resources**

### **Contents**

Introduction and outline of genetiX snowball, 2 pages. Consisting of:

- Today's programme for genetiX snowball launch
- Directions to the site
- What to expect when you arrive
- What the snowball participants will be doing
- Contacts
- Map showing the location of the genetiX snowball launch, 1 page

### **Appendix 1 - Snowball documents**

- Press release of Wednesday 1st July 1998, 2 pages
- Profile of the participants in the launch of genetiX snowball, 1 page
- Personnel Statements of snowball participants, 7 pages
- Pledge of nonviolence, 1 page
- Letters sent to farmer, GE companies and the police, 4 pages

### **Appendix 2 - GE primers and resources**

- GE briefing (Greenpeace), 8 pages

- What is wrong with Nature? Article by Dr Ricarda Steinbrecher, (Resurgence 6/98), 4 pages
- Ecofacts (Business and environment programme), 2 pages
- Is Genetic Engineering under control? (Quotes about GE), 1 page
- Genetically Engineered oilseed rape briefing (Friends of the Earth), 5 pages

## **Todays Programme**

Meet at rendezvous point

10.05 Drive to site

10.30 Set up equipment at site

10.45 Photo-opportunity

11.00 Snowball participants available for interview

11.25 Participants bag up protective clothing and clean gardening tools

11.35 Planting of symbolic apple tree, close to GE site

11.45 Finish

These timings are estimates and may vary due circumstances

## **Directions to the test field site**

The site is about a twenty five minute drive from the meeting point (see map). Take the A40 and join the M40 going south. Leave Junction 6 of the M40 . Turn right and proceed toward Shirburn and Watlington. After leaving Shirburn look for the next turning on the right signed Pyrton. It is at a cross roads, the left turn is a dead-end. Drive through the village of Pyrton. When you have left the village and after about  $\frac{1}{2}$  of a mile you will see a large deep red brick house on the right hand side. It has a well, and a lawn with a single large mature tree. Slow down and look for the next house on the right; it is partly obscured by hedgerow and trees. Immediately next to the house is a gravel dirt road. Follow this road, which is well formed although not metalled. There are no gates and the land is open and accessible. You will pass another house on your right. Drive past this and follow the track. Park as indicated on the map and walk to the test field site. This is only a short distance and you will see snowball participants in the distance.

The farmer, like all farmers in England and Wales hosting test field sites has been told of genetiX snowball. One of the support team for the launch will be liaising with the farmer when the snowball participants enter the farmers land. Therefore if you meet the farmer it will not be for the first time. It is not possible to access the test field site by public highways alone. You will therefore have to cross private land and technically this is trespass. Trespass is a civil offence but it is highly unlikely any action will be taken.

## **What to expect when you arrive?**

The test field site measures in total about 15 metres by 20 metres. The site is subdivided into plots, each one measuring about two by six metres. These are arranged as a grid, seven plots wide by three plots deep. The test field site is surrounded by a so called barrier crop. The barrier crop is barley, which is still green. There is a cleared area surrounding the test field site which allows the action to be viewed from all sides. The test field site is for Monsanto's herbicide tolerant GE oil seed rape. The oil seed rape is about 18 inches (45 cm) high with clearly developed seed heads which will soon be flowering. The plot where the GE plants are grown has been cordoned off. Please do not cross this cordon. This is partly to prevent the spread of the genetically modified material and partly to allow the snowball participants to complete the task of removing the GE plants without interruption.

The snowball participants will be wearing disposable white suits; protective foot covering; gloves and a head

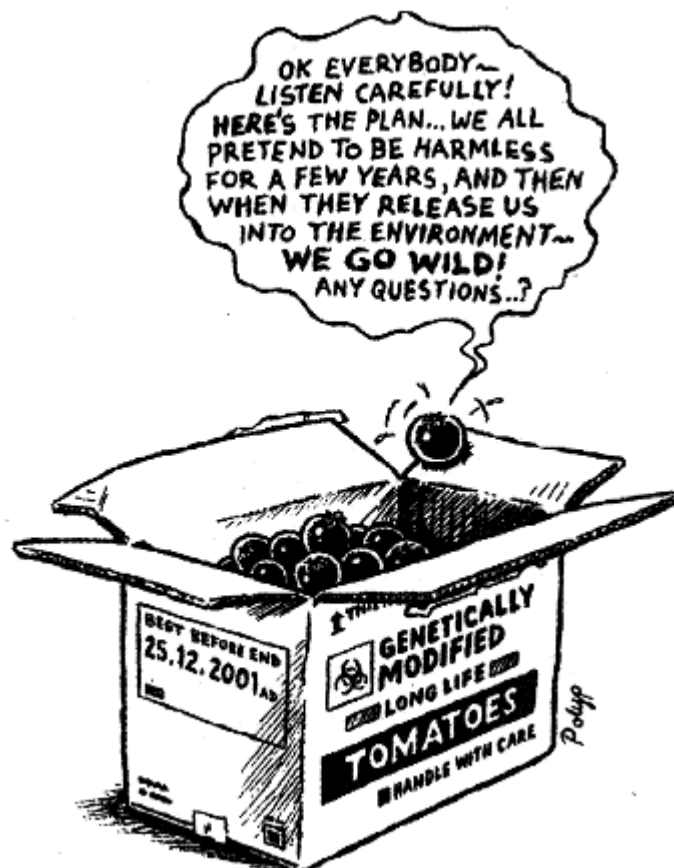
scarf. The participants will be carrying personal statements, which they will leave at the site (see appendix 1, they also carry with them a pledge of non violence. The participants will not be wearing masks; partly because it is unnecessary as the GE plants are not flowering and partly since they want to be clearly identified. There is a large genetiX snowball banner as a backdrop to the test field site.

### What will the snowball participants be doing?

The GE plants will be removed using hand tools like those used for gardening or simply by pulling them up. When you arrive at the site some of the GE crops may have been pulled up and bagged, however the participants will wait for the press to arrive before they complete pulling up the GE plants hence you will have shoots of the plant pulling. The GE plants will be disposed of once the action is complete by putting them in sealed biohazard bags. The local environmental health officer will be notified of the material and asked to dispose of it. The waste is being left on site to minimise the risk of the genetically engineered organisms spreading into surrounding area. The participants will be working as a team and are expected to complete the plant removal together. They will then come to the edge of the cordon and are available for interview. Please keep your questions for this time. Your patience in this matter is greatly appreciated.

### Contacts

- Press liaison on site - Andrew Wood, mobile 0973 953 446, page 07654 247 502
- genetiX snowball office - 0161 834 0295 (unstaffed on Saturday 4th July, a spokesperson available on 0161 224 4846)
- Expert critical scientific opinion - Dr Ricarda Steinbrecher, genetic scientist: 01273 231 153
- Stills pictures - Nick Cobbing 0973 642 103
- Film and video footage - Zoe Broughton 0961 181 576



## A5. Rolling the snowball on....

### *In this section...*

- Further Reading on group process
- Making decisions: A guide to consensus decision making
- Choosing your GM release site
  - What is a deliberate release
    - Small scale release sites for scientific research
    - Agronomic testing
    - NIAB testing and commercial certification
  - How to locate a release site
    - The GMO Public Register
    - Notification in the local press
    - Consent Schedules
    - Contacting the biotechnology company
    - Check out a Website
- Visit the farmer/release site
  - Crop Identification
    - Oil seed rape
    - Sugar beet
    - Maize/Corn
    - Potato
- Practicing nonviolence
- Reaching your community: Sample poster & leaflet
- Roles: Briefing for Action/Legal Observers
  - Why observe?
  - How to observe
  - The Law and action/legal observers
- Preparing your equipment: Check- list
- An activist guide to exploiting the Media

### A5.2 Further Reading on Group Process

Many of the books referred to in this appendix are available from or can be ordered from the Quaker Bookshop, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

- Coover, Virginia; Esser, Charles; Deacon, Ellen; Moore, Christopher. **A Resource Manual For a Living Revolution.** New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, USA, 1981.
- Jeffs, Martin. **Manual For Action: Techniques to enable groups engaged in action for change to increase their effectiveness.** Action Resources Unit, 1982
- Merritt, Sandy (Ed). **Speaking Our Peace: Exploring nonviolence and conflict resolution.** Quaker Peace and Service, 1987.
- Shields, Katrina. **In the Tiger's Mouth: an empowerment guide for action.** Millennium Books, Australia, 1991.
- Quaker Peace and Service. **Turning the Tide-a Quaker programme on nonviolent social change.** Quaker Peace and Service, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. Tel: 0171 387 3601. Briefing sheets and trainings on nonviolence.

## A5.3 Making decisions

### Is everybody happy?

*In which Peace News explores some of the pros, cons and practicalities of consensus decision-making*

Extract: Pages 12-15, Peace News, June 1988

### **Consensus: a brief introduction**

*by Steve Whiting*

There are many ways for communities to make decisions and none of them is perfect. Many of us have been brought up in a culture which believes that western-style democracy is supreme, that one-person-one-vote is the only empowerment anybody needs. Yet, in the very nations which shout loudest about the virtues of democracy, there seems to be widespread disillusionment about its ability to change anything in a meaningful way. Democracy seems to be about electing an executive to take all the decisions and then re-appointing it every so often. For the majority of us, this delegation of our own power may not feel very different from someone flipping a coin.

Usually - on both macro and micro levels - in a democratic vote a significant minority is deeply unhappy with the outcome. Whilst they may accept the decision - because they accept the rules of the game - they may still actively resist it or undermine it, and work towards the next voting opportunity.

Compromise is another method of reaching a decision, usually through negotiation. Two or more sides announce their position and move towards each other with measured concessionary and mutual steps. However, this can often lead to dissatisfaction on all sides, with nobody getting what they really wanted.

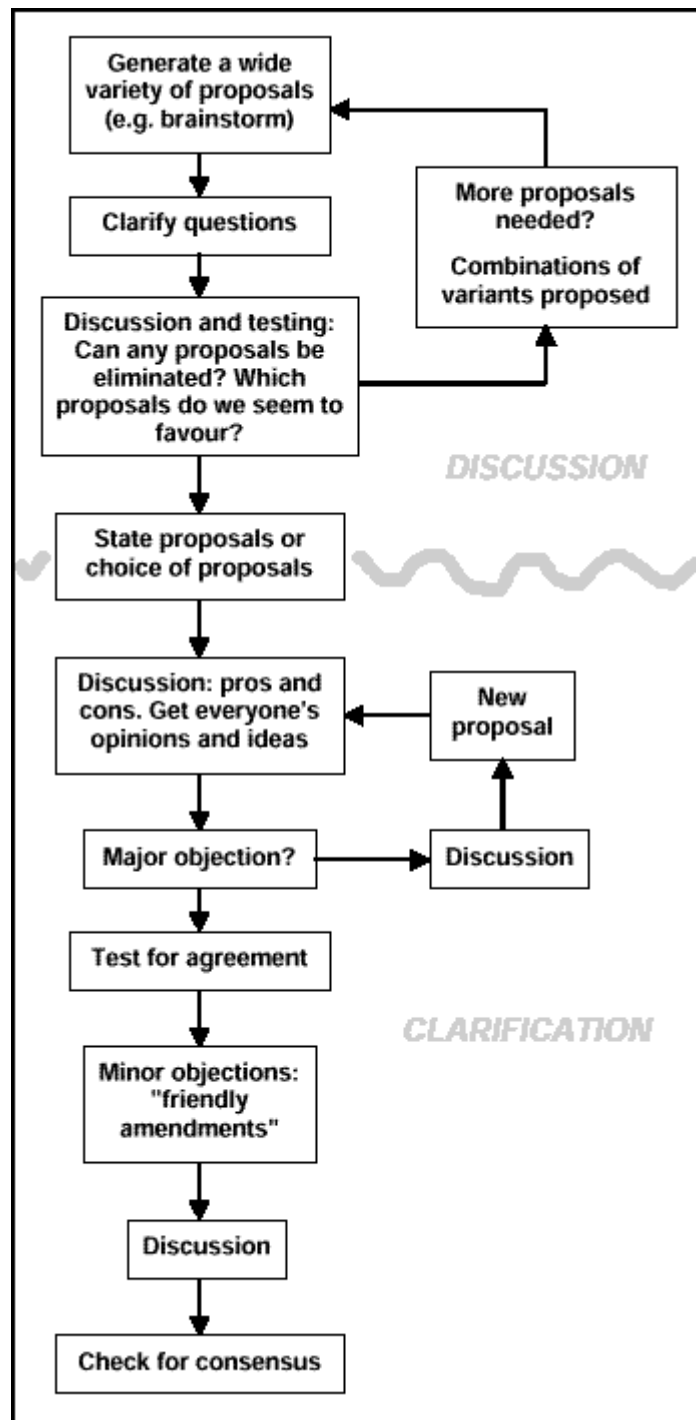
Consensus, on the other hand, is a more creative way of reaching a decision. It is a process where no decision can be reached unless all present are willing to accept it. Consensus, in theory, is the product of everybody's best thinking and places priority on the cohesion and stability of the group rather than arriving at quick answer - it can be slow and arduous, acknowledging that a problem for one member of the group is a problem for the whole group. However, if minorities are listened to, not only is the end decision often better than that which a majority would have swiftly imposed, the decision is more likely to receive widespread support upon implementation.

