



GE Free New Zealand In Food and Environment Newsletter July 2009

*Please note that some articles have been abbreviated in order to meet size constraints **

GE Free New Zealand victory in landmark case

Agresearch open ended genetic engineering experimentation has been overturned by a high court decision.

This application, had it been approved would have allowed any DNA from animals (inc. human and monkey), plants, fungi, microorganisms, viruses and/or synthetic sequences to be used in 9 livestock species. It would have set a precedent for 'carte blanche' genetic engineering experiments in unidentified locations endangering New Zealand's agricultural economy and environment.

The case taken by GE Free New Zealand was due to concerns that without a clear understanding of the organisms to be created any risk could not be evaluated. GE Free New Zealand argued that ERMA was wrong to accept the application in the first instance. Justice Clifford agreed that ERMA erred in its decision to accept the AgResearch application under the HSNO Act. This application can therefore no longer be processed. AgResearch have appealed the decision.

"This is a precedent-setting case and an amazing win for the public of New Zealand that protects our farmers and exporters," says Claire Bleakley. "We would like to thank all who supported and helped us in the process of the case." See more P2

GE Free NZ AGM
Arts Centre, 61 Abel Smith St
Wellington
September 13th 10am-4pm

Councils look at local controls on GM

Jun 25/6/09 Eloise Gibson
www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?id=1&objectid=10580602

Any day now – (See Page 6)
Aucklanders will be asked whether trials of genetically modified organisms should be allowed in their area as councils consider imposing local bans. Several councils in the Northland and Auckland regions have grown increasingly frustrated at what some say is a lack of proper control over GM field trials by Government authorities.

A telephone poll by Colmar Brunton this July, jointly funded by the Auckland regional and Waitakere, Rodney, Far North, Whangarei and Kaipara city and district councils, will ask a sample of more than 2000 residents if they are happy to leave GM controls to the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) or if they would like additional local rules.

A working group of seven Auckland and Northland councils (the six backing the poll and the Northland Regional Council) has obtained a legal opinion concluding councils probably have the power to ban or limit GM activities using rules in district plans.

Working group co-ordinator Dr Kerry Grundy, of the Whangarei District Council, said there was a lot of concern over who would foot the bill if genetically engineered field trials went wrong and contaminated the produce of other farmers, or tarnished a region's "clean, green" image.

Erma approves or rejects applications to import and develop genetically engineered material in New Zealand.

This month GE-free New Zealand won a High Court ruling that Erma was wrong to accept applications from taxpayer-funded Crown Research Inst. (CRI) AgResearch for the laboratory testing of human and monkey cell lines and development of GM cows, buffalo, sheep, pigs, goats, llama, alpaca, deer and horses.

Several councils unsuccessfully lobbied the Government to amend the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act to clarify councils' responsibilities or to give them a say in Erma's decision-making process. Councils from Auckland north have already adopted statements saying they support a cautious approach to, or may look at banning, GE trials in their areas until there is more information about the risks and benefits.

In February, a 10-year genetic modification trial was cancelled and another put on hold after 2 years when anti-GM campaigners exposed breaches of field trial rules that risked contamination of the environment. CRI Plant and Food Research admitted serious failures in a vegetable trial at Lincoln, near Christchurch, after plants that should have been destroyed were instead left to flower, exposing the environment to their GM pollen.

At the time, a Plant and Food spokesman said the breach was an embarrassing lapse by the institute.

GM animal applications invalid - High Court appeal upheld

GE Free NZ Press Release 7.6.09

In a precedent setting case, the High Court upheld the appeal by GE Free NZ against ERMA & AgResearch.

After 12 weeks of deliberation, Justice Clifford found that ERMA erred in receiving the applications from AgResearch and has declared them invalid. The decision sets aside the decision by ERMA to proceed with the applications. ERMA is to take no further steps toward hearing and assessing the applications.

In October 2008 GE Free NZ went to the High Court to appeal a decision by ERMA NZ to notify 4 applications submitted by AgResearch that ranged from importing genetically engineered embryo's created overseas, to field trialing and commercial production of pharmaceuticals in milk, development of animals to model disease and virtually 'anything else' that would be of commercial interest.

