

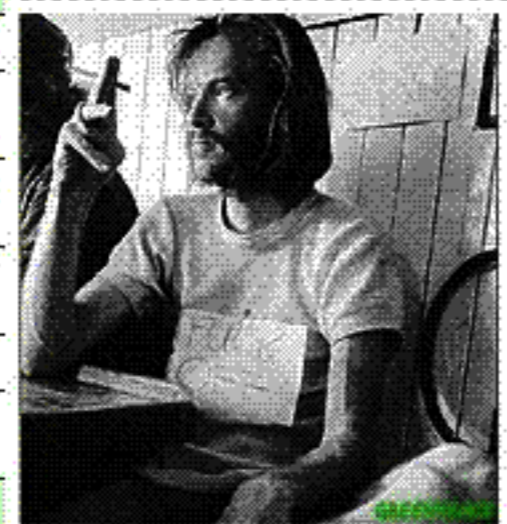


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Amchitka: the founding voyage

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Life on a Greenpeace voyage always involves a lot of colourful characters, strong opinions, good times and bad. Obviously at this point Bob was not in the greatest of moods and chose a novel and non-violent, if not entirely non-offensive, way of showing it.

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Bob Hunter sailed aboard the first Greenpeace voyage in 1971 to Amchitka in the Aleutian Islands to try and stop a US nuclear weapons test. When they were halfway to their destination, Richard Nixon announced a month's delay of the test. Most of the crew were running out of money or vacation time, and an acrimonious debate broke out about whether to continue or turn back. This is Bob's story about what happened.

Excerpt from "The Greenpeace to Amchitka"

By Bob Hunter
 Published by Arsenal Pulp Press, Canada <http://www.arsenalpulp.com>
 ISBN Number: 1-55152-178-4

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When I got back from the expedition to Amchitka and sat down to write a book about it, I was convinced

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When I got back from the expedition to Amchitka and sat down to write a book about it, I was convinced we had lost, and I was angry. The best chance ever to actually interfere with nuclear testing, and we had blown it through sheer stupidity – and a failure of nerve, to put it kindly. *Cop-out on the Way to Amchitka* was the title that loomed in my mind. And my personal failure of will was a big factor in that cop-out. Worse, I was afraid that I'd subconsciously thrown the fight to carry on with the voyage. I'd have to live with that until I died or the world blew up, whichever happened first.

I was also facing the most serious writing dilemma of my life. Since childhood, when I had started writing science fiction in my school scribbles, I had been looking for "experience". Like all intense young writers, I had plenty to say, but rather little context in which to present my thoughts. I'd read a bit, but there had been no plagues or crusades or recent wars on home ground. Even when the Great Red River Flood hit in 1950, my family was evacuated before the dikes broke. Real-life adventure had been hard to come by in working-class south Winnipeg after the war, a period during which Canada was at its dullest, if you can imagine. Such adventures as I'd managed to experience when I was growing up had been of the ordinary romantic or travel or childhood close-call variety. I had done some solo camping in the boreal forest and some hitchhiking in the western Canada and Europe, had got married and fathered two children, had embarked on an interesting career in journalism and published three books, but until that fateful voyage in the fall of 1971, nothing had happened to me that leaped out as being absolutely essential to write about, if only for my own understanding of life. And now that it had, I was obliged *not* to write about it – for the sake of the cause.

The problem was that I'd *joined*. What exactly I'd joined was not yet clear – it was still being defined – but I had definitely stopped being on the outside looking in and was instead on the inside looking out. I'd started out as a newspaper columnist, the ultimate

Weyler's book, "Greenpeace -- How a Group of Ecologists, Journalists, and Visionaries Changed the World."



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which Canada was at its dullest, if you can imagine. Such adventures as I'd managed to experience when I was growing up had been of the ordinary romantic or travel or childhood close-call variety. I had done some solo camping in the boreal forest and some hitchhiking in the western Canada and Europe, had got married and fathered two children, had embarked on an interesting career in journalism and published three books, but until that fateful voyage in the fall of 1971, nothing had happened to me that leaped out as being absolutely essential to write about, if only for my own understanding of life. And now that it had, I was obliged *not* to write about it – for the sake of the cause.