The number one requirement for consensus is the commitment of every single member of the group to make it work. Strong and impartial facilitation to keep the process on track and focused is also very important.

### **Basic Procedure**

There are lots of consensus models in lots of hand books (see flowchart for one). A basic procedure looks like this:

1. The problem, or decision needing to be made, is defined and named. It helps to do this in a way that separates the problems/questions from personalities.
2. Brainstorm possible solutions. Write them all down, even the crazy ones. Keep the energy up for quick, top-of-the-head suggestions.
3. Create space for questions for clarification on the situation.
4. Discuss the options written down. Modify some, eliminate others, and develop a short-list. Which are the favourites!
5. State the proposals or choice of proposals so that everybody is clear.
6. Discuss the pros and cons of each proposal - make sure everybody has a chance to contribute.
7. If there is a major objection, turn to step 6 (this is the time-consuming bit). Sometimes you may need to return to step 4.
8. If there are no major objections, state the decision and test for agreement.
9. Acknowledge minor objections and incorporate friendly amendments.
10. Discuss.
11. Check for consensus.



## Means and ends

For direct action groups, decision-making by consensus is not only a method of reaching decisions, but also a way of building community, trust, a sense of security and mutual support - important in times of stress and emergency. It does require commitment, patience, and a willingness to put the group first. It is not suitable for quick decision-making, but can help lay the ground on which 'emergency decisions' can be made and owned by the group. It is a method which becomes easier and quicker with practice and continued commitment.

The peace movement has traditionally adopted this method, mainly, I like to think, because it represents a deliberate attempt to match its methods with its goals. If we want a peaceful world where everyone lives in relative equality and justice, we have to practise that way of living in the here and now.

Steve Whiting is co-ordinator of "Turning the Tide", a nonviolence training project run by Quaker Peace and Service: Turning the Tide, Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ. England (tel +44 171 663 1064; email [steve@quaker.org.uk](mailto:steve@quaker.org.uk)). Flowchart: From workshops based on the work of the Philadelphia Life Center and Resource Manual for Living Revolution (Coover, Deacon and Moore)

### **The "block" as cornerstone**

*I believe that the right of an individual to "block" a decision endorsed by the rest of the group is the cornerstone of the consensus decision-making process... The permission of every member, rather than just the loudest, most articulate, or best known persons, is needed for a decision to be made. Therefore it becomes the group's concern to listen and respond to all participants and to take their thinking into account. Not only does this result in a more egalitarian group, but it also produces a more satisfied group in which every member has a chance to feel included and important, in which responsibility is likely to be more evenly distributed, and in which members are more sensitive to each other and feel more involved with each other.*

Chel, Building United Judgement: a handbook for consensus decision-making (The Center for Conflict Resolution, 1981).

## **Problems with Consensus**

*by Stephen Hancock*

I first came across explicit, self-conscious consensus decision-making techniques at the 1985 International Nonviolent March for Demilitarisation peace camp in Denmark: flowcharts, fishbowls, go-rounds, brainstorming, vetoes, et al. And even though we spent interminable hours discussing minor issues, by the end of the first week I was a consensus convert. A hundred of us then went off to paint a NATO base and spent three days in military custody - happily showing off our radical democratic skills with a fluency and satisfaction I have not experienced since. I can count on two elbows the number of times I have voted since this anarchic epiphany.

But there is a great danger that consensus gets portrayed as the be all and end all of democratic evolution, and so escapes necessary criticism and development. It is actually a very problematic system. After all, consensus represents a significant technical, psychological and cultural shift from many other forms of decision making.

### **Under use, over use**

However many pieces of paper and role-plays you've consumed, there are still some basic, and recurrent, problems with the use of the veto. It can be under-used, over-used and misused.

Actively participating in groups can be hard enough, and using a veto more so, particularly for people who feel unconfident in groups. It can involve standing up to - perceived or actual - group pressure and impatience. Many people are tempted to keep quiet (at least in a vote they get to raise their hand) and important conflicts are sometimes avoided. The wealth of individual and minority opinion, so often applauded by proponents of consensus, is often sat upon.

In the hands of those used to more than their fair share of power or attention, the veto can be a lethal

tool. It can magnify their voices, and be used to guard against changes that might affect their power-base and influence - one or two people could conceivably block progress deemed important by everyone else for a considerable period of time.

The self-censoring and conservatism which often accompany consensus can lead to a bland, undynamic mono-culture, devoid of conflict and breadth and difference. People won't put forward ideas they know so-and-so will object to, and change can come about so slowly that important opportunities and people are lost. Rather than benefiting from everyone's excellence, a group can sink into a lowest commonly acceptable denominator.

## **Poison and veneer**

Probably one of the worst aspects of consensus is when the right procedures are followed, but the inter-personal atmosphere is poisoned. Sometimes the atmosphere is already poisoned, other times the manner in which people use the procedures - provocatively, stubbornly, arrogantly, manipulatively - can provide the poison. Either personal antagonisms sabotage the process, or the end result is an ashen one - with resentments left to fester, whilst the veneer is one of acceptable democratic practice.

## **Solutions**

For consensus to work well, individuals and groups have to look at their structures, tools, skills, the way in which they work, and beyond - the technicalities of even the clearest of consensus flowcharts will not suffice.

## **Structures**

Groups need to make decision-making processes fit their needs, rather than the other way round. People shouldn't be afraid of making modifications - some groups even allow the possibility, after several consensus attempts, of falling back on an overwhelming majority vote. A particularly useful structural development is the possibility of vetoing a veto - if all the non-vetoing parties agree to block a veto, it might be the best way to bring a conflict out into the open and move the group along. Certainly, such a technique guards against politically-at-odds or overly stubborn people dragging the group down.

The delegation of proposal-creation can save a lot of time - get a dedicated group, or even pair, to go away and synthesise the discussions and brainstorm of the whole group. Consensus need not involve everyone at every stage of the process. Deal with several issues in parallel, and then come together with a platter of proposals - known as a smorgasbord in the Swedish ploughshares movement - and the meeting can be speeded up threefold or more.

## **Tools and skills**

"Tools" that groups use aren't just confined to brainstorm and go-rounds and paired listening. Religious or spiritually-minded groups might like to bring in religious practices - be it silence (as with the Quakers) or figures representing the elements and non-human world (as with some deep ecologists and their "Council of All Beings").

Most groups don't think of conflict resolution models and tools until some big conflict comes up - by which time, if it's not too late, it's often unnecessarily messy. An "anti-armoury" of familiar - conflict resolution practices is vital for long-term groups - and such skills are remarkably appropriate to so many other areas of our lives.



Skills need to be constantly developed and shared - and new people especially need to be offered supportive spaces in which they can practise facilitation, or conflict resolution. More skilled members need to be prepared to "disarm" themselves if they catch themselves hogging the show or feeling threatened by the increasing proficiency of others.

## **Awareness and process**

Consensus requires a significant degree of familiarity, practice, commitment, self-awareness and self-discipline. People have to be familiar with the models and tools they are using, be attentive and expressive, and often must test their criteria and motives before contributing - for a simple objection can take up a great deal of a group's time. The atmosphere in a group, the way in which people relate and communicate - these things need as much attention as technical skills.

Whilst there are many cultures and organisations which practise forms of consensus, the ones most prominent in the peace movements, at least, tend to be the detailed - sometimes rigid - North American ones (see piece below by Starhawk about her experiences among Greenham Common women). Activists need to be sensitive to process-imperialism, and create decision-making structures from a variety of sources - international and local.

The conservative and mono-cultural tendencies of consensus need to be counteracted by a healthy plethora of extra-meeting pursuits - by the creation of culture: music, dance, song, texts, celebrations, spaces in which to befriend and enjoy. A more holistic approach to movement or group building can often have the welcome spin-off of good, efficient, enjoyable meetings.

### **Alternatives to the veto/block**

Vetoing/blocking a proposal that has enjoyed a lot of discussion and synthesis is a serious act. It should be done thoughtfully, and on the basis of principled argument - about ethics, facts, likely consequences, relevant strong emotions - rather than on the basis of minor preferences or egotistical impulses. When the decision-making process has looped a couple of times, taking different opinions into account, creating modifications, and still you disagree with what's on offer, you might consider other forms of objection which don't hold up the group's progress:

- Non-support: "I don't see the need for this, but I'll go along with it."
- Reservations (recorded in the minutes if so desired): "I think this may be a mistake but I can live with it."
- Standing aside: "I personally can't do this, but I won't stop others from doing it."
- Withdrawing from the group

## **Culture shock at Greenham Common**

*by Starhawk*

In May of 1985, I participated in a walk with women from the Greenham Common Peace Camp in England. We walked from Silbury Hill, one of the ancient power places of the British Isles, across

Salisbury Plain to Stonehenge... [Salisbury Plain] is currently used as an artillery field and military base; through our walk, we symbolically reclaimed it.

For me, participating in decision-making with the Greenham Common women brought culture shock. In contrast to our West Coast [US] style of consensus, involving facilitators, agendas, plans, and formal processes, their meetings seemed to have no structure at all. No one facilitated, no agendas were set; everyone spoke when-ever she wanted to and said what she thought. Where we valued plans and scenarios, they valued spontaneity, trusting in the energy of the group and the moment. Instead of long discussions about the pros and cons of any given plan, those women who wanted to do it simply went ahead, and those who didn't, did not participate.

I found a delicious sense of freedom and an electricity in discussions unhampered by formalities. The consensus process I had known and practised seemed, in retrospect, overly controlled and controlling. Its rules and procedures seemed to impose the Censor under a new form.

At the same time, the Greenham-style process also had drawbacks. The group's preference for action rather than talk produces an inherent bias toward more extreme and militant actions. With no facilitation, louder and more vocal women tend to dominate discussion. Women who have fears, concerns, or alternate plans often felt unheard.

Each group needs to develop a decision-making process that fits its unique circumstances. The balance between planning and spontaneity, between formal processes and informal free-for-alls, is always alive, dynamic and changing. No one way will work for every group.

*From Truth or Dare.*

#### **The "block" as power enhancer**

[A] problem with IRB [the individual's right to block] is that assertive individuals and powerful interest groups are the ones most likely to use blocking. One of the strongest arguments in favour of IRB is that individuals who, under conditions of majority rule, would not be listened to, are listened to in consensus because they have the power to block any group decision. In my experience working with consensus, I have not seen a single occurrence in which a non-assertive, timid individual has had the gall to block an otherwise consensual decision of the group. In all instances, the individuals who have used blocking either had strong personalities, had powerful positions within the group, or represented powerful interests outside the group. Instead of serving to equalise power among individuals within a group, IRB gives more power to powerful individuals.

Elaine, Building United Judgement: a handbook for consensus decision-making (The Center for Conflict Resolution, 1981).

## **When not to use consensus**

*by Starhawk*

### **When there is no group in mind**

A group thinking process cannot work effectively unless the group is cohesive enough to generate shared attitudes and perceptions. When deep divisions exist within a group's bonding over their individual desires, consensus becomes and exercise in frustration.

**When there are no good choices**

Consensus process can help a group find the best possible solution to a problem, but it is not an effective way to make an either-or choice between evils, for members will never be able to agree which is worse. If the group has to choose between being shot and hung, flip a coin.

When a group gets bogged down trying to make a decision, stop for a moment and consider: Are we blocked because we are given an intolerable situation? Are we being given the illusion, but not the reality, of choice? Might our most empowering act be to refuse to participate in this farce?

**When they can see the whites of your eyes**

In emergencies, in situations where urgent and immediate action is necessary, appointing a temporary leader may be the wisest course of action.

**When the issue is trivial**

I have known groups to devote half an hour to trying to decide by consensus whether to spend forty minutes or a full hour at lunch. Remember consensus is a thinking process - where there is nothing to think about, flip a coin.

**When the group has insufficient information**

When you're lost in the hills, and no one knows the way home, you cannot figure out how to get there by consensus. Send out scouts. Ask: Do we have the information we need to solve this problem? Can we get it?

This and the extract above are reprinted from Starhawk's book 'Truth or Dare'. (c) Miriam Simos, published by Harper and Row, San Francisco.

## **A5.5 Choosing your GM release site**

### **A5.5.1 What is a release site**

A release site, also known as a test site, is a plot of land where a GM crop has been sown for experimental purposes and/or seed multiplication. This sowing is treated as a deliberate release of a genetically modified organism (GMO) to the environment. According to the public GMO register there are at present around 300 release sites in the UK; however, many of these sites seem to be no longer in operation. The release sites range from small scale plots for scientific research (50 metres squared), through medium size (500 to 10,000 metres squared) releases designed to test the agronomic properties of the GM crop, to large areas (the largest one is 17.5 acres) designed to increase the amount of seed in preparation for commercial release of GM crops.

In a parliamentary reply to the MP for Totnes, Ms Angela Eagle on behalf of the Minister for the Environment stated that: "Currently there are 64 experimental trials of GM crops in progress covering a total of approximately 841 acres [N.B. each trial takes place at a number of sites, hence the figure of 300 test sites above] .... The majority of the experimental trials are for oilseed rape (27), sugar beet (16), and potatoes (14), although GM wheat (3), maize (2) and chicory (1) are also grown."