"Our concerns about the broad and indefinite nature of these applications have been upheld." says Claire Bleakley "The cruelty and unregulated exploitation of animals for unsound GM research is not acceptable to New Zealanders."

The decision instructs ERMA to immediately halt processing the applications. AgResearch sought the right to modify 9 species of animals, for an unlimited period, for commercial ventures anywhere in NZ.

"This was not the 'case by case' regulation of ethical research that government promised the public, following the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification, but a wholesale rush to commercialisation that would likely devastate New Zealand's export and tourism image," says Jon Carapiet spokesperson for GE Free NZ.

Neither AgResearch nor overseas investors must be allowed such limitless scope to exploit New Zealand as a GE playground and threaten the very core of the New Zealand Brand.

Plant & Food Research Needs To Drop GE

Soil & Health PR 14.1.09

Plant & Food's misleading statements and conflicts of interest further show the need for genetic engineering (GE) field trials to be abandoned says the Soil & Health Association of NZ.

"Plant & Food's spin shows desperation to continue its GE field trials taking Aotearoa New Zealand down a path away from its current Clean Green and 100% Pure branding," said Soil & Health spokesperson Steffan Browning.

"Several flowers had opened and each of the opened flowers will have released pollen into the environment and GE seed pods may have resulted on non-GE brassicas in the area as a result of this negligence. A wide range of brassicas including broccoli, cabbage, forage kale and cauliflower would have been susceptible to insect or wind pollination."

"The field trial site is another example of the lack of monitoring of GE science in New Zealand. ERMA's consent conditions for the field trial state that following the growing season monthly inspections for volunteer plants must occur and any volunteers must be removed and killed by steam (autoclaving). Dr Campbell stated on radio that monitoring was carried out more regularly than required, yet when I inspected the site in December the dozens of plants showing regrowth were many months old and at least one had flowered." said Mr Browning.

"Dr Campbell, Plant & Food's management and board appear to be blinded to the risks of GE."

"Such blatant misinformation coming from a research organisation that is largely funded by the taxpayer shows a need for a major shake up and revamp of agricultural and horticultural science in this country."

The chair of Plant & Food is a FORST director and two senior HortResearch staff were on the ERMA GE Brassica committee that approved this field trial.

New Zealand Better Off After GE trials Cancelled

GE Free NZ PR

The decision to halt further trials of GE brassica comes following an internal report by Crown Research Institute (CRI) Plant and Food on the biosecurity breach at the trial site. The report recommends the brassica site should be closed down immediately. No further plantings are to be made and new personnel are to be put in place with the requisite experience to monitor the site over one year for volunteer GE plants.

"The internal report reflects the seriousness of the breach," said Claire Bleakley. The report has left the trial manager as the scapegoat, but the whole internal support and team leadership as well as regulatory agencies are implicated. The report shows a lack of enforcement and expertise by many people involved in the trial.

In its decision approving the trials the ERMA Authority set ambiguous and broad controls that were open to gross exploitation by Crop and Food managers. The inspection agency MAF overlooked enforcement protocols and accepted verbal assurances of site events, without visual confirmation.

See

www.radionz.co.nz/news/stories/2009/01/12/12459800051c

www.scoop.co.nz/stories/SC0901/S00010.htm

Soil and Health PR 28.6.09

MAF finalised the matter by way of a formal warning to the Plant and Food Research Field Test Manager, the scientist who had resigned her position as approved containment facility operator following publicity of the breach.

Plant and Food could have been fined at least \$10 million, and the scientist \$500,000.

This is more evidence that GM containment rules mean nothing and that breaches are excused. The rules ignore natural processes that make GM contamination inevitable.

Doctors Call for Ban on Genetically Modified Foods 30.6.09
www.responsibletechnology.org/utility/showArticle/?objectID=2989

Doctors Warn: Avoid Genetically Modified Food - Jeffrey M. Smith

On May 19th, the American Academy of Environmental Medicine (AAEM) called on "*Physicians to educate their patients, the medical community, and the public to avoid GM (genetically modified) foods when possible and provide educational materials concerning GM foods and health risks.*"

They called for a moratorium on GM foods, long-term independent studies, and labelling.

AAEM's position paper stated, "*Several animal studies indicate serious health risks associated with GM food,*" including infertility, immune problems, accelerated aging, insulin regulation, and changes in major organs and the gastrointestinal system.

