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Date:	June 15, 2005
Subject:	Medicines and crops; Greenpeace Fined 4,000 Euros; IITA, NABDA Demystify Biotechnology; Swiss Parliament opposes moratorium; Whole earth - or totally barmy?
	<p>Today in AgBioVoiew from www.agbioworld.org: June 15, 2005</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Medicines and crops * RE: Greenpeace Fined 4,000 Euros Under New Danish Terror Law * Nobel laureate addresses audience at Monsanto * IITA, NABDA Demystify Biotechnology * Parliament opposes GM crop moratorium * Scientists breed new fruits and vegetables * Full committee hearing on "Benefits and future developments in agriculture and Food Biotechnology" * Panel on modified crops taking shape * Whole earth - or totally barmy? <p>=====</p>

In the UK 'Economic Sabotage' is Still a Form of Free Speech ©

By Lawrence A. Kogan, Esq.

The UK government has been desperately trying to keep life science and biotechnology company jobs and investments in the UK. The five-year plan released earlier this year by the UK Department of Trade and Investment (DTI) suggests two possible reasons why such companies may be considering relocation - over-regulation and economic sabotage. Apparently, the UK government has been aware of these problems for some time, as DTI's 5-year plan recommended that the government use a 'lighter regulatory touch' and that it clamp down in a criminal sense on ideological animal rights group activities.

Animal Rights Extremists Commit Economic Sabotage - Animal Testing of Drugs

According to UK trade and industry secretary Patricia Hewitt, the single biggest threat to the UK's "position as number two in the world on biotechnology is the threat of animal rights extremists, animal rights terrorists". And, a spokesman for the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) previously remarked how extremist campaigns were having an increasingly negative impact on R&D investment in the UK and thereby

ruining the industry. Such claims were corroborated by the FT which reported last November (11/18/04 - "UK Plans New Law to Rein in Animal Rights Protesters") that "the UK is perceived as having one of the worst records for attacks by extremists. High profile campaigns of intimidation against anyone associated with animal testing have affected academic research, as well as the development of drugs."

In a January 2005 update of that report (1/20/05 - "Law Targets Animal Rights Militants"), the FT noted further how these activities have served to deter pharmaceutical companies from engaging in animal research by forcing "[i]ncreasing numbers of suppliers to drop their business with [such] companies..." According to ABPI figures, "there were 42 such 'capitulations' in the past quarter of 2004, more than two-thirds of the year's total of 113. More than 100 abusive or threatening phone calls and other communications were made to companies engaged in animal research last year, almost three times the 38 for 2003... There were 177 cases of damage to company, personal and private property in 2004, up from 146 the previous year."

A recent report appearing in the Daily Mail further corroborates this trend. It found that, during the three months ended October 2004, forty-eight attacks were committed on property belonging to pharmaceutical companies and their employees, along with countless acts of abuse and intimidation (e.g., blockades) against these companies' suppliers. In addition, such groups have engaged in personal harassment of life sciences company investors, including threats to publish their names and home addresses on the web unless they sell their shares. In fact, "abuse from animal rights militants has prompted almost 5,000 directors of medical research firms and their customers to seek Government protection." Unfortunately, as a recent BBC radio broadcast has revealed, illegal vigilante acts such as these increasingly reflect the modus operandi as well as the raison d'etre of political pressure groups once more 'sophisticated' attempts at legal or public 'persuasion' have failed. As emphasized by one animal rights group protestor, "You don't pick a company unless you can close it down because otherwise you just make those companies stronger. So when they are chosen - they are finished."

For example, by initially focusing legal and public pressure and threatening bad publicity on the suppliers of Huntingdon Life Sciences, Europe's largest vivisection laboratory, the Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (Shac) campaign caused eighty (80) such companies to sever their ties with the laboratory. Since, however, not all suppliers were convinced, the Shac organization proceeded to take further 'necessary' steps. As the BBC reported, "some nasty things have happened to companies [Shac] has 'named and shamed' on its website". A case in point is the September 10, 2004 placement of fake bombs under the cars of two directors of another Huntingdon supplier. That Shac 'persuasion' tool immediately proved very effective, as the supplier terminated its business relationship with the laboratory later that same day.