#### A5.5.1.1 Small scale release sites for scientific research

These are normally the most tightly controlled of the sites and often look like they are some sort of experiment. There may be several different GM plants being compared, with a view to selecting one for further research. The plants are usually set out in a regular way such as a grid of square plots or rectangular plots separated by narrow paths. Some of the plots will be the GM plants, others will be 'controls' (plots of normal plants grown as standard comparisons). In some cases (mainly oilseed rape) a barrier crop will be planted around the GM crop. This barrier may consist of a conventional variety of the GM crop or a totally different crop and is supposed to contain escaping pollen to prevent the spread of genetic material.

#### A5.5.1.2 Agronomic testing

This is the next stage in the development of GM crops. In these tests GM crops have been selected from various trials and are deemed to be worthy of more investment. The GM crop is grown over a larger area to further test the stability and viability of the GM crop. These tests are almost exclusively to investigate agronomic traits and to increase seed bulk for further planting if the GM crop performs as expected.

#### A5.5.1.3 NIAB testing and commercial certification

Before seed from GM crops can be released commercially it must be tested under the supervision of the National Institute of Agriculture and Botany (NIAB). If approved by the NIAB the GM crop will be placed on the National Seed List and it then becomes available for commercial use. Currently nine GM crops are undergoing NIAB testing. These release sites are important because they are the last stage of testing before a GM crop can be released commercially. If the tests are not satisfactorily performed commercial release will be delayed. They are also important because they are very large scale sites, (up to 15,000m<sup>2</sup> each), and thus stand the greatest chance of impacting on the environment.

On 21 July the Court of Appeal ruled that the Government had acted unlawfully in dispensing with the statutory requirements for entry of new seed types onto the national seed list. The Government will now have to reassess the whole seed list process delaying the introduction of commercial GM crops by up to two years.

### **A5.5.2 How to locate a release site**

The easiest way to find out the location of a GM crop test site is to ask friends and neighbours if they know of any GM crops being grown in your locality. Most of us however will not be living close enough to a release site to find out about it in this way, and will initially need to consult the GMO Public Register (see below).

#### A5.5.2.1 The GMO Public Register

The government is required by law to provide to the public details of all "deliberate" releases of

GMOs (mostly plants but also bacteria) to the environment. The government is encouraged to give grid references if the "open Government" and access to the environment information policies are mentioned. This information is contained in the GMO Public Register. You can get a copy of the register free of charge from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) Biotechnology Unit or you can view a copy of the register at one of the regional DETR offices (see below for addresses and for sample page from register).

The GMO Register is a shameful chaos of inaccuracies. This makes it very difficult for people to get clear and accurate information on sites and you should take all reasonable measures to confirm the sites.

For example, on the second genetiX snowball action, on Manor Farm near Banbury, we discovered that the release site was not GM oilseed rape as the GMO register had stated. Three years previously the farmer had unknowingly planted a GM oil seed rape crop; as soon as he realised he broke his contract. He told us that he does not believe in interfering with nature and will not allow any further GM releases on his land. We apologised for disturbing him and explained that the GMO Register lists his land as having a GM release site.

The register contains the details of each application for the deliberate release of GMOs as follows:

- Reference Number:-** this is the unique number assigned to each application, e.g. 94/R14/1. The number is made up of three parts: the first part is the year the application was granted, in this case 1994; the second is a reference number for the particular applicant, in this case R14 is the Scottish Agricultural College; the third part is the application number for that applicant, in this case it is the college's first application.
- Receipt date :-** the date the application was received by the DETR Biotechnology Unit.
- Applicant :-** the applicant's name and address
- Organism :-** the crop type and what genetic modification has been made to it
- Purpose :-** the reason for the field trial, most trials are to test for agronomic performance, very few assess ecological impact.
- Release dates :-** the dates between which the GMO can be released into the environment i.e. the dates between which the GM crop can be grown.
- Release site(s) :-** the location of the actual release. Sometimes there will be a list of sites here, and sometimes the years it will be released as well. Sometimes there is an Ordnance Survey grid reference number, but this may be for the farm, rather than the actual release site. Often there is a rather unhelpful sentence saying something like, "further details of the sites scheduled for 1998-9 will be made available at a later date," or, "further sites will be notified when they are confirmed."
- Release area(s) :-** a rough guide to the size of the site, in m2, hectares or acres.
- Consent date :-** the date on which the Secretary of State gave permission for the release.
- Conditions :-** these are things that the applicant must do in order to comply with the terms of the consent. This generally includes 'notification/advertisement of details of locations of all release sites and reporting.' This means that the applicants are legally obliged to publish a notice giving information on the whereabouts of each new sowing of GM crops in the local paper of the affected area (see

below). The applicants are also required to inform the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE) if anything unexpected happens to their crop. The conditions almost always end with, 'see consent schedule' (see below).

Many of the entries in the register are already several years old and do not contain up to date information on the whereabouts of the current release sites. Many entries in the register state 'further sites will be notified when they are confirmed'. The sites may well be confirmed at some later date but that does not include updating the GMO register. This makes it difficult to tell whether a site still exists without going to look at it, and even this might not tell you very much. The register provides a list of sites that have been used in the past, these may well be used again, indeed some of the trials may be fixed in one location for their duration.

*Last entries added 25/3/98*

**GMO PUBLIC REGISTER - INDEX**  
**LIST OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO RELEASE**  
**GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS TO THE ENVIRONMENT**  
**(SINCE 1 FEBRUARY 1993)**

Reference: 97/R22/9  
Receipt Date: 3 March 1997  
Applicant: Monsanto plc  
Crop Protection  
PO Box 53, Lane End Road  
High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP12 4HL  
Organism: Spring oilseed rape modified with Roundup Ready genes (glyphosate tolerance)  
Purpose: The proposed experimental programme is based on progeny of spring oilseed rape plants containing the Roundup Ready genes (tolerance to glyphosate). The general purpose of this experimental programme is to assess the performance of Roundup Biactive applications to control weeds in a spring oilseed rape crop and generate the necessary data for the registration of this Roundup Biactive use. There will also be small scale plots in order for the technology to be demonstrated to selected groups.  
Release Dates: From 1 March 1997 to 30 September 2001  
Release Sites:

Throws Farm	Manor Farm	Worsley
Stebbing	Wilton	Brocklesby
Great Dunmow	Malborough	N. Lincs
Essex	Wilts SN8 3SP	TA 103076
PL 578263	SU 263613	
Herbicide Registration trials	Firtree Farm	Lodge Farm
Ibstick Grange Farm	Fillongley	Kings Newton
Pretoria Road	Nr. Coventry	Derbyshire
Ibstock	Warwickshire	SK 397264
Leicestershire	SP 285875	
SK418098		
Tib Hall Farm		
Kingsbury		
Nr. Tamworth		
Staffordshire		
SP 228933		

  
Release Areas: Not exceeding 0.5 Ha  
Consent Date: 7 April 1997  
Conditions: Yes: notification/advertisement of details of locations of all release sites and reporting (see consent schedule)

You can get details of the sites closest to you direct from the genetiX snowball office. Otherwise you can order a copy of the GMO Public Register from:-

- The Biotechnology Unit, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6OE. Tel: 0171 890 5275/5277 Fax: 0171 890 5259.

Or view the GMO public register at the following locations:-

- ANGLIAN REGION:-Cambridgeshire, Essex, Lincolnshire, Bedfordshire, Bucks, Northamptonshire, South Humberside, Suffolk The Environment Agency, Anglian Region ,Public Register Section, Kingfisher, Goldhay Way, Orton Goldhay, Peterborough, PE2 5ZR
- MIDLANDS REGION:-Derbyshire, Hereford and Worcestershire, Leicestershire, Notts, Shropshire, Staffs, Warwickshire, West Midlands. The Environment Agency, Midland Region, Public Register Section, Olton Court, 10 Warwick Road, Olton, Solihull, Midlands, B92 7HX
- NORTH EAST REGION:-Cleveland, Durham, Humberside, North Yorks, Northumbria, South Yorks Tyne & Wear, West Yorks. The Environment Agency, North East Region, Public Register Section, 1st Floor, Stockdale House, Headingley Business Park, 8 Victoria Road, Leeds LS6 1PF
- NORTHERN IRELAND the Department of the Environment(NI), Environment Service, Calvert House, 23 Castle Place, Belfast BT1 1FY
- NORTH WEST REGION:-Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside The Environment Agency, North West Region, Public Register Section, PO Box 12, Richard Fairclough House, Knutsford Road, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 1HG.
- SCOTLAND The Scottish Office, Agriculture Environment and Fisheries Department, Room 345, Pentland House, Robbs Loan, Edinburgh, EH14 1TW
- SOUTHERN REGION:-East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Surrey, West Sussex. The Environment Agency, Southern Region, Public Register Section, Guildbourne House, Chatsworth Road, Worthing. BN111LD.
- SOUTH WEST REGION:-Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Scilly Isles, Somerset, Wiltshire. The Environment Agency, South West Region, Public Registers Section, Rivers House, East Quay, Bridgewater, Somerset,TA64YS
- THAMES REGION:-Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Bucks, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Oxfordshire. The Environment Agency, Thames Region, Public Registers Section, Millennium House, Unit 2, Fleetwood Park, Barley Way, Fleet, Hampshire. GU13 8UT.
- WALES The Environment Agency, Wales Region, Public Register Section, Abacus House, St Mellons Business Park, St Mellons, Cardiff. CF3 0LT.

The Land Registry To obtain a copy of the land register and file plan telephone the land registry on 0541 541 531 for an application form (form 109). Fee £8.

There are several other ways that might help in finding your local site:

#### A5.5.2.2 Notification in the local press

##### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Monsanto UK HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that they have been granted a consent to release genetically modified organisms under section 111 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 by the Secretary of State. The consent is for a programme of releases and is made under Commission Decision 94/730/EC establishing a simplified procedure for the release into the environment of genetically modified crop plants. Consent Application Reference, 96/R22/6.

Whereas cultivated oilseed rape is normally sensitive to the broad spectrum herbicide Roundup Biactive®, rape containing Roundup Ready™ genes would be protected from Roundup Biactive® sprays, unlike competing weeds which would be controlled. Given the characteristics of Roundup Biactive® and its favourable environmental profile (no toxic classification for humans or animals and rapid degradation in soil), the development of modified cultivated rape would provide a new, flexible, economical and environmentally respectful weed control technique for farmers.

The release will be undertaken by the National Institute of Agricultural Botany in Marry Worthy, Winchester. The trial will be drilled in August/September 1998 and harvested in July/August 1999. The purpose of the trial is to measure the yield and other agronomic characters of Roundup Ready™ oilseed rape.

The programme of releases covers additional trials for which the dates and sites are not yet known.

Enquiries about this notice should be directed to:

Monsanto UK. Tel 0800 092 0401. Further details are available on the public register of information about deliberate releases of GMOs at the address given below. Any comments to the Secretary of State on the application should be addressed to the Biotechnology Unit, Floor 3/G9 Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6DB, within 14 days of this notice. Further details are available at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~doc>.

The regional register may be viewed at the following address: The Environment Agency North East Region, IPC Department, Public Register Section, Rivers House, East Quay, Bridgewater, Somerset. Tel 01278 457333.

Applicant companies and Research Institutes must notify the public of the whereabouts of all GMO release sites. In practice this means that they must put advertisements or notices in the local press of each area in which they are going to sow a GM crop on a release site. Therefore one way of finding a site in your locality is to look through the local press in the "official notices" section for a release site notification. Local or regional libraries will hold back copies of local newspapers, alternatively the newspaper publisher will have back copies which you should be able to look at. It is very easy to miss a notification because they are usually quite small and only appear once a year, just before the crop is sown.

#### A5.5.2.3 Consent Schedules

Consent Schedules may contain updated information on the whereabouts of current release sites, although from our experience so far this has not been the case. Perhaps they will be sent out as the year progresses. Contact the DETR Biotechnology Unit in London and ask them to send you the Consent Schedule for the specific release in which you are interested, quote the Reference number for the release from the GMO register. It can sometimes be difficult to get information from them and the only thing we can suggest is that you keep phoning until you get it. You can also go in person by prior arrangement to both London and regional offices. The regional offices only hold information pertaining to that area.

#### A5.5.2.4 Contacting the biotechnology company directly

This straightforward approach might bear fruit.

#### A5.5.2.5 Check out a Website

If you are having trouble getting information directly from the DETR Biotechnology Unit then you can download a copy of the index of all applications on the Biotech unit's own website: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~doe> or check out the Friends of the Earth website: <http://www.foe.co.uk/> which has a list of all the GMO release sites. Alternatively contact the Genetic Engineering Network (GEN) for their most up to date list of release sites.

#### A5.5.2.6 Visit the farmer/release site

Once you have located your site in the GMO public register you could arrange to visit so that you can check that it still exists. You could contact the farmer directly by phone, letter or by going to the



farmhouse. One or two people knocking at the door should not be too intimidating for them, but beware that they may be territorial. You could ask them to show you around the release site, if they decline you could ask for a company contact number or name. You could then phone the company and ask for a tour.

If you decide not to approach the farmer or company directly or have no luck in a direct method then you will have to try to find the site yourself. Get yourself a large scale map of the area, e.g. one of the Pathfinder or Explorer series of O.S. maps, which show individual fields. Take advantage of any high points around the farm to get a good view of the layout; binoculars are useful at this stage. You will then need to walk around the farm looking in each field.