They conclude, "*There is more than a casual association between GM foods and adverse health effects. There is causation,*" as defined by recognized scientific criteria.

"The strength of association and consistency between GM foods and disease is confirmed in several animal studies."

Many doctors are already prescribing GM-free diets. Dr. Amy Dean, a Michigan internal medicine specialist, and board member of AAEM says, "***I strongly recommend patients eat strictly non-genetically modified foods.***" Ohio allergist Dr. John Boyles says "*I used to test for soy allergies all the time, but now that soy is genetically engineered, it is so dangerous that I tell people never to eat it.*"

Dr. Jennifer Armstrong, President of AAEM, says, "***Physicians are probably seeing the effects in their patients, but need to know how to ask the right questions.***" World renowned biologist Pushpa M. Bhargava goes one step further. After reviewing more than 600 scientific journals, he concludes that genetically modified organisms (GMOs) are a major contributor to the sharply deteriorating

health of Americans. READ MORE
www.aeonline.org/gmopost.html

Kiwi Poll Rejects GE Animals
www.giantexperiment.co.nz/news/item.aspx?id=89780868-c960-4243-b526-ff0f72083ac6

Soil & Health & SAFE:
GE Animal Poll
media release.12.10.08

Most New Zealanders are strongly opposed to the genetic engineering of animals in New Zealand, with farmers as ardently opposed as the rest of the community.

A Colmar Brunton Omnijet survey of over 1000 people shows two thirds (67%) of people are opposed. Opposition is equally strong across different ethnicities: among those with Maori descent who expressed an opinion nine out of ten (86%) are opposed.

Commissioned by the Soil & Health Association of New Zealand and the national animal advocacy organisation SAFE, along with GE Free NZ and the Green Party; it found that only 27 per cent of New Zealanders, and just 28 per cent of farmers, support genetic engineering (GE) of animals. Six out of ten farmers (61%) who stated an opinion in the survey said they do not support GE of animals, and almost a third of all farmers surveyed (28%) stated they 'don't know.'

A Quarter Million NZ Raised GE Eucalyptus Trees Intended for Planting in U.S

Soil & Health 28.6.09
www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PO0906/S00313.htm

More than a quarter of a million genetically engineered (GE) eucalyptus trees exported from New Zealand stand to shred New Zealand's clean, green brand and risk large-scale health and environmental damage.

ArborGen,(GE)tree research company one third owned by New Zealand company Rubicon (formerly Fletcher Challenge Forestry), is trying to plant 260,000 GE cold tolerant eucalyptus trees in 29 so called "field trials" in 7 different US states. These trees will be able to flower and set seed. While not permitted to be field trialled in New

Zealand have been developed in and exported from New Zealand.

Councils Take Note of High Court Decision 11.6.09

Auckland Regional Council PR:
www.arc.govt.nz/index.cfm?58A620FD-14C2-3D2D-B9CA-EA5858882785&objUUID=CC6AA3DF-14C2-3D2D-B9F8-AE9F33575DBB

Ruling gives nod to ARC's cautious take on GMOs

A High Court ruling overturning the government's Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA) decision to accept GMO applications from AgResearch is applauded by the Auckland Regional Council (ARC).

In 2007, the ARC adopted a precautionary position in relation to GMOs in response to both concerns expressed by communities and individuals, as well as some serious questions around local government liability should things go wrong.

Cr Brent Morrissey, ARC's representative the High Court ruling sends a strong signal to government that the body it set up to rigorously evaluate applications has not done its job.

"We identified problems with central government's approach to GMOs a long time ago and have been watching things carefully since. Local government has an opportunity through the Resource Management Act and the Local Government Act to regulate GMOs, and people can be very sure that we are protecting their best interests."

"Lastly, before going full steam ahead with GMOs, the government needs to give full consideration to the range of big questions around GMs – from concerns over human safety to environmental issues.

"This is a classic example, of how local councils take the lead in representing the views of New Zealanders and can best protect their interests."

"In this case we believe that ERMA was bullied into accepting applications that should have easily been seen as woefully deficient. We are worried that ERMA is being used by pro-GMO interests and is not adequately considering the risk to New Zealand and New Zealanders from the use of GMOs," concludes Cr Morrissey.

