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CONTAMINATED
DEMOCRACY
A Discourse Analysis of the Submissions to the
Royal Commission on Genetic Modification

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of
Master of Arts
In
Sociology
at Massey University, Turitea, Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

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2003
Abstract

This thesis investigated the practice of democracy in the Royal Commission of Genetic Modification, using a constructivist discourse methodology that drew on Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge, with a critical analysis of institutional power. Conflicting worldviews materialised in the sampled Royal Commission submissions, revealing a vast majority of submissions united by a vision of a ‘GE-free’ New Zealand. This majority stance was however pushed aside, with views expressed in the largely pro-GM Interested Person submissions proving dominant, contaminating the ideal of democracy. The Interested Person submissions are however more complex. A century old bureaucratic legislation promoted the contamination of democracy. Section 4A of the Commission of Inquiry Act 1908 excluded individuals and various groups from being heard by the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification. A consequence of such excluding was that the Royal Commission report presented a skewed analysis of the Interested Person submissions, unjustly favouring a pro-GM stance.
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and thank my supervisor Dr Martin Tolich for his help and encouragement throughout the duration of this thesis. He has always had an open door, which has been greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank Dr Paul Perry, Ang Jury and Ruth McManus for their ideas, input and encouragement with this thesis. There have been two people in particular, Barb Golden and Catherine Scheele who have read draft pieces of my writing, and have even been interested in what I have had to say (or they have done a good job feigning interest anyway)! Their comments and critiques (for example, 'clumsy sentence') have been invaluable.

The assistance of the archivists at the National Archives in Wellington has also been appreciated, as are the thousands of individuals and groups who put submissions forward to the Royal Commission on Genetic Modification. Without the 11,000 plus submission and declined interested person application writers I may not have found the inspiration for this thesis—not in the form it has taken anyway.

I would finally like to thank my family, especially my children Lenaia and Sage for putting up with me in the time it took to carry out this thesis, and for being interested in what I am doing (mainly in when I will be finished!).
Table of Contents

Abstract
Acknowledgements
Table of contents
List of Tables
List of abbreviations

Chapter One - Laying the Foundations
1.1. Key Concepts and History
1.2. Why Step Into the Firing Line?
1.3. A Taste of Things to Come

Chapter Two - Knowledge Validity and Power in Discourse as Exalting Ideologies and Determining Democratic Process
2.1. The New Zealand Context
2.2. The Sociology of Knowledge
2.3. Exploring Worldviews and Ideology
2.4. Science and Politics: Institutions of Power
2.5. The Role of the Mass Media in a Democracy
2.6. The Democratic Ideal

Chapter Three - Methodology and Design
3.1. Data Collection and Sampling
3.2. The General Public Submission Sample
3.2b. The Interested Person Submission Sample
3.2c. The Hui Submission Sample
3.2d. The Government Agency Submissions
3.3. Developing Frameworks for Data Analysis
3.4. Declined Interested Person applications
Chapter Four - The Silenced Majority? 44
  4.1a. Why the Fuss? GM Science and Ethics 45
  4.1b. Personal Health to Environmental Health 47
  4.1c. Information Formation, Liability and Regulation 49
  4.1d. Solutions: A GM-free, Organic Embracement 52
  4.2. Hui Submissions: The Centrality of Te Tiriti O Waitangi 54

Chapter Five - A Clashing of Worldviews 57
  5.1a. GM Science and the Ethical Implications 57
  5.1b. Personal Health to Environmental Health 60
  5.1c. Information formation, Liability and Regulation 63
  5.1d. Solutions: GM-Free Versus GM Embracement 68
  5.2. The Interested Person Submission Voices 70

Chapter Six - From Worldviews to Political Process 73
  6.1a. Science, Risks and Trusting the Experts 74
  6.1b. Validations and Justifications 76
  6.1b.i. New Zealand GM (Food) Research 76
  6.1c. Consumer / Producer Choice and Labelling 78
  6.1d. Envisioning the Future 82
  6.2. Worldviews Interpreted 83
  6.3. A Question of Numbers 86
  6.4. A Closer Look: 'Interested Person' status 88
    6.4a. Accessibility 89
    6.4b. Exclusion 92

Chapter Seven - Contaminated Democracy 96
  7.1. The Contamination of Democracy 97
  7.2. Unanswered Questions and Research Implications 102
  7.3. A Final Word 105

References 108
## Appendices

### Appendix A: Submission ("Interested Person") Form 1 113

### Appendix B: Commissions of Inquiry Act 1908 -section 4A 119
- Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 -sections 4 and 7 119
- The RCGM Public Notice (27 July, 2000) 120

### Appendix C: Submission Samples and Codes
- General Public Submission Sample 122
- Hui Submission Sample 124
- Interested Person Submission Sample 125
- General Public (and Hui) Submission Quotes 127
- Interested Person Submission Quotes 155
List of Tables

Table 1. Positions taken toward GM in GP submissions within the current research compared to the RCGM inquiry

Table 2. Positions taken toward GM in IP submissions within the current research compared to the RCGM inquiry

Table 3. Positions taken by declined IP applicants towards GM, by group and individual applications

Table 4. Stances taken toward GM by Interested Persons and declined Interested Person applications

List of Abbreviations

ADLS Auckland District Law Society
CDA Critical Discourse Analysis
COI Commission of Inquiry
CRI Crown Research Institute
DA Discourse Analysis
ERMA Environmental Risk Management Authority
GA Government Agency (submission category)
GATT General agreement on Trade and Tariffs
GE Genetic Engineering
GM Genetic Modification
GMO Genetically Modified Organism
GP General Public (submission category)
HSNO Hazardous Substances and New Organisms (Act)
IP Interested Person (submission category)
MAF Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
RC Royal Commission
RCGM Royal Commission on Genetic Modification
WTO World Trade Organisation