What is remarkable is that, until recently, the UK government has continued to permit this extremist behavior to violate other law-abiding citizens' democratic rights even though, as Prime Minister Tony Blair noted, "Britain has the most tightly controlled regime governing animal experiments in the world."

Environmental Extremists Commit Economic Sabotage - GM Crops

What is most disturbing about these activities, however, is that they do not reflect the aberrant behavior of only a small band of miscreants, as UK officials and the UK media would have the world believe. It is common knowledge that ideological extremism and criminal conduct are not entirely the province of animal rights advocates. Environmental extremism is also particularly well entrenched in UK and European daily life, where it has historically been the mainstay of such internationally recognized environmental groups as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, World Wildlife Fund and other more locally focused groups. Environmental extremists within these groups have widely disseminated misinformation to induce consumer fears and distrust of European regulators to gain credibility with the broader European public. They have employed strong lobbying pressure to shape national and regional 'precautionary principle-based' environmental policies. And they have threatened business and personal reputations, engaged in personal harassment and physical intimidation and caused destruction of personal and business property in order to influence industry conduct. Each of the acts within this latter category of 'wrongs' arguably constitutes a type of criminally actionable economic sabotage or economic terrorism no less severe than the acts committed by the animal rights extremists and targeted by Mr. Blair's proposed criminal legislation. That UK "Ministers are still debating whether the offence [being considered] should cover all extremists, not just the animal rights activists who are its principal target", is nothing less than an acknowledgement of this sad but true fact.

A good example of the type of economic sabotage engaged in by environmental extremists in the UK during the past five years involves genetically modified (GM) food, feed and seed. Extremist efforts have focused, since at least 1999, on terrorizing and causing economic loss to industry (biotech and pharmaceutical companies), farmers and scientists that dared to go forward with outdoor government-planned GM trials. Their ultimate goal was to stop the trials altogether, hamper government GM research efforts, and to block industry's development and distribution of GM products to British supermarkets and retail stores. The intended effect of such conduct was to deny the British public a potentially useful, and perhaps, essential new technology.

The UK government had planned to conduct trials in 55 fields by the end of 2000 - 25 fields for maize and oilseed rape and 30 fields for either sugar or fodder beets. Additional farm-scale trials were planned for 2001 and 2002. While government estimates had suggested that a total of 75 participating farms were needed to conduct a viable study, mounting Greenpeace pressure during this three-year period made it difficult to recruit enough farms. As the Guardian reported in September 2000, of the 31 English and Scottish farms that had originally signed up for the trials, 26 were placed on a Greenpeace 'hit list', and two others pulled out due to local pressure.

The trials had been facilitated by the Supply Chain Initiative on Modified Agricultural Crops (SCIMAC), an industry group drawn from the plant breeding, agrochemical and farming sectors, whose objective was to ensure that the commercial introduction of GM crops in the UK is managed openly and responsibly. SCIMAC had drawn up a code of practice on the transfer of information about GM products along the supply chain and

guidelines on the management of herbicide tolerant crops. While the UK government (DEFRA) initially welcomed this 4-year initiative, it did not, for political reasons, endorse outright SCIMAC's risk management guidelines.

Greenpeace-driven economic sabotage was catapulted into the public limelight following the non-guilty jury verdict rendered on September 20, 2000, at the criminal trial of Greenpeace UK executive director, Peter Melchett. Melchett and 27 other members of Greenpeace had been criminally charged on July 26, 1999, with raiding (trespass), damaging (vandalism) and trying to remove (theft) six acres of a GM maize crop that were being grown by local Norfolk farmers for seed company Agr-Evo Ltd (now the agrochemical company Aventis). At trial, Melchett successfully invoked the subjective facts-intensive defense known in Britain as 'the Tommy Archer defense' which, as the Independent wrote, "relied on the jury accepting that the defendant genuinely believed that the action would prevent greater damage being done." In other words, the group's otherwise illegal actions were justified because the group 'honestly' believed that it was responding to an even greater potential threat posed to the environment by the pollination of GM crops. According to the local prosecutor, the verdict was based on a finding that the group's actions were not premeditated, within the meaning of the Criminal Damage Act of 1971, which was said to allow people to protect land and livelihoods from other damaging intrusions. This is utter rubbish and an insult to the average citizen's intelligence!