MONSANTO PESTICIDES: An interview by Ken Roseboro with scientist Gilles-Eric Seralini May 08

"I practiced genetic modification not to make plants but to make bacteria to investigate the role of genes in cancer. I cloned several genes in human cells to look at hormonal promoted cancers. I thought it was great when I heard that commercialised GMOs were released in order to reduce pesticide use. I asked to see the files as I was working on the effects of pesticides on cancers, it was very difficult to get them. Eventually I got the working documents I saw nothing had been done to look at the actual effect of the pesticides within the plant. Instead of reducing pesticide use, three-quarters of the GM were created in order to absorb pesticides like Round-up and one-quarter designed to produce their own pesticides. I was worried about the control of that.

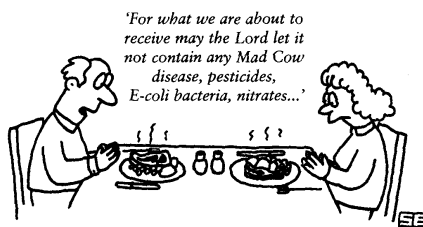
In 2003 I was chosen by the EU to review all the studies commercial GM sites in Europe. The reviews were not organised - they could not answer the controls that were needed to enforce GM in Europe. I felt the crucial controls were to have labelling and a ban on GM ingredients in food. First Clinton and then Bush have said that the scientific arguments and request for more controls should be ignored and they complained about GM labelling and assessment in Europe.

I began to work on Round-up and I discovered several things - doses of Roundup lower than those recommended for agricultural use were potentially toxic, and Roundup is considered less toxic to the ecosystem than other pesticides. Even small amounts could disturb human and rat pregnancies, mouse kidneys, rabbit sperm and other human tissues. The pesticide disrupted endocrine production, which is necessary for the creation of oestrogen, even in the male. In 2007 we challenged a Monsanto advertisement extolling the biodegradability of Roundup. The advert was banned and Monsanto was fined 15,000 euros.

I was asked to meet other experts and specialists from across Europe and we

asked Government for environmental assessments of GMOs. The result was EU Directive 201.

GM is not about feeding poor children. They are here to feed the rich of the G8 countries. Countries that are very rich, and their politicians, are in favor of it. The technology has a lot of rich possibilities but the way they are exploiting and using it right now is to serve pesticides in the plant without the proper tests and assessments. If you were to do the proper tests and assessments, GM is not profitable as it is. 99.9% of GM plants are to absorb or produce pesticides. People don't see that. They only see the propaganda about growing food in a desert or feeding the world, how all other problems will be solved if this technology is allowed.



There are 30 million kinds of plants in the world and just four - rice, wheat, maize and soya - give 60% of the food and energy. It should be possible to change that, making different plants adapted to different countries to help feed the world, but not if you make thousands of hectares of the same plants just for feeding pigs and cows.

The fact that you have only four plants imposes monoculture and also the control of the seeds. If you control the seeds that feed the world you become 100 times richer than Bill Gates because you can say which country has which seed and which culture and you get paid every time somebody uses that seed anywhere in the world. And if you add the possibility of green oil you become master of the world. You are richer than any State or any country. You have more power, and you decide who plants what.

The drug companies want to do that. The eight biggest drug companies are the biggest GM makers and the biggest pesticide manufacturers. They are interested in GM not to make a lot of

varieties but to have patents for these four species. They began with maize and soya and they had the patent last year (2007) for wheat in the United States and they are working on rice.

I believe GM seed will make hunger in the world. They will make people starve. Poor people will not have enough money to buy the seed.

I think GMOs are dangerous because of the results that have been produced in the laboratory, because of Roundup residue and probably because of Bt residue. I think GM technology is out of control.

You can't feed 240 million Europeans without tracing the product and GM is not traceable. There's no traceability in the States where 98% are produced at the seed level.

I'm confident that the effects of GM are not like toxic effects. They are like pesticides - they increase endocrine diseases, increase cancers and increase neurological diseases like we have seen in farmers, increase malfunction and reproductive problems. But if there's no traceability you can't ask the right questions.

You can't find out about GM created diseases if you don't study it. We are almost eating GM already through animal feed in Europe. Are American people more sick because they are eating GM food directly? Are they living less and having more food-related diseases? The answer is yes to both of the last questions.