Things to look out for are:

- marker posts, usually white/scarecrows
- grids of bare earth and regular patterns of plants
- unusual paths into the middle of fields

Try to stick to public rights of way as much as you can as you will look less suspicious and are less likely to be challenged by farmers or workers.

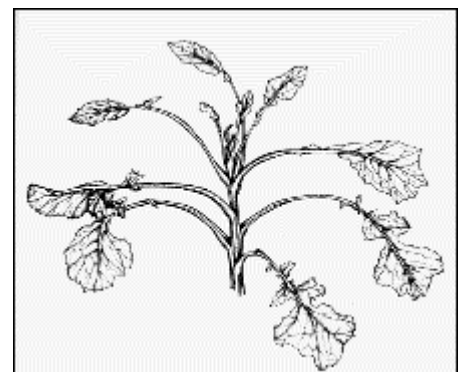
If it is unclear which fields belong to the farm then it might be helpful to get a copy of the land register entry and filed plan for the farm from the Land Registry. The land register will give the name of the owner of the farm and a very brief description of the land. The filed plan is a large scale O.S. map showing the boundaries of the farm. It is however quite common for farmers to buy or rent extra land adjacent to their farms and this will not be included on the register or in the plan. Another method of ascertaining which land belongs to which farm is to look for the tracks of vehicles and see what direction they travel in and where they go in and out of fields.

### **A5.5.3 Crop Identification**

It is very useful to know what the crops look like at various stages of their growth and maturation.

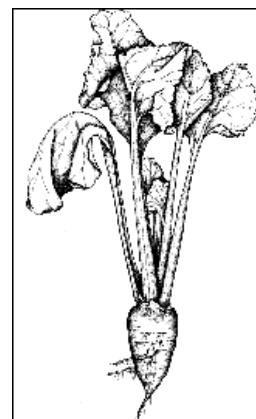
#### A5.5.3.1 Oil seed rape (Brassica napus) Annual

As it is a member of the Brassica family (of which there are many types in Britain) it is quite difficult to accurately identify this plant until it is flowering. Its most familiar characteristics are its bright yellow flowers and strong smell. There are two types of rape being tested; winter oilseed rape, which is planted in August/September, flowers in May/June and is harvested in late July/mid-August and spring oil seed rape, which is planted in late March/mid-April, flowers in July and is harvested in early September. When it is nearly ready to harvest, it has thick stems with many narrow pods (2-4mm diameter and approx 80mm long). The pods contain numerous small spherical seeds from which the oil is pressed.



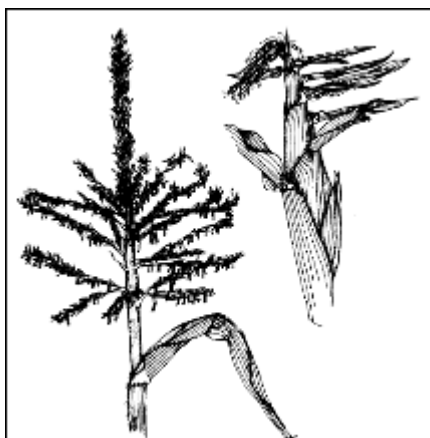
#### A5.5.3.2 Sugar beet (Beta vulgaris) Biennial

This plant is related to the beetroot, spinach and swiss chard so go and have a look at a local allotment for an idea of the leaf shape you are looking for. In the first year of its life it sends down a large tap root which is the harvested product. But in some GM tests (seed amplification trials) it is left over winter or the root is cut up and replanted, as in the second year the plant sends out a flower stalk and sets seed. At the later stages of its development the leaves and the root are quite large and it cannot easily be pulled out of the ground but must be dug up.



#### A5.5.3.3 Maize/Corn (Zea mays)

When maize first sprouts it looks a bit like a thick leaved grass. The leaves are blade shaped with parallel veins and a prominent rib. As it matures it develops a sturdy central stem on top of which the male flowers form on thin stalks, this is where the pollen is produced. The tassels of the female flower form at the nodes of the lower leaves and the stem. The corn cobs form here once the female flower has been pollinated. Visit an allotment to see if you can identify any plants.

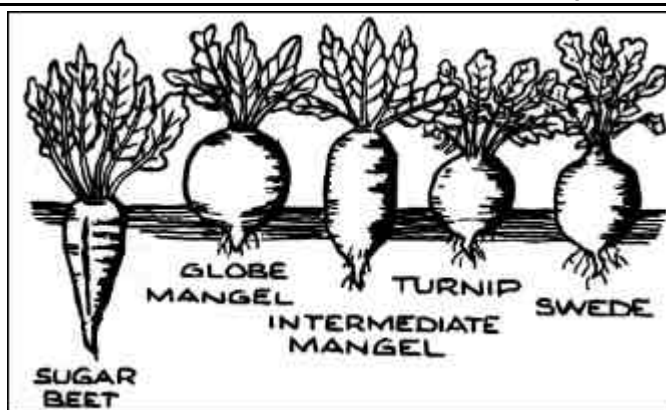


#### A5.5.3.4 Potato (Solanum tuberosum)

These are planted late in spring as they are not frost tolerant. The leaves are usually dark green and slightly hairy, particularly on the underside. The plants are usually grown in rows on the top of ridges with earth heaped up on either side of the ridge. Visit an allotment.

It is often difficult to be 100% certain that a trial plot is GM as other types of crop trials may use a similar site layout. One possible test to verify herbicide tolerance of the GM plants would be to apply a small amount of the herbicide, to which the crop is suspected to be tolerant, to a few plants on the trial site and then to check a few days later on their health. We haven't tried this ourselves and you may decide that this use of herbicide is not an appropriate approach in an environmental campaign.





Crop	Sown	Flowers	Harvested	Notes
Spring Oil seed rape	Mar/Apr	July	Early Sept	10-20cm apart
Winter Oil seed rape	Aug/Sept	June	July/Aug	10-20cm apart
Sugar beet	Mar/Apr	Aug	Sept - Jan	20-50cm apart
Maize/Corn	Apr/May	Aug	Sept/Oct	20cm apart
Potatoes	Mar/Apr	Variable	July onwards	30-75cm apart

## A5.9 Practicing nonviolence

### Nonviolence training

We are currently in the process of developing a training programme so contact the genetiX snowball office if you are interested in this.

### Turning the Tide: A Quaker Programme on Nonviolent Social Change

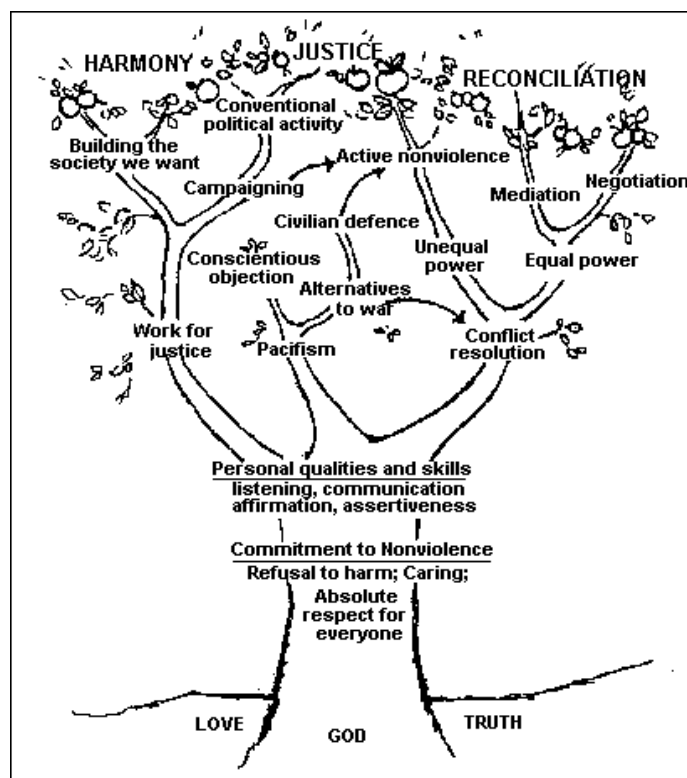
The programme can help action groups with: developing strategies, group-building, exploring active nonviolence, communication, personal nonviolence as preparation for action, nonviolent direct action training. No group is too large or too small!

Contact: Quaker Peace & Service, Friends House, Euston Road, London, NW1 2BJ. Phone 0171 387 3601. Fax: 0171 388 1977.

### Turning the Tide Taster sheets:

Included at the end of the handbook are introductions to the 'Turning the Tide' courses on:

- Nonviolence and active nonviolence
- Power
- How change happens



## A5.10 Reaching into your community

Posters and leaflets are provided on the following pages.

## A5.11 Roles: Briefing for Action Observers

### A5.11.1 Why observe?

The role of the observer is important for 2 main reasons:

- by your presence, to calm situations down and to inhibit excessive use of force or unreasonable behaviour by police or guards;
- by recording events, to gather evidence for court actions and to act as a reliable witness in any subsequent trial, and to gather information for future actions and for publicity.

### A5.11.2 How to observe

#### ***Look the part***

This means that you should wear a fluorescent tabard. You may also find that you will be treated better if you look fairly respectable. This is not to forget the fact that you should dress for the weather. You need to have with you: a watch, pens, notebook or official looking clipboard, transparent plastic bag for notes. If possible, also have a (cheap) camera or Dictaphone.

#### ***Establish your presence***

As soon as you arrive at the action identify yourself to the senior police officer present and state that you are not there to disrupt or obstruct anything, merely to observe. If asked, give your name.

#### ***Get close to the action***

Get as close to the action as possible without risking arrest or your safety. If the police block your way or ask you to move, remind them that you are not obstructing or disrupting anything. If this does not work speak with the senior officer. Similarly, with security guards. But remember that while you are committing no offence, you are still a trespasser and they have the power to remove you.

#### ***Take notes***

You should try to take notes all the time and record as much information as possible (see observer's report form below). Keep a record every 5 minutes or so - even if nothing is happening. If an incident (eg. assault or arrest) occurs make a full report. Record the location and time of any note. All information is potentially useful, but the following is vital:

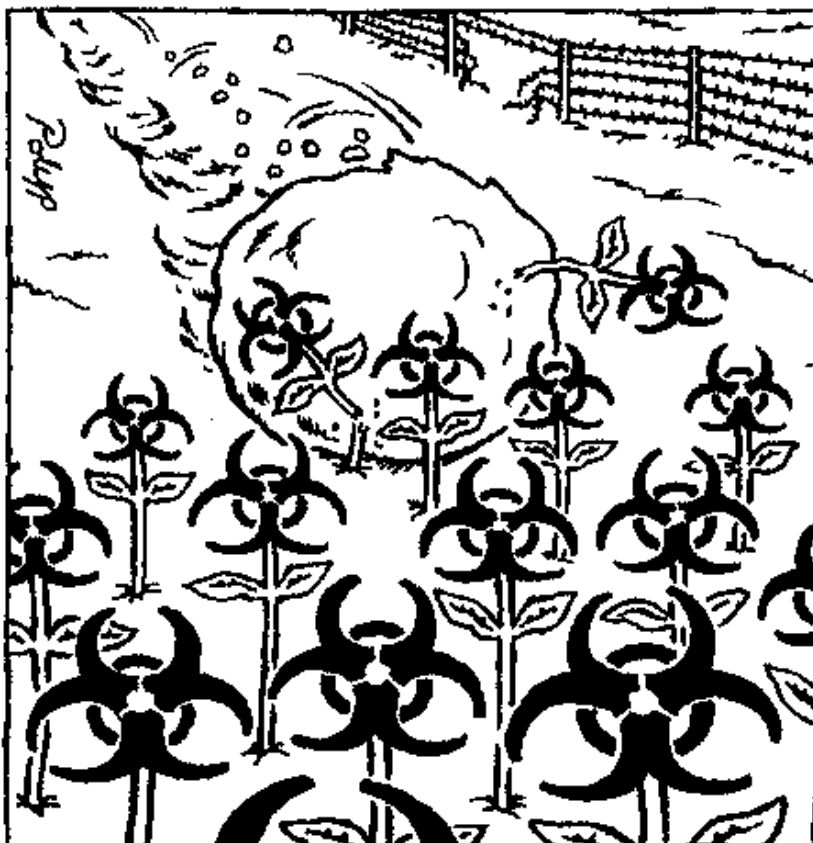
#### ***Assaults on snowballers***

Name of victim; time and location of assault; name, number, description, rank, photograph of assaulter; injuries and how sustained; details of witnesses, including phone numbers. Inform the police of the assault and try to get them to take action. Arrange first aid/ambulance if necessary.

#### ***Arrests of snowballers***

As above. Also, reason for arrest from police officer or snowballer. Report the arrest to the police liaison person and to a lawyer so that legal representation can be followed up.