The problem was that I'd *joined*. What exactly I'd joined was not yet clear – it was still being defined – but I had definitely stopped being on the outside looking in and was instead on the inside looking out. I'd started out as a newspaper columnist, the ultimate Ishmaelian outsider, accustomed to being responsible for nothing except the authenticity of my insights and words. "Tell it like it is" was the creed of the counterculture scribe, and my personal mantra. Suddenly I found myself in the inner circle of a nascent political organization, with a bit of potential power in my hand, which at the time seemed like the power to change the course of history. All that had to happen was for the *MV Phyllis Cormack*, AKA *Greenpeace*, to make it to Amchitka Island and park there under the nose of a nuclear test bomb code-named Cannikin. How much simpler could it be?

Yet everything got fucked up. We never quite managed to go in the direction we wanted to go, or be in the place we wanted to be. And we fought bitterly among ourselves about it. Everything we did or said got sucked into an overwhelming power struggle. Here we were, supposedly saving the world through our moral example, emulating the Quakers, no less, when in reality we spent most of our time at each other's throats, egos clashing, the group fatally divided from start to finish. As every writer since Homer could tell you, this was the story: the conflict within. But having agreed, early in the game, to the Unity Rule – something like: I Pledge to Stay On-Side With the Group No Matter What, which had seemed like a



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... you, she had the story, the summit plan. But having agreed, early in the game, to the Unity Rule – something like: I Pledge to Stay On-Side With the Group No Matter What, which had seemed like a bold leap into solidarity with The Movement at the time – I had effectively gagged myself as a reporter and historian. It was a trade-off, but I bought into it, so I couldn't complain. I'd get to be part of the consensus – my own skinny hand on the wheel of decision-making over the course of the *Greenpeace*, and therefore destiny – but like any other politician, I'd have to agree not to disagree in public. I disagreed, as it turned out, with just about everything that was done, but had to keep my mouth shut. How, therefore, to write a book? An *authorized* book, which followed the party line yet still told the awful truth – that we had screwed up.

Three decades later, his grey beard turned white, Jim Bohlen confided to me over a drink that he had been giving the sailing orders to our captain in secret throughout the voyage. As the guy signing the cheques and as the chairman of the Don't Make a Wave Committee, which had chartered the boat, Bohlen had the legal authority to do that, but rather than say that he was the boss, and that the *Greenpeace* and the protest action were therefore being run as an old-fashioned hierarchical power structure, he played games to keep us radical young crewmen under control. One of them was the promise that the ship would be run by consensus – each of us would have the power of veto. This was considered the ultimate hip form of sharing power at the time, and I, for one, respected it.

But it was all a sham. Decisions were indeed made – Bohlen made them. And he made them after the rest of us had gone back to our bunks. At the time I wrote my manuscript, immediately after the voyage, I had no idea what Bohlen had been up to behind the scenes. On any given day the actual movements of the boat, as opposed to the direction we'd agreed to at our meeting the night before, remained a mystery to me. Bohlen had us completely flummoxed. I salute him now for his cunning and maturity and prudence. We probably would have died if he hadn't assumed control. But back then, I plotted and connived to overthrow him as leader because he was "behind us out". Don Metzger, Bobbie



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The man who ultimately determined the fate of that first Greenpeace trip was John C. Cormack, the captain and owner, who had accepted the job of sailing his fishing boat into a nuclear test zone only out of economic desperation, a fact that never got talked about much. In hindsight it is interesting to remember what Cormack did and did not do at the critical moment. He saved his boat and us along with it. And we all saved face, at least enough to go home.

The key moment of the trip came a day before we limped back into Vancouver. As we all sat slumped in the galley, burned out, Bohlen announced that he was going to shut down the Don't Make a Wave Committee as soon as he got the chance. It was an *ad hoc* group and it had done its thing. Don't do that, I told him. Why waste all this hard-earned media capital? Fold the committee, sure, but reconstitute it as the Greenpeace Foundation. That was



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As it turned out, all my angst was unnecessary. Time has proven my post-trip despair to be utterly mistaken. The trip was a success beyond anybody's wildest dreams. That bomb went off, but the bombs planned for after that did not. The nuclear test program at Amchitka was cancelled five months after our mission, and some scholars argue that this was the beginning of the end of the Cold War. Whatever history decides about the big picture, the legacy of the voyage itself is not just a bunch of guys in a fishing boat, but the Greenpeace the entire world has come to love and hate.