Americans are living less and more are dying early from food-related problems. Is that linked to GM or hormones in the cow or to all the additives in the food they eat? No one knows because no one is finding out. GM is not labelled over there. It will go on like that for years if we don't study the problem.

I wanted a moratorium of GM in Europe, but we have been told we can't have any money for testing. So this is the first time in the history of the world that what amounts to a drug or pesticide has not been tested before release by anybody other than the company that makes it.

Government position

There appears to be a pro GE attitude at all strategic levels of science and government with an expectation of increased commercial outcomes from the science dollar. Steffan Browning recently attended the Agricultural and Horticultural Science Forum in Lincoln to find the attendees (mostly pro GE) ebullient and confident about the future of GE in NZ.

We need to speak out against this at every opportunity reminding government of the importance of our quality primary produce exports as the foundation of our economy. The NZ public groundswell that has developed over the past years must visibly show opposition to GE, particularly to GE biofuels and GE animal research as they are probably the main future focus for the 'gene jockeys' outside the lab now.

Food Labeling—Country of Origin

For many years now GE Free NZ and others have been fighting for country of origin labeling enabling us to inform ourselves of the origin of the foods we buy. Not only would country of origin give us the chance to avoid GE foods but also foods from countries where agricultural practices may not always be healthy & safe.

Questions in the house July 09

Sue Kedgley (Greens) to the Minister of Consumer Affairs: If country-of-origin labeling remains voluntary for single-ingredient foods—such as fruit, vegetables, meat, and fish—then how will the Government guarantee that all such labels are fair and accurate?

Hon Heather Roy (Minister of Consumer Affairs) : The accuracy and fairness of country-of-origin labeling, like the labeling of other goods, is regulated by the Fair Trading Act. This requires that information about goods must not be misleading or deceptive.

Sue Kedgley: Is it not the case that if labeling remains voluntary, and there are no minimum mandatory standards that retailers are required to meet, there will actually be no way of guaranteeing that unscrupulous retailers do not mislabel imported products as products of New Zealand,

and there will be no way of ensuring that the more than 1,000 retailers of fresh food actually bother to label their fresh produce?

Hon Heather Roy: We are a small, reasonably well-educated economy. We are often able to achieve through voluntary means what other jurisdictions can achieve only through compulsion. The industry has shown, as indicated, a willingness to participate in a voluntary code; in fact, some supermarkets have already started. Given that there is increasing demand from the public to know where their food comes from, I put this issue on my work plan in January this year. Subsequently, the Prime Minister asked me to progress work on voluntary country-of-origin labeling of wholefoods, and I have set up a working group to explore the options around this issue. The working group is led by me. Its other members are the Minister for Food Safety, the Minister of Agriculture, and the Minister of Trade. Our respective officials have begun work and have been in discussions with retailers.

Sue Kedgley: Why, when country-of-origin labeling is mandatory for clothing, footwear, and wine, should it be voluntary for food, especially when other food labeling, such as ingredients and nutrition labeling, is mandatory and underpinned by a regulatory standard?

Hon Heather Roy: My understanding is that the mandatory requirement for clothing and footwear to be labeled was an initiative that was put in by a previous Government quite some time ago in the early stages of a "made in New Zealand" campaign. Things have moved on significantly since that stage, and, as I indicated in my last answer, due to an increasing demand from the public to know where their food comes from, I have put the issue on my work plan. A working group is dealing with the issue now.

Sue Kedgley: Why, when she is Minister of a department whose main role is to encourage the provision of accurate information between suppliers and consumers, would she not support consumers' right to know where their food comes from and to be confident that labels are fair and

accurate, especially when point-of-sale labeling of fresh foods is very easy and cheap to implement?

Hon Heather Roy: The reason I set up a working group is to explore the issues. We want to see consistent guidelines put in place so that it is easy for retailers to conform in a voluntary capacity. I have every confidence, based on discussions that I have had to date with retailers, that they are willing to put things in place. It is important, in my position as Minister of Consumer Affairs, to ensure that information is easy to access for consumers. I am confident that a voluntary regime—as supported by the Labour Party, the National Party, and the ACT Party—is enough to cover this issue.