# genetiX snowball



A campaign of  
nonviolent civil  
responsibility

## **genetiX snowball**

spreads open  
resistance to the  
genetic modification of  
crops and food by  
encouraging groups  
and individuals to  
**safely, nonviolently  
and accountably** pull  
up a small number of  
genetically modified  
crops and to convince  
others to do the same

# PUBLIC MEETING

Local Details:

**genetiX snowball** pack and further information available from:  
One World Centre, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2 5NS  
Tel. 0161 834 0295 Fax 0161 834 8187 Email [genetixsnowball@orangenet.co.uk](mailto:genetixsnowball@orangenet.co.uk)  
<http://www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/gs/>

## **genetiX snowball** is calling for

**A five year moratorium on the deliberate release of GM plants in Britain except for government sponsored ecological health and safety tests (in enclosed systems) and the removal and safe destruction of all GM crops already existing.**

The campaign is asking for reasonable and safe nonviolent action in order to achieve a very reasonable request of caution, in the face of unknown dangers.

**When this has been met, the genetiX snowball will cease.**

### WHAT TO DO NEXT

Send off for the free genetiX snowball action pack, containing all you need to know to take part in the genetiX snowball

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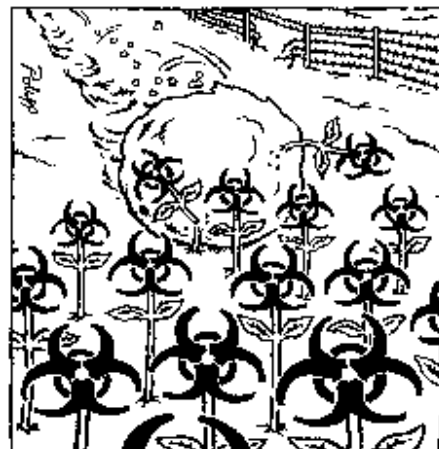
Email: [genetixsnowball@orangenet.co.uk](mailto:genetixsnowball@orangenet.co.uk)  
Internet: <http://www.gn.apc.org/pmhp/gs/>

The pack is free but donations of stamps and money are very welcome. Cheques payable to "genetiX snowball".

### LOCAL CONTACT:

## **genetiX snowball**

*The greatest mistake was made by those who did nothing because they could only do a little*



***A campaign of  
nonviolent civil  
responsibility***

A snowball rolling down a hill gathers momentum and gets bigger as it travels. genetiX snowball will spread open resistance to the unsafe, unwanted and unnecessary practice of genetic modification of crops and food in the same way. This will happen by encouraging groups and individuals to nonviolently, accountably and safely PULL UP A SMALL NUMBER OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED CROPS and convince others to DO THE SAME.

This idea is particularly appropriate to GM crops, as only the collective nonviolent action of a large number of people will have enough influence to put on the brakes of this runaway experiment.

When the democratic process ceases to protect our health and the environment it is necessary for citizens to take reasonable nonviolent action to affect change within that democratic process. In the face of all responsibility being waived by those in a position to wield it, the responsibility falls on us.

Genetic Modification inserts genes from one species to another in ways that

would never occur naturally. The Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) produced are being released into the environment and the food chain at an alarming rate. Without any public consultation, some of our food already contains GM soya, maize, tomatoes, yeast and bacteria. There is widespread distrust, mounting scientific evidence against, and numerous ethical concerns about this technology, because:

- It is flawed science and the theories on which GM is based are inadequate and imprecise. We simply don't understand enough to know exactly what it may do.
- It is unsafe and potential hazards include new toxins and allergens in food, more virulent diseases, antibiotic resistant bacteria, 'superweeds' and 'super-bugs', loss of crop biodiversity and disruption of delicate ecological balances.
- It is unnecessary and the modifications are primarily profit driven. Alternative solutions to the perceived need for GMOs, such as better access to food and organic farming are not being properly explored.

GM crops have been released at over 300 sites around the country. Despite supposed safety regulations, there is proof that some have already started to 'escape'. This poses unacceptable and irreversible risks of cross contamination and genetic pollution to ourselves and the environment.

At the moment there are no commercially grown GM crops in Britain. By safely pulling up small numbers of GM plants and creating a groundswell of public opinion against GM crops, we can influence government policy.

Our accountable and nonviolent actions will highlight our concerns and simultaneously check that others agree with us. If we do not get a response to our invitation to join the snowball it will stop. This is our democracy check.

English Nature, the RSPB, Prince Charles and numerous other respected bodies, scientists and prominent figures have called for a moratorium on the commercial release of GM plants in the UK until safety tests are completed.

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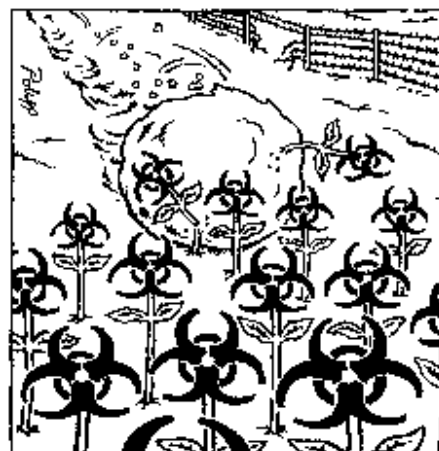
Email: [genetixsnowball@orangenet.co.uk](mailto:genetixsnowball@orangenet.co.uk)  
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LOCAL CONTACT:

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Also, note more general things, eg the number of police/guards there are; the types of police/guards and what they are doing; any special equipment - long handled batons, riot gear, horses; TV crews and other media; weather conditions; police treatment of press; incidents of rough handling; attitude of police to you; confiscation of belongings; police tactics; details of police vehicles.

Finally, put the date, your name and signature at the bottom of every page of notes.

### **Plans**

Plans can be very useful to show the location of events. Make them where appropriate and cross-refer to them in your notes. Sign and date them.

### **Cameras**

If you use a camera, first take a photograph of the day's newspaper to date your pictures. Record in your notes the time and place of any photograph and what it was of.

### **Stay together**

Stay in touch and near any fellow observers at the site, and know who they are. This is important for a number of reasons: to provide each other with support and confidence, it will also allow you to split up tasks between you.

### **Dealing with the police**

If you have problems with the police, be assertive but do not risk arrest. Note any abuses of power or unreasonable behaviour (and identities) and report it to the senior police officer. A formal complaint/legal action/negotiations/publicity can be made later. If police request your name, give it. You may risk arrest for police obstruction if not. Note that you have, and record the identity of the officer.

### **Dealing with security guards**

Similarly, with the guards. However, do not give them your name. They have no right to have it. Guards have the right to remove you from the land using reasonable force. They do not have the police's power of arrest (only citizens' power).

### **At the end of the day...**

Observers reports should be signed and dated and kept safely to be copied to relevant solicitors and to decontaminators. If you feel your notes need rewriting for clarity or legibility, do this straight away (and again sign and date them) so that your updated notes are admissible in court.

## **A5.11.3 The Law and action/legal observers**

As the action will take place on private property anybody present at the action without authorisation is arguably a trespasser. This has implications for the legal status of the individuals observing. The practical implication of trespassing for observers is that they can be removed by the police or security guards.

There are 3 main areas of law relevant to observing: aggravated trespass, obstruction of the highway, and public order.

As long as observers are seen as not being involved in disruptive trespass they will not be guilty of aggravated trespass. However, if the police direct people to leave the land, it is better to obey them. Observers can avoid obstruction of the highway by making sure they keep to the edge of any highway.

The public order offence which bears most relevance to observers is obstruction of a police officer. This is a very broadly and flexibly defined offence: basically, doing anything which makes a police



officers job more difficult, eg. refusing to give your name if an officer believes you are a witness to an incident, being too close when they are arresting someone so that you get in the way. No warning has to be given before an arrest is made for this offence.

This briefing has been adapted from a Friends of the Earth briefing. Copies of legal observers report forms are provided on the following page.

## A5.12 Preparing your equipment

<b>Essentials</b>	<b>Desirables</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- biohazard warnings</li> <li>- brightly coloured tape</li> <li>- heavy duty polythene bags</li> <li>- heavy duty sticky tape</li> <li>- protective suits gardening gloves</li> <li>- over-shoes</li> <li>- bucket and water</li> <li>- hand tools</li> <li>- headscarf or hat</li> <li>- personal statements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- banner and flags</li> <li>- camera</li> <li>- camcorder</li> <li>- symbol of transformation</li> </ul>

There are biohazard signs of different sizes for photocopying on the following pages

## A5.13 Media

Media contacts are an important part of the campaign. For a grass-roots view of how the media works, and how to handle them, read George Monbiot's 'An activist guide to exploiting the Media' at the end of the handbook.

Date:genetix snowball

Name:Observation Record

Contact Details:

Location:		
Map Coordinates:		
Time of Arrival:		
Time	Incident	Observation details

Page:Signature:

Incident key: A = Arrest    AS = Assault



## A6 Accepting the consequences

### A6.3 Preparing for trial

#### Further reading

**How to Defend Yourself in Court**, Michael Randle, The Civil Liberties Trust, 1995.

## A7. Continuing with resistance

### A7.3 Prison and moving through fear

#### Resources and further reading

##### **EARTH LIBERATION PRISONERS SUPPORT NETWORK**

BM HEAL, London, WC1N 3XX publish newsletter with details of environmental activists in prison and their addresses.

##### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE CARE AND RESETTLEMENT OF OFFENDERS (NACRO)**

169 Clapham Road, London, SW9 0PU. Tel: 0171 582 6500 among other things publish useful booklet for families and friends of people in prison called Outside Help, phone for free copy.

##### **PRISON REFORM TRUST**

15 Northburgh Street, London, EC1V 0AH. Tel: 0171 251 5070 campaigns for better conditions in prison, deals with enquiries about various aspects of imprisonment and complaints about treatment of individuals in prison. Copublishes with the Prison Service the Prisoners Information Book, phone for a free copy.

##### **VEGAN PRISONERS SUPPORT GROUP**

PO Box 194, Enfield, Middlesex, EN1 3HD provide good nutritional information for vegans in prison

##### **VEGAN SOCIETY**

7 Battle Road, St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex, TN37 7AA. Tel: 01424 427393 Join the Vegan Society before you go to prison to ensure that you receive a vegan diet.

**The Prisoners Information Book**, Prison Reform Trust and HM Prison Service, 1996, free copies available from Prison Reform Trust, 15 Northburgh Street, London, EC1V 0AH. Tel: 0171 251 5070.

# Contacts and resources

## ❖ Government

### **Tony Blair, PM**

10 Downing Street, London, SW1A 2AA

### **Michael Meacher, Minister of the Environment**

Dept. of the Environment, Transport and Regions, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith St London SW1P 3BT

### **Frank Dobson, Minister of Health**

Dept. of Health, Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1A 2NS.

### **Lord Donoghue Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food**

MAFF, Whitehall Place West, London, SW1A 2HH

### **To find your MP**

Call 0171 219 4272, it helps if you know your post code. To find your MEP call 0171 227 4300

## ❖ Regulatory and Advisory Bodies

### **Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment (ACRE)**

Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Ashdown House, 123 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6OE. Tel: 0171 890 5275/5277 Fax: 0171 890 5259. Deal with approval of applications for deliberate release of GMOs into the environment.

### **Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP)**

Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3PY. Tel: 0171 276 8187 Fax: 0171 276 8333. Deal with consumer and marketing approval of GM foods.

## ❖ Local GE Campaign Groups

### **Action Against Genetic Pollution (AAGP)**

c/o 3 Crawborough Villas, Charlbury, Oxfordshire, OX7 3TS. Tel: 01608 811 057 (eves.)

### **BRIGHTON GEN**

71b Upper Lewes Road, Brighton, Sussex, BN2 3FT. Tel: 01273 624 192

### **CAMBRIDGE CONCERNS**

Patrice Gladwin, 11 Heron's Close, Cambridge, CB1 4NS. Tel: 01223 570 873  
<camcon@argonet.co.uk

### **CAMPAIGN TO BAN GM FOODS**

David Colling, Campaign to Ban GM Foods, 103 University Street, Belfast, BT7 1HP, N. Ireland.  
<nlp@ni.net.co.uk

### **CONSUMERS OPPOSING GENETICS (COG)**

The Flat, 46 Kingsbury Street, Marlborough, SN8 1JE. Tel: 01672 513 950

### **FIFE EF!**

c/o 91 South Street, St. Andrews, KY16 9QW. Tel: 01334 477 411.

**M.A.G.E. (Manchester Against GE) & GM Free prisoner support**

Dept. 29, 1 Newton Street, Manchester, M1 1HW. Tel/fax: 0161 224 4846  
<genetics@avocados.globalnet.co.uk

**NEWCASTLE GeneNO**

P.O. Box ITA, Newcastle, NE99 1TA. Tel: 0191 261 151

**NORFOLK GENETIC CONCERN**

c/o Box EF!, The Greenhouse, 42-46 Bethel Street, Norwich, Norfolk, NR2 1NR. Tel: 01508 531 636

**S.A.G.E. (Sheffield Against GE)**

38, Firth Park Crescent, Firth Park, Sheffield, S5 6HE, Tel: 0114 296 7336

**SOMERSET GEN**

P.O. Box 478, Taunton, Somerset, TA2 7YR.

**SOUTHWEST AGAINST GE (SWAGE)**

c/o Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Eastville, Bristol.

**STROUD CAMPAIGN FOR SAFE FOOD (GLOS.)**

Tel: 01453 765789

**TOTNES GE GROUP**

River House, Seymour Terrace, Bridgetown, Totnes, TQ9 5AQ, Tel: Luke 01803 867951  
<penguin@zetnet.co.uk.