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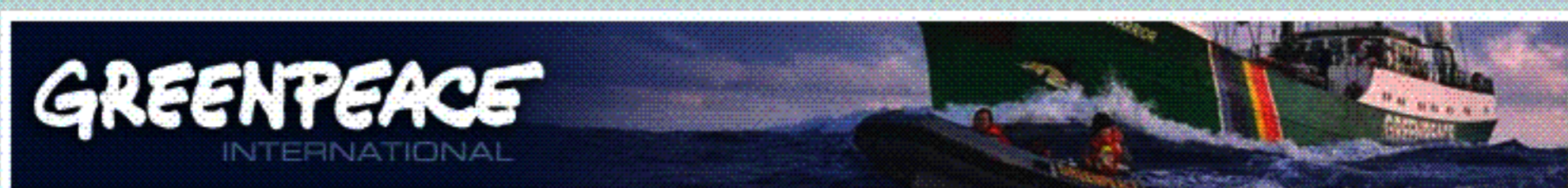
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Moruroa: Journey into the bomb

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David McTaggart on the Vega in 1981

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In June of 1972, David McTaggart raised a pair of binoculars from the deck of his 38-foot ketch, Vega. He and two crew had been 70 days at sea, and they were stationed in the forbidden zone outside Moruroa, the Pacific atoll where the French government tested nuclear weapons in the atmosphere.

His aim was to stop the test blast with his ship's presence. But he was unsure whether the French would detonate the bomb regardless of his defiance. That morning, June 17th, he saw the balloon go aloft which signalled detonation was imminent.

The French military had been ghosting the Vega throughout its stay in the forbidden zone, and communicated orders to leave. Helicopters had buzzed the masts. The crew of the Vega had expected to be boarded and physically removed from the area. Now it appeared that a decision had been made to simply detonate the bomb -- protestors be damned.

His fingers too swollen to write, McTaggart kept an audio diary of those days which has recently come to light. [You can listen here](#) to his entry for that evening.

McTaggart, Nigel Graham, and Grant Davison made wooden blocks to seal the vents of Vega against fallout. They made plans to throw their stove and generator fuel overboard so it wouldn't ignite.

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McTaggart, Nigel Graham, and Grant Davison made wooden blocks to seal the vents of Vega against fallout. They made plans to throw their stove and generator fuel overboard so it wouldn't ignite.

They'd agreed that if they survived the blast and the shockwave that two would stay below and one would go up into the deadly fallout on deck wrapped in oilskins to motor them out of the forbidden zone.

They'd prepared the matchsticks they would draw to determine who that would be. And they'd radioed a telegram to their Vancouver base saying "BALLOON RAISED OVER MORUROA LAST NIGHT STOP GREENPEACE THREE SIXTEEN MILES NORTHEAST STOP SITUATION FRIGHTENING PLEASE PRAY AND ACT."

The next day, the French sent a minesweeper to "escort" Vega out of the blast zone, and when McTaggart and the crew refused, a high-seas game of manoeuvres ensued which ended with the ramming of Vega and the detention of McTaggart and his crew. The weapon was detonated on June 26th.

But the voyage of the Vega drew worldwide attention to nuclear weapons testing and renewed pressure on the French to abandon the programme from many quarters.



Greenpeace vessel Vega boarded by French commandos in Moruroa nuclear test zone. Skipper David McTaggart was hospitalised from his beating by commandos and almost lost the sight in one eye.

McTaggart was relentless. On his return to Moruroa in 1973, he so infuriated the French military that he and his crew were beaten to the point that McTaggart lost vision in one of his eyes for several months. The French government attempted to say that McTaggart had gotten the injury from slipping on the deck of his own ship. But one of McTaggart's crewmembers had smuggled dramatic photographs of the beating off the ship, which brought worldwide media attention, and further embarrassment, to the French government.

With the entire Pacific united in outrage and opposition, the French government at last relented - partially - and moved its weapons testing programme underground. Weapons testing at Moruroa ended at last in 1996.

"Greenpeace -- How a Group of Ecologists, Journalists, and Visionaries Changed the World."

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McTaggart went on to become Greenpeace International's first chairman, and led the organisation throughout the 80s and into the 90s. He died in a car crash in 2001.

