



***COLUMBAN JUSTICE, PEACE and
INTEGRITY of CREATION AUSTRALIA (JPIC)***

Bishop Pat Power launches DVD: Unjust Genes on Genetically Engineered Food

Columban Mission has produced a 26 minute DVD with accompanying Booklet called 'Unjust Genes: Life and Death for Sale' to raise public understanding of genetically engineered food.

Bishop Pat Power launched the DVD and Booklet at the Australian Catholic University in Canberra last Monday 28 August. The University's Rector, Professor Peter Camalliri, hosted the event.

In his talk, Bishop Power praised the way the Columban Society continues to help alert the church in Australia to social issues in the developing world. He recalled the role Father Brian Gore played in the early 1980s in making Australians aware of the workings of the Marcos dictatorship.

Quoting from the Booklet Bishop Power said that its explanation of modern transgenic technology was helpful in making an ethical response to the spread of genetically modified foods. He noted the way patenting laws are being used for the profit of a few bio-tech companies. He went on to argue that citizens have a right to offer ethical opinions about developments in science.

A segment of the DVD was played for participants at the launch beginning with a 2005 Safe Food Conference in Manila jointly sponsored by the Columbans. The production of the DVD was a follow up to that conference to help raise awareness not only about the concerns of farmers and scientists in the developing world but the situation on genetically engineered (GE) food in Australia.

A farmer at Young and founder of Concerned Farmers, Juliet McFarlane, attended the launch and spoke of the confusion surrounding government approval of genetically engineered crops in Australia. She, along with scientist Prof Adrian Gibbs of the ANU and Melbourne based consumer advocate for the proper labeling of food, Kim Healy, appear in interviews on the DVD.

Producer of the DVD and Booklet, Columban Father Charles Rue, thanked Bruce Dynan Productions and head of the Canberra Archdiocese's Social Justice Commission, Mike Cassidy. Copies of the DVD are for sale. It aims to involve farmers, environmentalists, scientist, nutritionalists, students and social justice groups in discussion. The serious issue of GE food has often remained hidden from the public. He asked for advocacy using the precautionary principle.

During question time, divergent views about the role of science emerged. It was agreed that there was a need for well funded public science to help counter the lack of disclosure and aggressive moves by bio-technology corporations to control the human food chain. Dr Allan Green from CSIRO believes that many concerns about genetically modified products will be resolved in time. As an historian, Dr Paul Collins questioned the place of predictions in statements of scientists, or others, saying it seems best to stay with the facts as they are known in the present.

In 2005, a working group for the World Council of Churches published a reflection on genetics in agriculture and human life, 'Caring for Life'. It asked the questions: What is the problem that GE is supposed to address? Who defined the problem and gave the solution, and to what end? Who will benefit? Who (and what) is most likely to lose out? The DVD helps to address these questions. The possibility of GE crops for bio-fuels adds to the questions.

Rev. Charles Rue
MTh MEnvPlan(Mq) PhD
JPIC Coordinator Australia
charlesrue.cmi@columban.org.au

Mb 0408 466 820

Mail: Columban JPICoz
c/- ACU
Locked Bad 2002
STRATHFIELD NSW 2135