❖ **National and International GE Campaign Groups**

**A SEED Europe**

PO Box 92066, 1090 AB Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: +(31) 20 668 2236, Fax: +(31) 20 665 0166 email: aseedeur@antenna.nl

facilitates coordinated actions among groups in all parts of the world who are addressing the global environmental and development crisis and is currently working on a food and globalisation campaign.

**FRIENDS OF THE EARTH (FoE)**

26-28 Underwood Street, London, N1 2PN, Tel: 0171 490 1555 or 0113 242 8153

Very active on GE within their Food and Biotech campaign with many local groups taking action.

**GAIA FOUNDATION**

18 Well Walk, London, NW3 1LD, Tel: 0171 435 5000, Fax: 0171 431 0551

Working on the Patents Directive and biopiracy.

**GENETHICS NEWS**

PO Box 6313, London, N16 0DY. Tel: 0181 809 4513 Fax: 0181 809 4513

Produces newsletter edited by geneticist David King.

**GENETIC CONCERN**

24-26 Dame Street, Dublin 2, EIRE. Tel: 00 353 1 6705606 <geneticconcern@tinet.ie

Fighting court case against GE crops being grown in Ireland.

**GENETIC RESOURCES ACTION NETWORK (GRAIN)**

Girona 25, Pral, E-08010 Barcelona, Spain,

Tel: +(34-) 3 301 1381, Fax: +(34-) 3 301 1627

Promotes sustainable management & use of agricultural biodiversity based on people's control over genetic resources and local knowledge, with a special emphasis on developing countries. Lots of work on Patents

### **GENETIX FOOD ALERT**

Coalition of wholefood groups calling for the government to implement a 3 year moratorium on the importation, growing or use of GMOs in food and a halt to the importation and use of GE food. You can contact the campaign coordinator on: 0141 554 7633.

### **GENETIC ENGINEERING NETWORK (GEN)**

P.O. Box 9656, London, N4 4JY. Tel: 0181 374 9516

Provides information on all aspects of GE, publishes newsletter "Genetix Update" and has an e-mail information list. If you would like to be on the list reply to <genetics@gn.apc.org> putting 'Subscribe Genetics' in the subject box. There is a very busy list (list 1) & a less busy list (list 2) that only receives the Genetix Update newsletter and occasional action alerts - specify which you'd like when you subscribe.

### **GENETICS FORUM**

94 White Lion Street, London, N1 9PF. Tel: 0171 837 9229 <geneticsforum@gn.apc.org>

Committed to the socially responsible use of the new gene technologies. Publishes magazine "Splice of Life".

### **GENE WATCH**

5 Post Office Row, Litton, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 8QS. Tel/Fax: 01298 871558. <genewatch@dial.pipex.com>

Write briefings on GE, particularly around policy issues.

### **GREEN PARTY**

The Green Party, 1A Waterlow Road, London, N19 5NJ

Calling for GM free school dinners. For leaflets and info. send an SAE

### **GREENPEACE**

Canonbury Villas, Islington, London, N1 2PN. Tel: 0171 865 8214

Commissions reports as well as direct action on GE.

### **NATIONWIDE FOOD SURVEY**

Beacon House, Willow Walk, Skelmersdale, Lancashire, WN8 6UP. Fax 01695 503306.

Booklet listing GE free foods.

### **NATURAL LAW PARTY**

Mentmore Towers, Mentmore, Bucks. LU7 0QH. Fax: 01296 662486.

Very active with many active local groups also.

### **SOIL ASSOCIATION**

40-56 Victoria Street, Bristol, BS1 6BY, Tel: 0117 929 0661, Fax: 0117 925 2504

<soilassoc@gn.apc.org> Promotes organic farming and has lists of local organic box delivery schemes for a GE free diet

### **WOMENS ENVIRONMENTAL NETWORK (WEN)**

87 Worship Street, London, EC2A 2BE, Tel. 0171 247 3327 Fax: 0171 247 4740.

Campaigning on GE, produces useful briefing sheets on setting up local campaigns and ideas for action

## Glossary

affinity group	See section 5.1.
decontaminators	the people who take the role of pulling up GM plants from a deliberate release site.
gene	a particular sequence of nucleotides along a molecule of DNA which represents a functional unit of inheritance.
genome	the basic complement of chromosomes in any one species, hence the sum total of its genes. The totality of the genetic information of an organism.

## Abbreviations

GM	genetically modified (also can be called genetically engineered or genetically manipulated).
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# An activist guide to exploiting the Media

## by George Monbiot

*Every battle we fight is a battle for the hearts and minds of other people. The only chance we have of reaching people who haven't yet heard what we've got to say is through the media. We might, with good reason, regard the papers and broadcasters with extreme suspicion, we might feel cheapened and compromised by engaging with them. But the war we're fighting is an information war, and we have to use all the weapons at our disposal. Whether we use the media or not, our opponents will. However just our cause and true our aims, they will use it to demonise and demolish us, unless we fight back.*

### **EXPLOIT THE MEDIA, OR THE MEDIA WILL EXPLOIT YOU!**

## **PART 1:WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST**

### **A. Triviality**

Every media outlet shares the same principal aim: to expand its share of the market. It does this by seeking to grab and hold onto people's attention. This is why the media concentrates so much on events rather than issues, and especially trivial, flashy and colourful events. Most journalists are convinced that people can't concentrate for more than a few seconds. This is mainly because they can't concentrate for more than a few seconds.

On the face of it, this is a major disadvantage for us, as our aim is to make people aware of big and important issues.

### **B. Bias**

Many outlets have a secondary aim: of pandering to the prejudices of their proprietors. As most large news-gathering organisations are run by perverse billionaires whose interests are at odds with those of the rest of society, this makes life still harder for us.

In practice, it means that there are some outlets we simply have to avoid: there's no point in approaching the Sun, for example, unless you're appealing to narrow nationalism or are prepared to get your tits out. Stay well away from the Daily Mail, unless you're highlighting an animal rights issue which doesn't involve a confrontation with big business/landowners/hunters etc.

But there are often a surprising number of opportunities for making use of other parts of the right-wing media: some of the things that occasionally slip past the editors' noses at the Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph, for example, are pretty unexpected. While their editors and proprietors may be total bastards, a lot of journalists are not bad people, just weak and cowardly. Many of them want to help, and will look for opportunities to do so without upsetting their bosses.

Newspapers are allowed to be partisan, and expected to be by their readers. But the broadcast media are legally obliged to be balanced and fair. In practice, as we know, this isn't always the case, and there are certain programmes, such as Littlejohn, which you should avoid at all costs. More importantly, their concept of fairness is a narrow one: as long as both Labour and Tory politicians have had their say, balance is seen to have been achieved, even if the view from Westminster represents just a tiny part of the political spectrum.

Most broadcast outlets are also very conscious of the views of their advertisers, and even more trashy

than the printed ones. The result is, once again, conservatism: broadcast journalists appear to be terrified of telling their audience something it doesn't know already.

## **C. The Game**

Another way in which we're up against it is that we take our campaigns seriously, while interviewers tend to see their work as a game, whose political outcome is immaterial, but which must be played by a set of rules. These rules are, at first sight, obscure to people without a lot of media experience. If you don't play by the rules, it's a foul and you're sent off. As our only objective is to win, regardless of etiquette, we tend to foul more often than other contributors. As a result, sometimes we come across very badly.

That's the bad news, but there's also plenty of good news: we have several significant advantages over our opponents.

## **PART 2: OUR ADVANTAGES**

### **A. Integrity**

We're genuine people, not hired hands defending a corporate or institutional position. This shows when we allow it to: an open and straightforward appeal to common-sense can cut through the clamour of self-interest and spin-doctoring with a powerful resonance. When we keep our message uncluttered and get straight to the point, we can be devastatingly effective.

### **B. Articulating Public Sentiment**

People are increasingly prepared to listen to what we have to say: many know in their heart of hearts that things are going badly wrong, and could be very much better. Activists in the media have often been able to reach parts of the public psyche that no one else can touch, as they articulate sentiments that have never been put into words before. Hard as it may be to believe, a lot of mainstream journalists are secretly sympathetic to the causes we espouse.

### **C. Inherent media friendliness**

We're colourful, fun, outlandish and outrageous. Much as television executives might claim to hate us, television cameras love us.

## **PART 3: HOW TO GET THE PRESS TO COME TO YOUR ACTION**

News doesn't just happen; it is made to happen. News, in other words, is managed and manipulated. And if we don't manage it, someone else will.

### **A. Co-ordination**

Media work tends to be tacked onto actions as an afterthought, with the result that there's almost always too little of it and too late. Invariably, far too much is left to chance, which means that actions

often end up alienating more people than they reach or, even worse, get completely ignored. If we built our tree houses with as little forethought and care as we conduct our press work, there would have been some pretty gruesome accidents by now.

Reaching the media is as time-consuming, as demanding and as necessary as building lock-ons or digging tunnels. If we don't start tackling this task with the efficiency and creativity that we bring to the rest of our work, we'll be worsted again and again by our opponents.

This means that every action aimed at altering public opinion must have a dedicated media co-ordinator, whose job is to ensure that the activists' point of view reaches the wider world. She or he must be responsible for planning a press strategy, drawing up a hit-list of journalists, preparing press releases and briefing spokespeople. Ideally the co-ordinator will build up a small team, including someone who stays behind to write and despatch up-to-the-minute press releases and people who will meet and escort the journalists who come to an action.

Not everyone is going to be good at handling the press. To do the job well, you need to be confident, sociable and pretty mouthy. At least one person on the team should be able to write well. But media skills, like any others, can be learnt, and surprisingly quickly.

## **B. Timing**

Is critical. You have to give journalists enough notice of your action or initiative, but not so much that they forget about it. A good time to put out a first, advance press release, for example, is about ten days beforehand, with a second one sent out two days beforehand. Journalists don't only have a three-second attention span, they also have a three-second memory, so you've got to keep on their case.

The day of the week is also important. A great day for an action, from the point of view of publicity, is Sunday, as not a lot happens on Sundays, and journalists need something to put in Monday's papers and in Sunday afternoon's news programmes. If you can do it before lunch, so much the better. The later in the day something happens, the less likely the newspapers are to cover it, as they can't get it to press on time.

If you really want your action to be ignored by the press, then do it on Budget Day. In other words, look out for what else is happening that day. If there's a huge story pending, you don't want to be competing with it. Nor do you want to be competing with another alternative event: they won't cover two protests on the same day.

## **C. Pre-publicity**

Most journalists are also astoundingly unimaginative and cowardly: they don't want to touch an issue unless it's already been mentioned in the press. If you can pull it off (and it's not always possible), it's very useful to get a friendly and trustworthy journalist to flag the action up a week or two beforehand, without giving too much away.

The best way to achieve this is:

- First find your journalist
- Invite her/him to your meetings, under what are called "Chatham House" rules. This means that they can't make use of anything they hear there without your permission.
- Create an atmosphere of secrecy, excitement and intrigue, which only that journalist (or, as a maximum, two or three journalists) is privy to. All journalists love to imagine they're in the Famous Five.
- Be very nice to them and make them think they're part of the gang.

Once it's been mentioned in the press, you'll find that there's a lot more interest from other reporters. Pathetic really, but there you have it.

## D. Press releases

Journalists speak only one language, and that's their own. If you're going to reach them you have to speak that language too. This means that your press release should mimic the format and style of a news story. It's a simple and straightforward formula and (sorry to be dictatorial) it **MUST** be applied. If it isn't, your press release won't work. Period.

<p>iii. <b>HEADLINE (NO MORE THAN EIGHT WORDS)</b></p> <p>iv. First paragraph: one sentence which tells the whole story.</p> <p>v. Two</p> <p>or three</p> <p>short paragraphs explaining the story</p> <p>vi. Your contact details (faint)</p>	<p>vi. Your contact details (faint)</p> <p>vii. Notes</p> <p>for</p> <p>journalists</p> <p>vi. Your contact details (faint)</p>
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Here's how to fill it in, section by section:

- i. **Your contact details.** No journalist will run a story without them. Essentials are:
  - The name of your organisation/disorganisation (preferably big, bold and across the top of the page)
  - One or more contact names
  - Contact number(s): where contacts are **DEFINITELY** going to be for at least the next two days (mobile phone numbers are useful).
- ii. **An embargo** means that you are instructing journalists not to publish or broadcast the information in the press release before a certain time. There are several good reasons for an embargo:
  - Journalists will know they aren't going to be trumped by anyone else getting in before them.
  - It creates a sense of event.
  - Timelines concentrate journalists' minds.
  - You know when to expect publicity, so you can plan subsequent news management around it.

NB: An embargo doesn't mean that journalists won't be stupid enough to phone the police or the company due to be occupied and ask what they think. So don't stick anything on your press release

which you don't want to be generally known.

This is the usual format:

***EMBARGO: 00.01am, Friday 15th May***

00.01 is a good time, as the papers can then keep up with the broadcasters, and it's less confusing than 00.00.

DON'T put on an embargo if you've got some immediate news, that you want on the radio or TV straight away. Generally, you'd embargo a press release giving advance warning of an action (till about 24 hours before the action's due to start), but not a press release which comes out once the action's started.

