

Executive Council Committee on
Science, Technology and Faith and its
Subcommittee on Genetically Engineered Foods

April 26-27, 2001
Cleveland, Ohio

Minutes

Attendance:

Milton Coleman, Norman Faramelli, Kendall Harmon, Barbara Smith-Moran (Committee Co-chair), Susan Youmans (Subcommittee Chair), Sandra Michael (consultant), Eric Beresford (consultant), Tony Jewiss (staff)

Susan Youmans chaired the meeting of the Subcommittee and opened a discussion about how best to maximize the influence of the conference held 19-22 January in New York City, entitled "Genetic Engineering and Food for the World." A CD-ROM of all the major talks and several of the workshops is forthcoming, thanks to a grant from the Counterbalance Foundation. The same foundation is beginning to provide video streaming of several of the talks at its website, <www.counterbalance.org>. These can be cross-linked to the National Church's website. The conference proceeding, in text and electronic forms, is currently being edited by Susan Youmans. These should be available next summer.

A primary focus of the Subcommittee's work in the current triennium will be to track the implications of the new biotechnologies for food production, distribution, and safety, as well as for the nature of farming and access to land and livelihood.

Following up on Edward Gleason's invitation to write science-and-religion materials for Forward Movement Press, the group agreed to develop titles such as the following:

- The Precautionary Principle
- Justice Issues Regarding GM Foods
- Contemporary Luddites and the Prophetic Witness
- Beyond Tofu and Tacos: Faithful Choices Regarding GE Foods
- Is the Web of Life Sacred?
- Is there Place in God's Creation of Genetically Engineered Organisms?
- Gene Patenting: Ownership or Stewardship of Life?

The Subcommittee will develop a position to provide the basis for its response to these issues. It will continue to publicize the importance of these issues in church and secular publications.

Barbara Smith-Moran chaired the next session, to discuss the wider Committee's plans for the triennium. In addition to its primary focus on food biotechnologies, the Committee on Faith, Technology and Faith will continue to explore the following topics:

- Robotics and nanotechnology (A conference on this topic was co-sponsored with the AAAS and CTNS, 13-14 February 2001, at Grace Cathedral, San Francisco.) The public lecture at this event by Bill Joy of sun Microsystems is already available by video streaming from the Counterbalance Foundation website.
- Creationism and Evolution Controversies (These have taken on a new face in some forms of teleological arguments).
- Other Pressing issues of the day, including global warming and pesticide use.

Members of the Committee drafted a Report for the June meeting of the Executive Council.

The Committee agreed to meet again in the fall of 2001, and twice in 2002. One meeting in 2002 will be in connection with the annual Ecumenical Roundtable on Science, Technology, and the Church, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in April.