

# Why I have broken the AgrEvo injunction against genetiX snowball

Martin Shaw

3<sup>rd</sup> August 1999

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of this month in the Royal Court of Justice, the Judge Mr Burton described me as ‘reckless’ for breaking the Monsanto injunction without seeking legal advice, in some respects he was correct. This time I have sought specific legal advice and thought very carefully about this action.

AgrEvo and Monsanto are corporate bullies, they think they can stop people getting involved in open and accountable Nonviolent Direct Action (NVDA) by imposing injunctions and thereby threatening them with financial sanctions and ultimately depriving them of their freedom. To a certain extent they are right. GenetiX snowball is intended – and hopefully will be - a mass movement against Genetic Modification (GM) of food, corporate control and mindless obedience. Our openness has led to oppressive and wide-ranging injunctions from both companies. Hopefully our actions today will show them in their true nature, which is not the caring environmentally friendly company they attempt to portray to the public but the soulless despoilers of the earth. AgrEvo together with other multinational companies put profit before life.

Despite legal difficulties in this country, genetiX snowball inspired actions are starting to happen around the world and thousands of people support our actions in this country. Recently a group in Croatia uprooted a GM trial site and the same will hopefully soon be happening in the USA and in other countries. Two fields have recently been destroyed in California, the action was dedicated in part to genetiX snowball, as well as the covert Lincolnshire Loppers and the mass open movement in India. appropriately called ‘Cremate Monsanto’.

AgrEvo have conducted more releases of GMO’s in Britain in 1999 than any other company. Approximately 42 out of the 135 deliberate releases are either AgrEvo or Plant Genetic Systems. PGS have been taken over by AgrEvo, which is typical of an industry that is dominated by only a few huge companies which can control the market – but as recent consumer backlash has shown not people who make up that ‘market’.

The Spring Oilseed Rape, which has been pulled up today, is the same variety as the three farm scale trials. The purpose of the release is to test this variety for the National Seed List (NSL). This is one of the final (and only) legislative hurdles before a new variety can be grown commercially. The information being gathered will not add one iota to the real questions around the growing of GM crops: if they are

wanted, necessary or safe to humans or the environment.

AgrEvo recently appealed to the high court to have all the farm scale tests included on the sites which we are enjoined from. This shows the clear link between farm scale trials, which are meant to be scientific and independent, and AgrEvo who provided the seed and I believe the security guards to 'protect' the plants at Watlington. What is happening to this green and pleasant land when private security guards are employed by multinational companies to protect plants from citizens whose primary demands are wholesome food and freedom from oppression?

Britain is at the forefront of the worldwide campaign against GM agriculture. The hopes of millions of people for a more organic and truly sustainable future of the world's food supply are, to some extent, in our hands. We as individuals can either be part of the problem or part of the solution. Millions of people in this country have rejected GM food in the shops, thereby becoming part of the solution. Due to the political climate, my personal circumstances and support from friends, family and professional people I am able to take the resistance further.

In life most people are their own jailers; we internalise the fear of sanctions by the state, this prevents us acting in ways that we feel are right and democratic. In this way the state controls us without us realising it most of the time. To be branded a 'criminal' for taking largely selfless acts to protect the planet and its people is preposterous and a gross misuse of the term. There is no corporate liability (at present) for genetic or environmental damage caused by GM, giving them impunity to manipulate life for their profit.

Governments and the complacent media nearly always slur campaigns of NVDA as undemocratic or 'mob rule'. Democracy itself has been won by direct action (although not always nonviolent). The briefest glance at history will show that many of the most important beneficial changes in society have been won for the people by 'activists' resisting the rule of law in a proportionate manner when necessary.

I take no pleasure in breaking this court order and do so reluctantly. However I believe that it is important for democracy and society that protests cannot be 'SLAPPed'<sup>1</sup> down by companies with the money and power to use and manipulate our legal system to the detriment natural justice and the common good.

I believe that AgrEvo and Monsanto have used this tactic deliberately to prevent a full public criminal trial where we can use the 'public interest' defence for criminal damage. If this defence is allowed to be heard it will bring the truth out into the open about GM food. Up until now the biotech industry and

complicate governments like ours are deceiving the public and farmers about the truth behind GM.

These companies hoped that we would be afraid to break their injunctions – and they were right. But the three of us have moved through some of our fears and with the freedom we have gained we are able to act with integrity and honesty. I hope and believe this will resonate with and be understood by most people. Indeed I hope people will take courage and inspiration from this action to take similar actions.

As Margaret Mead said:

***Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world: indeed, it's the only thing that ever does.***

Today as well as pulling up and bagging GM plants, I have further broken the injunction by committing the heinous crime of planting organic apple pips, wild flower seeds and biohazard signs on the site. Some of these flowers would be growing in the area if it were not for the broad-spectrum herbicide being sprayed on this site. The majority of Britain's floristic diversity (and top soil) has been lost since the Second World War due to destructive agricultural practices.

There is surely something very wrong when rural employment is at an all time low and falling. Farmers are using dangerous chemicals which are damaging to themselves as well as the environment and final consumer. Whilst this is happening the tax payers are paying billions of pounds to pay for set aside and to subsidise over production.

People taking NVDA against GM deliberate release sites have been accused of not wanting to publicly debate the issues and being antidemocratic. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is often the biotech companies who refuse to speak at public meetings and manipulate governments and regulators. Dr Paul Roylott the Commercial Seed Manager at AgrEvo refused to share the same platform with me at a discussion organised by the British Association for the Advancement of Science. In his letter, together with a number of gross factual inaccuracies, he states "Destroying trials does not indicate a willingness to enter into genuine open debate. I cannot condone such actions and therefore feel that my attendance on stage with any member of this group is inappropriate." I wish to point out to Dr Rylott and AgrEvo (as we have in all our correspondence) that we are willing to discuss the matter at any time regardless of the

---

<sup>1</sup> a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation used extensively in the USA to prevent activists from taking effective NVDA. Another unwelcome import from 'the land of the free.'

fact they continue to sow GM seeds despite massive public opposition.

***No prison can contain,  
The freedom that you gain  
when you move through fear.***

Words from 'With my hammer' by Shannon & Theo of *Seize the Day* to whom this action is dedicated.

With love and respect for all that you do.