- iii. **The headline** must be short, pithy and to the point. Avoid mystery, elaborate puns or being too clever. The purpose of the headline is to grab the journalists' attention and give them an idea of what the press release is about. If it doesn't do both of these things, they'll read no further and dump it in the bin. It must be NO MORE than eight words long. Use a big, bold font.

Writing headlines isn't easy, and generally takes a good deal of practice. So practise. Look at how they do it in the papers, then try writing headlines for imaginary actions, or real ones which aren't going to happen for a while. Remember: in this as in all writing, a straightforward, plain style is best.

- iv. **The first paragraph.** This isn't easy either but, like the headline, it's essential to get it right. You've got ONE sentence in which to tell the whole story. If the journalist doesn't get the gist of it, she or he won't read on.

There is nothing so complicated that its essential point can't be summarised in a simple sentence. So work out what you're trying to say, then boil it down to its essence. As before, look at the news stories in the papers and see how they do it.

- v. **The rest of the text.** Must be no more than two or three paragraphs long, each of which should be no longer than one or two straightforward sentences. They should expand on what you say in the first paragraph. Keep it simple and avoid jargon. Assume (and you won't be far wrong) that journalists know nothing. If there is other essential information which you can't fit in, put it in the Notes for Journalists section. (see below).

Above all, make sure that the first and second paragraphs have covered all the five Ws: WHO, WHY, WHAT, WHERE and WHEN.

- vi. **Your contact details again.** Remember: most journalists have a three second memory, are wilfully blind and very, very stupid, so you have to keep on their case.
- vii. **Notes to journalists.** This is optional. Preferably they should be on a separate page. Journalists have got very little time, and the sight of a huge block of text which is hard to digest will put them off. They want to look at the first page and know that the essentials of the story are there. If they want more, they can turn over and read on.

Generally, you'd write no more than four or five paragraphs of notes (and certainly no more than a page). They should give more details about the rationale for the action: e.g. facts and figures about genetically engineered soya, DBFO roads etc. In other words, this is the place for the complex information which might put journalists off if it's on the front page.

Number the paragraphs in this section, as it makes it them look easier to digest.

## E. What makes a press release effective

News, of course, is meant to be all about novelty, so emphasise what's new about your action. This shouldn't be difficult as the DIY movement is so creative and innovative: people are always coming up with exciting new approaches, so all you have to do is make sure the press hears about them.

Take the Birmingham Northern Relief Road protest, for example. A headline like "Protesters occupy trees along route of new road" will consign a press release straight to the bin, as most journalists will imagine they've heard it all before. But "World's longest sermon threatens to stop new road" (telling the story of the vicar who has discovered that it's illegal to interrupt a priest during his sermon, and intends to preach continually in front of the threatened trees) will make them sit up and wonder what it's all about. If you want to mention the tree-sit, you can do so further on in the text.

There might also be a new political aspect of the story you can use to attract the journalists' attention to your protest: "New road could destroy region's economy, experts say" would, for most journalists, be counter-intuitive and interesting (which shows how much they've been paying attention).

If your action's outside London, and you're organising transport to get there, say so in the press release, pointing out that journalists are welcome to join you on the coach. Many reporters are so lazy that they won't bother turning up unless everything's laid on for them.

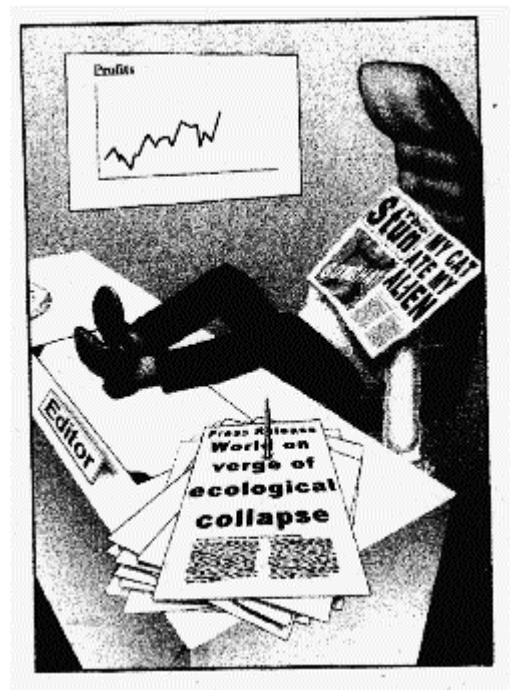
## F. When to send press releases

The most critical press release is the one that goes out about two days before the event. Without it, you won't get much coverage, if any at all. But it's a good idea to put one out much earlier than that as well - about ten days prior to the event - so that when the journalists get the second one they should be ready to respond to it.

It's also important to send out a third one the moment the action begins, telling them you've succeeded in stopping work on the bypass/locking Group 4 in their offices etc.

If it's a one day action and your press person has still got the energy and resources, it's no bad thing to send out a fourth press release saying how it all went. A journalist's interest is pretty unpredictable, and could be stimulated at any time.

If the action lasts longer than one day, send out a new press release every day, as long as you've got something to say. Once the event's in the press already, there'll be plenty of opportunities for follow-ups. This is the time when you can sometimes get them to cover the issue you're trying to highlight, rather than simply the event.



## G. Who to send them to

The secret of all successful press releasing is getting them to the right people - so find out who the

right people are. Make a list of:

- Media outlets you want to reach
- Individual journalists who seem to be interested in/sympathetic to the cause

The more you can reach the better, of course, but, unless you're just aiming at the local press, realistically you want to try to press release at least forty places. If it's a national action and you want national publicity, they must include the following:

- All the broadsheet newspapers
- BBC newsroom
- ITN/Channel 4 newsroom
- Newsnight
- The Today programme (on Radio 4), plus PM, The World at One, The World Tonight
- Radio 5 Live

NB: You should adapt the tone and contents of your press release to the media you're trying to reach. "Road protesters come to Romford" might be of interest to the Newham Recorder, but to get to the nationals you'd need something more like "New front opens in road war".

## H. How to send press releases

Faxing is still the best way to send them, and a fax modem is invaluable. Some journalists are beginning to emerge from the Neolithic, so they might be contactable by email, but on the whole the communications industry is the last place to use up-to-date communications (except the Department of Trade and Industry, which runs the government's Technology Foresight programme, yet can't use email). Don't use snail mail: it invariably gets lost/disregarded/placed on the bottom of the pile.

To get fax numbers, simply phone the papers, TV and radio stations in question and ask for the fax number of the Newsdesk. If you also want to send your press releases to named journalists at the same organisation, it's best to get their fax numbers off them: reception will often give you the wrong fax number, or one that's been out of date for months. Keep all the fax numbers you get for future reference. Best of all, load them permanently into your computer, so, once you've decided who should get what, your fax modem can contact them automatically.

## I. Following up

One thing of which you can be absolutely certain is that something will get lost in the newsrooms you're targeting: either your press release, the journalist's concentration or the essence of the story. This means you **MUST** follow it up with a phone call.

Just a quick one will do. Ask: Did you get it? Will you be covering the action? Do you need any more information?

They're likely to be rude, gruff and unhelpful. But don't be put off - they're paid to be like that. Make sure you're ready, if need be, to summarise the story in one or two sentences; the first question the journalist will ask is "wot's it all about then?", and her/his attention will wander if you spend more than ten seconds telling them.

However rude they are, never fail to be polite and charming: at the very least, you'll put them to shame.

## PART 4: HOW TO DEAL WITH THE JOURNALISTS WHO COME TO YOUR ACTION

The whole media-exploitation process is about news management, and this is just as much the case once journalists get to the action as it is when you're trying to attract them. You've got to give the best possible account of what you're doing, and provide the clearest possible explanation of why you're doing it. This means:

### A. Make sure the right people talk to the journalists.



Different people do different things best. Some are tree-houses or digging shit pits, but not much good at being charming to the running

have just dropped a tab of acid or have last night's vomit stuck in their hair. This won't endear them to

trouble crossing the cultural divide as it is.

Talking to the press is something of an art form: you well-briefed. Best of all, you'll have practised, by persuading your

### B. Be careful, but don't come across as suspicious.

Some of them will be there to help you  
you will pretend to be out to help you. The only real safeguards are:

- to know who they all are. Ask them who they are and who they work for. Some

Bartholemew, Sebastian Sebag Montefiore). You should find out who the dodgy ones are before the action, so you'll know to be ultra-careful if they turn up.

not to say anything stupid or risky

be friendly towards them, whoever they are. Bite your lip. Don't put their backs up even if

### C. Be a tour guide.

don't want them to see. Introduce them to the people who'll get on well with them, and keep them away from the people who won't be able to restrain their contempt. If it doesn't seem like a major intrusion on

### D. Be ready to deal with the ones who don't turn up

lots of journalists won't be able to make it, but might still be interested. They'll want to know what's happening and how things are going, so there should be at least one press release. Journalists are suckers for on-the-spot reports, so when they ring, put some excitement



into your voice. Give them plenty of colour, make them feel they can see it.

## PART 5: BEING INTERVIEWED

Interviews and studio discussions are a bloodsport, and you, the interviewee, are the one of the combatants. People watch or listen to them in the earnest hope that one or other of the participants will be gored to death. Like any other fight, you win not through brute force but through skill. And, like any other sport, there are rules you have to follow.

So here are the rules and tactics. Try them out on your friends. Practice, as in any other sport, is absolutely critical. If you haven't done many interviews before, get someone to pretend to be the interviewer a day or two before you're due to go on, and get her or him to give you a hard time. See how you do, and find out which parts of your technique you'll have to brush up.

If you don't practise, expect to be caught out every time. If you do practise, you'll find that all you have to do is repeat what you've been through already, which isn't a scary prospect at all.

### Rules and tactics

- i. Be informed. This is the golden rule. Remember, this is an information war, and the best warriors are the ones with the best information. Don't go into a studio unless you're confident that you know your subject better than the person you're up against, and can head her or him off if they try to outfox you with some new facts. This means lots of reading. Make sure your information is reliable and stands up to critical examination.
- ii. Be calm. However much the issue, or your opponent, winds you up, you mustn't let it show. Generally the calmest person is the one whom the audience sees as the winner. This doesn't mean you can't be passionate and enthusiastic - indeed these are good things - but your passion and enthusiasm must be tightly controlled and mustn't, repeat mustn't, spill over into anger. If necessary, take a deep breath before answering the question. Be polite but firm with everyone.
- iii. Be concise. It's amazing how little time you get. You must know exactly what you want to say, and say it in as few words as possible, with clarity and determination. The main point must come at the beginning of the interview: you should summarise the whole issue in just one or two sentences before expanding on your theme.
- iv. It's the answers that count, not the questions. When you go into the studio, you must know exactly what you want to say and how you want to say it. Don't be too scrupulous about answering the question: deal with it as briefly as possible, then get to the points you want to make. You must leave the studio at the end of the interview knowing you've made the most important points as effectively as possible.
- v. Don't try to make too many points. You want to have a maximum of three main lines of argument. Any more and both you and the audience will get lost.
- vi. Finish your point. If the interviewer tries to interrupt you before you've got to the important thing you want to say, don't be afraid to carry on talking until you've said it. Sometimes it's useful to say "Just a moment" or "If you'd let me finish". Be assertive without being rude. Don't let yourself be bullied.
- vii. Simplicity. Make your points as clearly as possible. Use short sentences and simple words. Try not to use sub-clauses (a sentence within a sentence), as you might confuse the listener.

viii. Turn hostile questions to good account. There are several ways of doing this:

- Deal with the question quickly, then move on to what you want to talk about. This is the simplest and safest way of handling tricky questions. A good way of going about it is to agree with part of the question, then show that it's not the whole story. "Yes, of course human welfare is critically important, but that doesn't mean we should neglect animal welfare. At the moment, x per cent of all dairy cows die before they're six years old because of the terrible conditions they're kept in. Now that doesn't do them any good or us any good." Or: "Yes, destroying the potatoes will affect the farmer's livelihood to a small extent. But the issues at stake are enormous. If these plants were allowed to reach maturity
- Deliberately misinterpreting the question. "You're quite right, there were a lot of undesirable elements at the protest. In fact, there's an urgent need to regulate the security industry properly. Do you know that a lot of security guards have criminal records for violent assault? It's symptomatic of the whole road- building industry: they don't care what they do or who they do it to."
- Undermining the factual content of the question. In other words, don't let the interviewer push you into a corner. (e.g. Q: "But, given that biotechnology is necessary to feed the world, what you're really doing is putting wildlife before humanity." A: "In fact you're wrong to suggest that biotechnology is necessary to feed the world. By concentrating food production into the hands of a few multinational corporations").

But always, always, bring your answer back round to the point.

ix. Leave your notes behind. If what you want to say isn't in your head, you shouldn't be in the studio.

x. Project. You're not having a casual chat with the interviewer or the other guest. You have come to make some important points, and you must get them across in such a way that the viewer or listener can't possibly ignore them.