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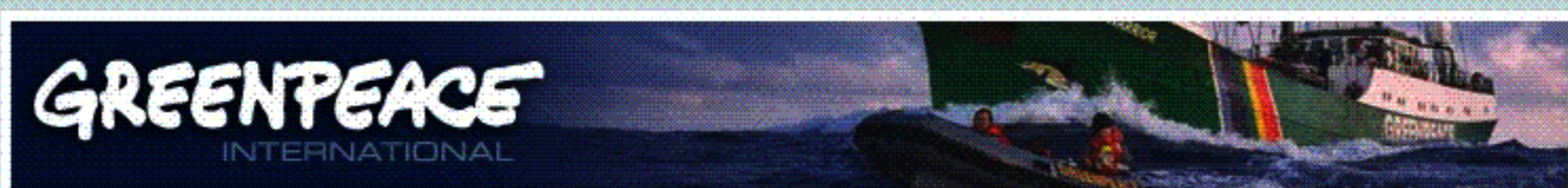
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You'll get a **monthly e-zine** with ways you can help our campaigns for a green and peaceful Earth -- everything from opportunities to volunteer to simple actions you can take with a few clicks of your mouse: you decide. There'll also be news about **goodies** you can buy or download, **games** you can play online and **tips for a greener lifestyle**.

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Eliminate toxic chemicals

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Consuming Chemicals

Unborn babies are exposed in the womb to synthetic chemicals.

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Toxic chemicals in our environment threaten our rivers and lakes, our air, land, and oceans, and ultimately ourselves and our future.

The production, trade, use, and release of many synthetic chemicals is now widely recognised as a global threat to human health and the environment.

Yet, the world's chemical industries continue to produce and release thousands of chemical compounds every year, in most cases with none or very little testing and

understanding of their impacts on people and the environment.

Solving the chemicals crisis

Substituting hazardous chemicals with safer materials is the answer to governments and industry that have failed to control the spread of dangerous chemicals around the globe. Greenpeace analyses of the man-made hazardous chemicals in consumer products, house dust, rainwater and blood add to the growing documentation that man-made chemicals are out of control, threatening our health and environment.

The good news is that we now have a chance to win a global precedent, starting in Europe, which will require companies to

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Our global community of Greenpeace activists hail from 125 countries and territories. We have a long list of victories to prove that when we speak with one voice, we can change the world. Sign up and you'll get a monthly E-zine and action alerts full of ways you can be a one-minute activist. It's all free.

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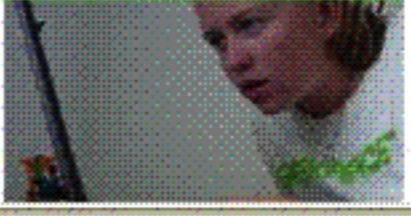
Want to volunteer? We can use any skill: from envelope-stuffing to Amazon survival training. Many of the folks who work in our offices today started out as volunteers. In some countries we provide action and non-violence training to folks willing to become activists. To find out more, you'll want to talk to your local Greenpeace office or contact us here at our International Headquarters in Amsterdam.

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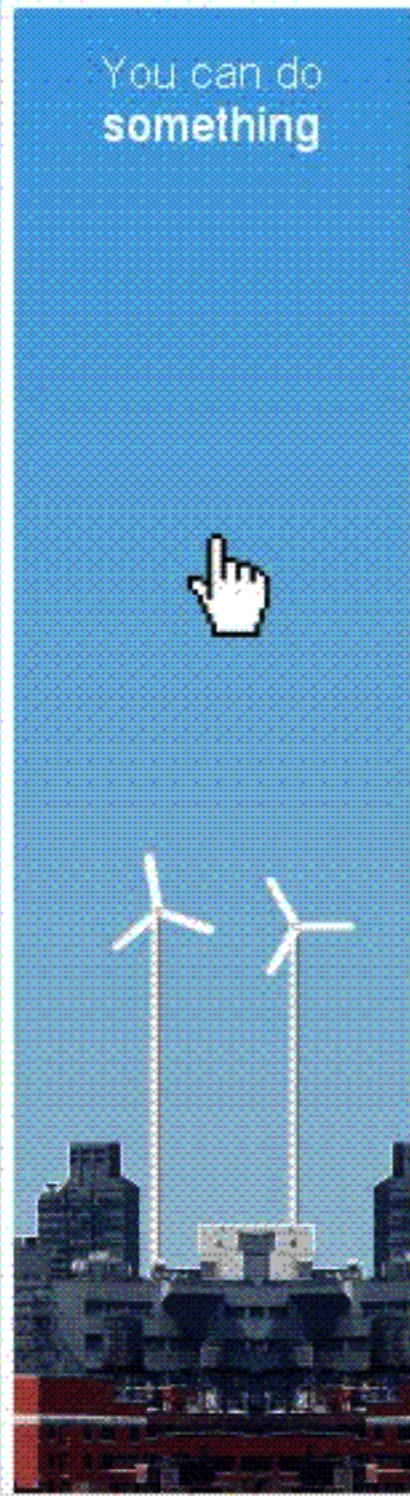
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Join one of our ships

Sailing aboard a Greenpeace ship can be the experience of a lifetime. Many ask: few are chosen. The link below will tell you where to send your curricula vita if you think you belong on the deck of a Greenpeace ship. We value maritime experience, safety training, and a wide range of skills in our professional crew.


