

DOCUMENTS
**THE BOGÈVE DECLARATION: TOWARDS A
PEOPLE-ORIENTED BIOTECHNOLOGY**

Synopsis—Twenty-eight participants from 19 countries met at La Soleillette, Bogève, France, March 7-12, for the 1987 Dag Hammarskjöld Seminar entitled *The Socioeconomic Impact of New Biotechnologies on Basic Health and Agriculture in the Third World*. The seminar was organized and sponsored by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden, and the Rural Advancement Fund International (RAFI), Pittsboro, NC, U.S.A., and Brandon, Canada, in cooperation with the International Organization of Consumers Unions (IOCU), Penang, Malaysia, The International Coalition for Development Action (ICDA), Brussels, Belgium, and the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) in Geneva.

We, the seminar participants, met in Bogève, France, to discuss the impact of new biotechnologies on health and agriculture in the Third World, where the vast majority of the world's people live. In discussing the nature of the new biotechnologies, and their significance for humanity, we recognise that biotechnology is a global issue. It cannot be assigned such attributes as positive, negative, or neutral. Like any other technology, it is inextricably linked to the society in which it is created and used, and will be as socially just or unjust as its milieu. Therefore, we conclude that in today's world this most powerful new technology is more likely to serve the interests of the rich and powerful than the needs of the poor and powerless.

We fully recognize the potential of biotechnology to improve the quality of life of humanity. But it is important to emphasize the risks and hazards associated with biotechnology, including serious and possibly irreversible health, safety, environmental, and socioeconomic consequences, as well as the use of such technology in biological warfare.

In agriculture, for instance, while biotechnology may promise to increase production and reduce costs, it is more likely

to accentuate inequalities in the farm population, aggravate the problem of genetic erosion and uniformity, undermine life-support systems, increase the vulnerability and dependence of farmers, and further concentrate the power of transnational agribusiness.

In health, for instance, biotechnology promises more effective diagnostic tools and new ways of preventing and curing diseases. However, the pharmaceutical industry is more likely to focus on the most profitable commercial opportunities and divert attention from basic health requirements.

In view of the above, we make the following recommendations.

AT THE CITIZEN LEVEL

- that we accept a major role in the development of public discussion and policy related to biotechnology;
- that we monitor industry activities in this field;
- that we commit ourselves to taking action in this field with the relevant UN bodies including FAO, GATT, ILO, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNIDO, WHO, and WIPO;

- that we agree to carry our concerns back to the networks with whom we are engaged, such as Health Action International (HAI), International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), Pesticide Action Network (PAN), and Seeds Action Network (SAN) in order to facilitate cooperation;

- that we seek to promote appropriate technologies that are socially just and ecologically sustainable, including regenerative agriculture, alternative crop protection strategies, preventive medicine, recycling of resources and wastes, etc.

AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

- that a dialogue be established to determine the real needs of society and the main requirements for a national biotechnology strategy based on these needs;

- that the socioeconomic and environmental implications of such a strategy be fully considered;

- that the regulatory requirements for the safe testing and introduction of the technology be established and stringently enforced;

- that the control over the technology be as signed to the public sector and that the monopolization of the technology by private interests be resisted.

AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

- that, as at the national level, a wider-ranging international discussion of the impact of biotechnologies be encouraged and begun as soon as possible, noting particularly the initiatives begun in UNIDO/ICGEB (The International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology), UNCSTD/ATAS (The Advance Technology Alert System), and other international bodies;

- that Third World governments take measures to develop appropriate biotechnologies and further explore the opportunities for South-South cooperation in all aspects of the development and use of biotechnology, in particular with regard to the utilization of genetic raw materials;

- that the evolution of research and development of biotechnology be closely monitored so that the interests and rights of the Third World are kept foremost in institutions working on these issues;

- that changes in existing intellectual property rights discussed in WIPO, which deny the rights of the Third World, should be closely monitored and that a major revision of the Paris Convention be encouraged in order to safeguard the interests of the Third World.

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm that a rational biotechnology policy must be geared to meet the real needs of the majority of the world's people and the creation of more equitable and self-reliant societies while working in harmony with the environment.

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Reproductive and Genetic Engineering: Journal of International Feminist Analysis

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