This means that you should put more emphasis into your voice than you'd do in a normal conversation. It might sound strange to you when you first do it (and practice it before you do a real interview), but on air it'll sound fine. In fact, if you don't do it, you'll sound flat and boring. TV and radio are all brightness and colour, and you must sound bright and colourful to make an impact. It's a bit of a balancing act, projecting well without ceasing to stay calm.

xi. Use your body. On TV a good rule is that your head and torso should stay fairly still (which makes you seem solid and trustworthy), but your hands should lend emphasis to what you say (they can help to drive your points home). Eyebrows are pretty useful too.

xii. Humour. If you can do it without making it sound frivolous or irrelevant, a bit of humour can help a lot to win your audience over. Gently satirising your opponent's position is often quite effective. ("Well, let's take a look at this Countryside Alliance. Its main funder is the Duke of Westminster, who, as his name suggests, is a horny-handed son of rural toil. Unfortunately, his rolling green acres in Mayfair and Belgravia keep him in town quite a bit, but at least that allows him to fight off the undemocratic tendencies of the urban oppressor from the benches of the House of Lords").

xiii. Don't hate your opponent. This is perhaps the hardest task of all, but it is absolutely necessary. Whatever you might think about the person you're up against, you must leave your feelings at the door of the studio. If you allow yourself to hate them, you'll lose your cool, lose focus and lose public sympathy. One way of dealing with your feelings is to regard your opponent as someone who has been misled and needs to be told the truth. Think of your role as being to put them right, rather than to put them down, and you'll find that when you go into the studio you'll be a lot less tense.

And remember - when you go into a studio, you are there to tackle one issue and one issue alone, not to put right the ills of the whole world. Concentrate on one task, and you'll make life a great deal easier for yourself.

## PART 6: FOLLOWING UP

### A. Keeping up your contacts

It's a good idea to write down the names and numbers of all the journalists you meet, and maybe make a brief note of what they're like and how they treated the subject. If you're going to be involved in a long campaign, keep the sympathetic ones informed about it every so often, so that when the next event comes up, they won't have forgotten what it's all about. Share your contact lists and experiences with people in other campaigns: it could help them a lot.

### B. Complaining

Activists are treated unfairly by the press more often than any other group of people except gypsies, travellers and asylum seekers. The reasons are not hard to divine: we are challenging powerful vested interests, we are prepared to break the law and, above all, we can be discussed collectively without any fear of libel, as we do not belong to incorporated organisations.



So, for example, the Sunday Times could claim that "eco-terrorist" tree-sitters at Solsbury Hill booby-trapped buildings, attacked guards with catapults and crossbows and dug pitfall traps full of metal stakes, safe in the knowledge that, as long as no one was named, no one could sue, even though the whole bullshit story was refuted by the police. Had it, on the other hand, made the same allegations about security guards, Reliance would have sued the pants off it, even if neither the company nor the guards were named, as Reliance was the only security company on site.

Redressing bullshit stories is difficult, time-consuming and often very frustrating, but sometimes it works. If we don't complain, the media will feel free to do the same thing again and again, so it's worth trying, even if it ends in failure. Here are the options:

- i. If you're fantastically rich, have been named in person and have lots of free time, sue for libel. It's not an option for most of us, but if you know a lawyer who's prepared to work for free and the case is a clear-cut one, it is worth sending a threatening letter. If it's sufficiently convincing, it might prompt the paper or programme to issue an apology and settle out of court: and a few thousand quid for your cause never goes amiss. Don't try it without a lawyer: they'll just laugh it off. There is no legal aid for libel cases.
- ii. If you or your movement have been slagged off unfairly in the papers, but there's no possibility of legal redress, there are several other options. None of them are ideal, but they're all better than nothing:
  - Write a letter for publication. Make sure it's short, pertinent and not personally insulting. Humour and irony are particularly useful weapons.
  - If you can bear to, talk to the journalist who stitched you up. Be ultra-reasonable and put your case calmly and clearly. Just occasionally, this works, and she or he will relent and write a follow-up piece, putting your side of the story.
  - This is very long shot but, if you've got good writing skills, see if you can persuade the comment editor to let you write a column putting your case.
  - Appeal to the Press Complaints Commission. It's a voluntary body set up by the

newspapers themselves and is, as a result, pretty useless, even though most of its members are now drawn from outside the press. Its code of practice includes guidance on respect for privacy, the right to reply and journalists' behaviour.

**The Press Complaints Commission**, 1 Salisbury Square, London EC4 8AE. Fax: 0171 353 8355. Tel: 0171 353 1248

- iii. If you've been stitched up by the broadcast media, your prospects are rather better. It's governed by quite a few laws and codes, which are supposed to protect both the public interest and individual rights.

If you've got a small complaint, take it up with the programme concerned: preferably with either the producer or the series editor. If you don't get worthwhile, as the producers of Channel 4's asinine *Against Nature* series found to their cost. Following thousands of viewer complaints, the Independent Television Commission delivered one of the most damning verdicts in its history, with the result that Channel 4 had to make a humiliating prime-time apology and the series director, Martin Durkin, had to resign from the company he works for. With luck, he will never work in mainstream television again.

Remember: if they stitch you up and you don't complain, they'll do it to you again and again.

## **PART 7: CONCLUSION**

All campaigning is hard work, and exploiting the media is just as hard as any other aspect. We've tended to neglect it in the past, and then wonder why no one comes to our actions. Our movement needs specialist media workers just as much as it needs specialist tree-climbers. The more there are, the more clearly our message will come across, and the more people will be attracted to our cause. This is how small rumblings turn into earthquakes. The revolution will be televised, but that doesn't mean that it won't also be live.

***@nti-copyright for activists. Copyright for everyone else.***

# *Turning the Tide Taster Sheet*

# **NONVIOLENCE AND ACTIVE NONVIOLENCE**



**Empowered PEOPLE in  
STRONG communities taking  
effective ACTION**

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'Nonviolence' is a word which is used in many ways. People in the Home Office, for example talk about 'nonviolent crime', meaning crime which does not involve physical injury or destruction of property. On the basis of what it sounds like, many people take it to mean just 'not violent' and often interpret it as gentle, passive, harmless, nonconfrontational.

For some activists and theorists, nonviolence is a secular word, meaning 'people power', that is social and political movements which use the power of demonstrations, non-cooperation or direct action to change a situation; it is a strategy, not a principled choice. For others, however, the word carries a religious meaning to do with the ultimate goal of nonviolent action and the spirit in which it is carried out. It is this meaning of the word which the Turning the Tide programme uses.

## ***Nonviolence - a positive calling***

Nonviolence sounds negative, and some aspects are described in terms of a refusal to harm, but the desire not to harm arises from the positive calling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. The vocation of the Christian to compassion and justice leads to a commitment to eschew violence (that which damages and degrades people and the natural world), whether physical, psychological or structured into our society.

## ***Becoming nonviolent people***

From this basic commitment comes a need for us to develop the capacity to be nonviolent in our daily lives and relationships as well as in social and political action. Nonviolence involves absolute respect and care for everyone as people (as opposed to what they might be doing), even opponents. This, together with a willingness to take upon yourself any suffering that might arise, requires a daily spiritual grounding and practice - nonviolence is not something you can spray on after a training session or two! To be open channels of the spirit, we can work on developing the skills of listening, affirmation, communication and assertion.

## ***Active nonviolence***

Active nonviolence is one approach to achieving peace and justice alongside action to build a just world through sustainable and participatory development, and the methods of creative conflict resolution. It is appropriate where there is a disparity in power between two sides in a conflict so that the powerless side has to take action to even up so that negotiations can start. The need may be as basic as to demand recognition from the powerful that they are fellow human beings, or to get them to see that there is a problem. Or the situation may be one of such structural injustice that it cannot be

improved or reformed, but has to be transformed. The aim is both dialogue and resistance - dialogue with the people to persuade them, and resistance to the structures to compel change.

### ***The methods of active nonviolence***

Dramatising actions, usually symbolic, can be used to reveal the truth of an issue and to draw attention to it. For example, homelessness campaigners in Washington claimed the body of a pauper who froze to death and carried it in a coffin to city hall, thus literally laying it the door of those responsible. The 'creative disorder' of demonstrations, blockades, marches or invasions attract attention to an issue and can lead to change. Non-cooperation - strikes, boycotts, stay-aways, refusal to follow orders - and intervention - blockades, sit-ins, direct action - create a crisis and can compel necessary change when opponents are unpersuadable. Creating alternative institutions is another way of altering society. (NB: One should never use a method which one would not want used against oneself!)

### ***Characteristics of a nonviolent campaign***

- Absolute respect for the opponent/everyone involved
- Care for everyone involved
- Refusal to harm, damage or degrade people
- If suffering is inevitable, willingness to take it on yourself rather than inflict it on other
- Belief that everyone is capable of change
- Appeal to the opponents' humanity
- Recognition that no one has a monopoly of truth, so aims to bring together out 'truth' and the opponents' 'truth'
- Understanding that the means are the ends in the making, so the means have to be consistent with the ends
- Preparation and training, so that behaviour is nonviolent

# Turning the Tide Taster Sheet

## POWER



**Empowered PEOPLE in  
STRONG communities taking  
effective ACTION**

Power can be defined as the ability to have an impact on the world. In our society power is usually interpreted as 'power over' - the ability some people and groups have to make other people do things they would not otherwise do. However power is not an inert thing which some people just have; it exists in relationships. The power of some depends on the obedience of others, which leads to the question of why people obey, why they actively or passively keep systems going with which they may not actually agree.

### For example: power in a school

In a school everyone involved with it has some power to make an impact on the school's functioning and the people in it. They can do this because they all possess various advantages, or sources of power.

Who	Sources
<b><i>The Head</i></b>	Social tradition, controls money, gives rewards and punishments, the law, has information, interface with the outside world
<b><i>Teachers</i></b>	Length of experience, knowledge, socially recognised position, the law, (sometimes) charisma
<b><i>Children</i></b>	Numbers, nuisance value, they are the raison d'être for the school's existence
<b><i>Prefects</i></b>	Position in the system
<b><i>Governors</i></b>	Can hire and fire, vested authority, control of budget, can expel
<b><i>Older classes</i></b>	Size and strength
<b><i>The caretaker</i></b>	The key, controls the environment, knowing how things work, (vis a vis the children) is a grown up
<b><i>The school secretary</i></b>	Controls information and is a channel of communication
<b><i>Bullies</i></b>	Size, cunning, intellect, physical strength
<b><i>Parents</i></b>	Can raise money, can remove children (the law), cooperation, can become Governors
<b><i>Secretary of State</i></b>	The law, inspection, ultimately controls resources, civil service apparatus

The sources of power are the reasons why some people obey others, and can be summarised as:

- legitimacy (democratically elected government/divine right of kings)
- habit/social traditions (close to legitimacy)
- control of information and ideas

- skills and knowledge
- physical strength/size (or weapons) - greater ability to threaten
- money, material resources
- 'henchpeople' who carry out the power-holders' orders (police, army)
- incentives (money, status)
- sanctions (fines, prison, death)

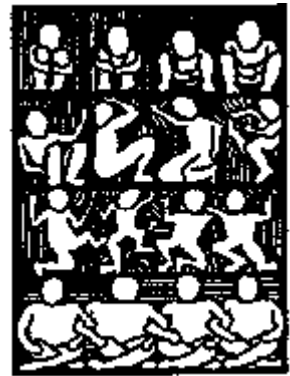
There is also charisma, which may give power to someone who otherwise does not have it, or strengthen the power of someone who has other sources. A very important source of power is the ability to define reality, to be able to say what the world is like and what people are like.

Active nonviolence can enable apparently powerless groups to find power together in order to alter oppressive structures and relationships.



## *Turning the Tide Taster Sheet*

# HOW CHANGE HAPPENS



*Empowered PEOPLE in  
STRONG communities  
taking effective ACTION*

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The tactics we might use in a campaign - for example, leafleting, letters to the government and the press, public meetings, demonstrations, Non-Violent Direct Action - are based on assumptions about how change happens. Most of them are intended either directly to persuade the government (or another elite which 'has' power) to change course, or to stir up public opinion so that the government is pressured into making a change. After a preliminary step of identifying who the elite is (it's not always obvious), the different ways that change can be made to happen can be summarised as:

<b><i>Persuade the elite</i></b>	letters, delegations, information-giving
<b><i>Coerce the elite</i></b>	boycotts, demonstrations, non-cooperation
<b><i>Replace the elite</i></b>	vote another party in, dubious as people in power tend to fall into the structures and patterns of behaviour that they inherit
<b><i>Become the elite</i></b>	get elected, palace coup, but there is always the danger of being co-opted
<b><i>Ignore the elite</i></b>	direct action, just do whatever it is for yourselves, Gandhi's 'constructive programme' of making village India self-reliant and self-governing
<b><i>Abolish the elite</i></b>	revolution, restructuring society to disperse the power

### How deep a change?

When we embark upon action to bring about social, political or economic change, we need to know how deep a change we are seeking - the more it requires people to change their deeply held beliefs and attitudes, or to change their behaviour, the more difficult it will be.

The change may be quite small and simple things like lead-free petrol: life goes on just the same but people put lead-free in their cars.

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|-------------------------|---|
| <b><i>Requires:</i></b> | 1) people to believe that lead does harm (education) - does not require them to take painful action or change their worldviews in any major way   |
|                         | 2) public pressure on politicians to counter the car lobby (letter-writing, lobbying, demos, visibility for the campaign) - not too threatening to the car manufacturers;                   |
| <b><i>In order:</i></b> | 3) to get government legislation or fiscal action (dialogue with government and civil servants) - some cost to the government in lost revenue - but they get brownie points for being green |