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Make your life a little greener

Everybody can help save the world, every day, with small choices that have big impacts. Here's our list of ways you can tread more lightly on the Earth. Drop in to the [Action Forum](#) with more suggestions or to ask your fellow cyberactivists for answers to those tough questions.

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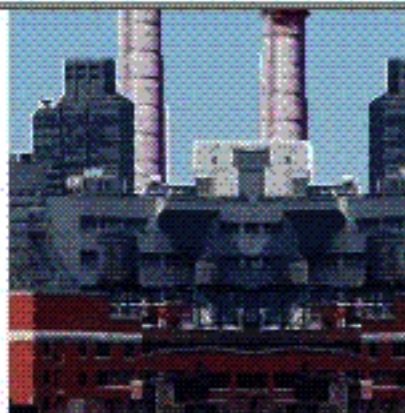
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Lisa

"Cyberactivism is the best way to speak out against environmental destruction. It's easy, effective and fun and doesn't waste trees."

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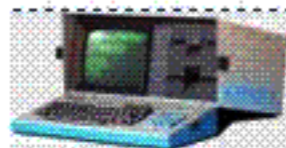
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Any time you see something on the Greenpeace site that interests or informs or inspires you, send it to a friend or five. Print out a copy of the page and stick it to the bulletin board at school or work. (Especially if you work for Monsanto, Exxon, the nuclear weapons industry, or hang out among whalers.) Submit cool links to sites like [BoingBoing](#), [Grist](#), [Slashdot](#), and [Fark](#). Write letters to the editor of your local paper. Buy a [Greenpeace T-shirt](#) and wear it when you speak at your school or do that international television interview.



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NEW: We're looking for a wide range of skills to help us [develop our online campaign tools](#).



Tell us your ideas

Got an idea for other things you or your fellow Greenpeace supporters can do to help? You can drop an email to us at supporter.services@int.greenpeace.org or post a

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**Green geeks**

Are you a geek? You can help us get the word out by creating screensavers, desktop agents that pull our action alert feeds via RSS, a Firefox skin, a Gnome theme, a virtual ship in Sims Online, create a Greenpeace Klipfolio, alternate CSS files for this site, develop a game, create a Green Living Wiki -- let your imagination run wild. Send us your results at supporter.services@int.greenpeace.org and if it's cool and functional, we'll use it and send you some merchandise as a thank you.

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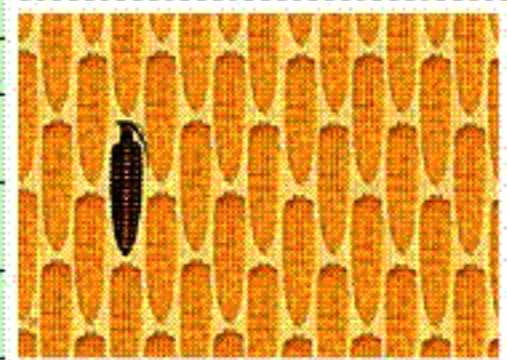


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Say no to genetic engineering

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Corn grenade: the winning image from the Greenpeace Seeds of Trouble competition

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While scientific progress on molecular biology has a great potential to increase our understanding of nature and provide new medical tools, it should not be used as justification to turn the environment into a giant genetic experiment by commercial interests. The biodiversity and environmental integrity of the world's food supply is too important to our survival to be put at risk.

Genetic engineering enables scientists to create plants, animals and micro-organisms by manipulating genes in a way that does not occur naturally.

These genetically modified organisms (GMO) can spread through nature and interbreed with natural organisms, thereby contaminating non 'GE' environments and future generations in an unforeseeable and uncontrollable way.

Their release is 'genetic pollution' and is a major threat because GMOs cannot be recalled once released into the environment.

Because of commercial interests, the public is being denied the right to know about GE ingredients in the food chain, and therefore losing the right to avoid them despite the presence of labelling laws.

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