

## PAPER FOR ETHICS SYMPOSIUM – 25 OCTOBER 2006

I believe that the public resistance to genetically modified food raw materials is a symptom of society's view on science rather than a criticism of GM technology.

The debate on GM has raged around the "public" demanding safety from this technology and scientists and the world of technology justifying those safety challenges.

There has been no adequate recognition by the scientists / technologists of the public disappointment with i.e. Mad Cow disease and therefore is feeling let-down by "people in the know" and have become suspicious of new technology. Over the last few decades the public has been let down a number of times by these "people in the know"! Let us tackle the tobacco issue. For many years scientists managed to prove that tobacco does not cause cancer until the landmark position was taken when scientists did prove that smoking causes cancer – in fact those scientific results are now published on every cigarette box. Although the comparison is wider, I believe this view can fit the public's position on GM.

I would like to reduce it to :

"You telling us it is safe, what about tobacco "

"You do not even seem to be able to agree amongst each other"

I believe that the pursuit of science has left society behind and no effort is made to manage the public relations of science. Scientific discovery used to be the focus of a privileged few in the previous century, until first governments sponsored and dictated direction of scientific activities before corporations contracted and began to control science for financial gain. The combination of distrust of corporations (i.e. ENRON) and a science which has not for many years been even close to a society is hampering the introduction of new technologies such as GM, the next most likely nano technology.

Unless science can earn back the public/society trust, a return to the dark ages might lie ahead.

Summary :

The debate of GM has nothing to do with the technology but our failure in the scientific community to take care of society interests.

"What about me, my health and the future of my children".

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