Despite strong objections voiced against the verdict by SCIMAC, the National Farmers Union and the participating farmers, the UK government remained 'on the fence'. As a result, environmental extremists believed they were given the 'green light' to destroy the UK's GM crop research program, and along with it the crops themselves. This mindset was reflected in the remarks of Charles Secrett, director of Friends of the Earth UK. He was quoted by the Guardian, during September 2000, as stating that, "As far as I can see this throws the door open for people to legitimately destroy GM crops that are about to go to pollen" (emphasis added). These comments suggest either that the unrepentant extremists suavely knew what they were doing, or that they lacked the mental capacity to appreciate the criminality (wrongfulness) of their conduct or the need to conform their conduct to the requirements of the law. In other words, they were criminally insane.

A number of additional attacks against GM crop trials followed the issuance of this verdict at various locations in England and Scotland, between March and August 2002. They were committed by Friends of the Earth and other local extremist groups, and resulted in the destruction of many more acres of GM crops planted by different UK farmers located in such places as Warwickshire, Munloch (at Easter Ross in the Scottish Highlands), Newport and Hilton, Dorset. The irony of these events was plain for all to see. Individual farmers had willingly participated in UK government planned GM crop trials facilitated by a cautious industry, which were intended to provide more information to the public about the potential scientific risks and benefits associated with herbicide-resistant crops. This was precisely the kind of information environmental extremists such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth had demanded all along but chose to ignore for political reasons.

These environmental extremists, however, were not satisfied until they could also disrupt and destroy the business relationships that existed along the British food supply chain. As

early as the fall of 2000, the US Department of Agriculture had noted how Greenpeace-induced "hysteria surrounding genetically engineered (GE) food" had prompted pledges from a number of British supermarkets to phase out meat, eggs and dairy products from animals fed GM crops. This was in addition to the bans they had already adopted on the direct use of GM crops in breads, cakes, ice cream, and other products. In other words, Greenpeace was able to successfully shape consumer demand for GM products as well as influence producer and retailer supply of such products. This was achieved by promoting consumer misinformation and fear and by engaging in guerilla-type military tactics against companies, their employees and their suppliers. The goal was plainly and simply economic sabotage, at both a micro and macro level.

The UK Must Hold Animal Rights and Environmental Extremists Legally Accountable

In many ways, animal rights and environmental extremism raises similar British and European societal concerns that go much deeper than the safety of animal testing or GM crops. Fundamental questions about the ability of the British and European legal systems to cope with the gradual erosion of respect for private rights and public authority need to be answered. While it may be true that peaceful direct action carried out by people who actually take responsibility for their actions must be allowed to shape what happens in a mature democracy, it does not, however, follow that the irresponsible vigilante 'justice' practiced by these extremist groups deserves respect at all.

Indeed, the UK would be sending a negative message to the global life science and biotech industries and to the many laboratories and universities participating in critical cutting-edge research if it did not immediately curtail and treat these types of extremist conduct as criminally actionable offenses under the law. After all, the British animal rights and environmental movements are among the largest and strongest in the world, and global activists look to them as models of inspiration which they then import into their own countries and employ against government and industry.

Former Greenpeace co-founder, Patrick Moore, recognized almost ten years ago that it was "not reasonable to expect the [modern] environmental movement to drop its extremist agenda overnight. The rise of extremism is a major feature of the movement's evolution and is now deeply embedded in its political structure" (emphasis added). Unfortunately, nothing much has changed since that time - in fact, it has only gotten worse. And, it has spread to other causes, such as animal rights.

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