

# MONSANTO



OCCUCARD #7



EXPOSING AND OPPOSING THE CORPORATE STATE

**M**onsanto is a multinational agricultural biotechnology corporation headquartered in Creve Coeur, Missouri. With the exception of weapons manufacturers and other private military firms, there is perhaps no corporation that provides such a dramatic example of corporate influence over government. Not only does Monsanto spend a staggering \$8 million a year lobbying government officials (imagine 80 full-time lobbyists each paid \$100,000 a year), but many former Monsanto executives hold key positions in the FDA, EPA and USDA, where they have made favorable regulatory decisions regarding Monsanto products.

One of those products, recombinant bovine somatotropin, commonly known as “bovine growth hormone” (rBGH), is a synthetic hormone injected into cows to increase milk production. It also increases the levels a substance called IGF-1 in their milk, which is then passed on to humans. Elevated blood serum levels of IGF-1 have been linked in numerous studies to breast, colon and prostate cancer. For this reason, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and all 27 European Union countries have banned the use of rBGH. The FDA’s highly controversial 1993 decision approving rBGH was overseen by former Monsanto attorney, Michael R. Taylor, who was serving as the FDA’s Deputy Commissioner of Policy at the time. After the decision Taylor left the FDA and again joined Monsanto, becoming the company’s chief lobbyist and Vice President for Public Policy. He has since gone back and forth between Monsanto and various government positions in the FDA and the USDA, highlighting the “revolving door syndrome” that has become a hallmark of corporate-government collusion.

Monsanto’s genetically modified (GM) crops consist primarily of those modified to be resistant to the herbicide Roundup (another Monsanto product) and those modified to contain within their cells the biological pesticide called *Bacillus thuringiensis* (or Bt). Widespread health and environmental concerns over both these types of GM plants are based on numerous scientific studies and have resulted in many countries banning GM crops entirely. In the European Union a moratorium on new GM crops has been in effect since 1998 and strict labeling is required on all genetically modified food products approved before the moratorium. Monsanto has spent millions of dollars pressuring EU officials to allow the introduction of GM foods into Europe, and—more significantly—recent Wikileaks documents reveal U.S. State Department officials also pressuring EU officials on Monsanto’s behalf.

Monsanto’s actions run the gamut of illegality and dirty tricks, and include the attempted bribery of Canadian officials; the intentional dumping of toxic waste into the environment; and the filing of hundreds of lawsuits alleging “patent infringement” against small farmers whose crops became contaminated with their patented genes, etc. Mass protests against Monsanto have spread to dozens of countries around the world and have included civil disobedience actions like the burning of experimental crop fields and the nonviolent occupation of Monsanto facilities.

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