Sue Kedgley tabled a Horticulture New Zealand report showing **47 countries that have mandatory labeling of fresh produce.**

Three more biotech crops to hit market in 2012—plant scientist says

Agri-Commodities 25.2.09

Three modified crops, papaya, aubergine and rice, resistant to common pests will hit the domestic market in the next 3 years. Other biotech crops are being tested in the Mindanao campus of the University of the Philippines. The private sector is "also talking about its own multiple stacked genes in corn, about eight of them," despite the controversy generated by its well-publicized experiments in 2002.

Bt Brinjal Unfit for Human Consumption

ISIS PR 09/02/09
www.isis.org.uk/Bt_Brinjal_Unfit.php

Release of Bt brinjal into the environment for food, feed and cultivation may present a serious risk for human and animal health; the GM aubergine is unfit for consumption [1]

That's the verdict of French scientist Professor Gilles-Eric Seralini of the Committee for Independent Research and Information on Genetic Engineering (CRIIGEN), who carried out the first ever independent assessment of Monsanto-Mahyco's dossier on toxicity tests submitted to the Indian regulatory authorities.

Imminent GE telephone poll/survey in Auckland/Northland region

GE FREE NORTHLAND is putting out an alert to let you know that the Auckland Regional Council and most of the territorial authorities north of Auckland right up to Cape Reinga are planning to carry out collaborative community consultation on Genetically Modified Organisms.

We understand that Colmar Brunton has been commissioned to conduct a telephone survey during the month of July to ratepayers and residents to get their opinions on GMOs.

They will be asking in particular whether ratepayers are satisfied with current national regulation by central government agencies ERMA and MAF (under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996) or whether people would like local councils to regulate GMOs in some way. Survey participants who advocate regulation of GMO land use by local councils will further be asked their opinion on regulation of GMOs versus outright prohibition.

GE Free Northland strongly supports (in view of the incompetence of central government agencies like ERMA and MAF and the flaws and gaps in the HSNO Act) local regulation of GMO land use.

An outright prohibition of all GMO land use and GMO aquaculture until such time as a truly strict liability regime is put in place, the risks are adequately identified and evaluated, credible systems for ensuring the protection of organic and conventional primary production, and genetic engineering shows some evidence of benefit overseas.

Disclaimer-We are not liable for any error, omission, fact or misinterpretation in this publication, nor any action taken on the information given.

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GREENPEACE TRUE FOOD GUIDE

The 6th edition of the guide allows Kiwi consumers the chance to check the food they're eating doesn't contain GE. Despite the fact that there are no commercial GE crops in NZ, GE ingredients can still find their way into our food chain through processed food.

Go to : www.gefreefood.org.nz to download your own copy at www.gefreefood.org.nz/downloads/GreenpeaceGEFreeFoodGuide08.pdf

You can also give your favorite cafe or takeaway a copy, lobbying them to support GE free The Green "GE FREE section" continues to grow, reflecting a strong ongoing non-GE position from NZ food companies and unprecedented anti-GE stance from Australasia's largest food company Goodman Fielder.

This is the first time a major industry player has stepped so publicly into the wider GE debate. Australia is the biggest source of NZ's canola and other processed foods that we consume, so the company's stance does directly impact us.

NZ Food Authorities have approved some thirty GE products for importation and use in food. Food Authorities do no tracking or independent testing, those with allergies, pregnant women, very young and elderly may be most at risk.

Vote GE FREE with your dollar!!! Support the companies with GE FREE policies and Identity Preservation (IP) systems in place to ensure that their products continue to be GE free. Support companies which are committed to a GE Free Policy.

We need to encourage them to include a statement or logo on the packaging so that people know they have a GE-free policy.

A new website has been set up to help companies and consumers:
www.gefreereepolicy.com

Documentary on GE Trees - A Silent Forest: The Growing Threat, Genetically Engineered Trees, 45 min docu narrated by Dr. David Suzuki Available for purchase at www.customflix.com/207574

"The Future of Food"

Videos are available in NZ Price \$25 per DVD postage for more info contact us at Head Office. A fantastic documentary, the film is an effective tool in educating people at all levels of awareness about the GE issue.

T Shirts natural unbleached cotton with rainbow GE Free NZ logo \$20.00 incl.P&P from Head office. Bumper stickers + GE Free corflute signs also available see website.

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