

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED FOODS AN INTERVIEW WITH JEFFREY SMITH¹

Helke Ferrie©

*Jeffrey M. Smith is a leading spokesperson on the health dangers of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). In 2003 his first book, **Seeds of Deception**,² documented the serious yet unknown side effects of genetically engineered foods. His second book, **Genetic Roulette**,³ just released this year, shows how the world's most powerful Ag biotech companies bluff and mislead critics, Congress, and the FDA about food safety research for the products Americans buy every day. Mr. Smith directs the Campaign for Healthier Eating in America from the Institute for Responsible Technology, where he is executive director.*

Helke Ferrie: I have to tell you something, and this will probably get your high blood pressure going, and then you can talk nonstop. Yesterday, I was speaking to someone in Ottawa who is a lobbyist connected with agriculture in general. He informed me, among other things, that the Canadian government has actively started moving towards outlawing farmers' markets and Health Canada people are going around everywhere, to all the different counties, providing information sessions in which they tell people that this is happening for the safety of the public so that they don't get sick from contaminated foods. Of course, they cite things like Maple Leaf meats and all those kinds of things which have nothing to do with this issue at all; but with the lack of Inspectors - the entire inspection system has been gutted by this government – they have a real problem. We are now working to stop that [i.e. the attack on farmers' markets]. Connected with this move by Health Canada is, of course, the promotion of genetically engineered foods. And fortunately, we have a bill before parliament, which made it into the Senate, and may even make it into law if enough is done to support it. It was introduced by an NDP Member of Parliament in British Columbia – his name is Alex Atamanenko,, he's of Russian extraction. The bill is very simple. It says that no genetically engineered foods, or seeds can be passed into the market, unless a marketing assessment has been done, showing clearly there is a need for their sale and that there is a market that will actually buy this proposed GMO. There isn't a market, because the European Union has already made rules which make it very difficult to put any GMO on the market. Now, I heard that there is a similar bill before the United States Congress (Bill S510) which would prohibit the sale and the use and the growing even of anything that comes from your backyard garden, to a farmers' market operation, unless it is essentially under the control of a corporation and those safety rules that supposedly protect people. What is your view on this and the move towards this push to force this genetic engineering irreversibly into the food system? What is your view on these things? Where are we with this? Can we succeed to stop this?

Jeffrey Smith: Yes, we can absolutely succeed against them. Both the U.S. and Canadian governments have been the enforcement wings of the biotechnology industry, as far as GMOs are

¹ This interview took place on May 29 2010 at the Canadian Holistic Nutrition Conference in Toronto. Interview transcribed by Joan Zabtany R.H.N. Posted on Vitality – Toronto's Monthly Wellness Journal, July 2010

² Smith, J.M. 2003. Seeds of deception – exposing industry and government lies about the safety of the genetically engineered foods you're eating. Yes! Books, Fairfield IA. 289 p.

³ Smith, J.M. 2007. Genetic roulette – the documented health risks of genetically engineered foods. Yes! Books, Fairfield, IA. 317 p.

concerned. They have done everything that they can to promote GMOs in spite of the fact that it has cost governments and industry huge amounts – the U.S. is spending \$3 to \$5 billion extra in subsidies every year to prop up the prices of the GM crops no one wants, i.e., to pay farmers because prices went down because of the lack of sales. It was estimated that the corn prices in the U.S. decreased by 13 – 20% because of the production of GMOs. It was hidden from view because of the increased subsidies by the U.S. government.

Helke Ferrie: In other words, they make sure that the stuff is subsidized even though nobody buys it.

Jeffrey Smith: Well, they buy it. But the thing is no one buys it in Europe. [For example] they lost 99.6% of their corn sales to Europe.

Helke Ferrie: 99.6%?!

Jeffrey Smith: Yes. Canada even lost its canola and honey sales to Europe because of the lack of pollination by bees. But instead of withdrawing GMOs as a failed technology, they try and break open new markets and force people to take it, [and do so only] on behalf of the biotechnology industry. The perfect example is that most Canadians and most Americans, maybe 9 out of 10, want GMOs labelled, but because the agencies are designing their policies to promote the biotechnology industry, they ignore the 9 out of 10 North Americans to support the interests of the five agricultural biotechnology companies. They are basically not aligned with consumers, nor aligned with health, but aligned with business.

Helke Ferrie: But the consumer in Europe seems to be differently oriented than in our part of the world.

Jeffrey Smith: Exactly. It is the consumers in Europe that have taken GMOs out of the food supply and have managed to keep GMOs out of the food supply. The European Food Safety Authority and the European Commission are both pro-GMO. They both repeat the same bogus assumptions and declarations of the biotech industry, often just re-quoting Monsanto's comments without any real scientific justification or any independent scientific evaluation – that [pretence at] "science" is only just a kind of a façade.

Helke Ferrie: Even though the European authorities promote it, the people won't buy it.

Jeffrey Smith: Yes. That's because consumers over there know much more about it. And that's why our campaign for healthier eating is designed as a consumer campaign.

Helke Ferrie: You need to tell us more about this campaign.

Jeffrey Smith: All right. The concept is that GMOs give no consumer benefits. So, if even a small percentage of consumers were avoiding brands that use GMOs, the companies would switch to non-GMO ingredients in order to maintain their market share. So we think that if just 5% of U.S. shoppers were to avoid GMO ingredients, then this would be sufficient to create a tipping point to knock them out of the market totally.

Helke Ferrie: You really think that just 5% consumer rejection would be sufficient to actually topple the progress of this juggernaut?

Jeffrey Smith: Yes. We have to think in terms of North America. So many brands on the market in Canada come from the U.S. So, we're thinking 15 million Americans, maybe 17 million North Americans, or 5% of the North American population would be sufficient to change the system.

Helke Ferrie: When you say 5% - I've heard this before in a different context - how is it possible that a mere 5% of the population saying, I won't eat the stuff, would have an actual effect on the entire corporate system? Do you know how that works and why it works with just 5%?

Jeffrey Smith: If you take 15 million people out of your customer base, this equals millions and millions of dollars lost. And if you are a Kraft Foods marketing executive, and you are losing millions of dollars, and you know that you can shift to a non-GMO brand without even changing your recipe, you know it makes economic sense to simply use the already available non GM corn.

Helke Ferrie: So, change might cost the food company nothing.

Jeffrey Smith: It might cost you in the beginning because you have to pay a little extra for the non-GMO premium, but once the whole system switches over to non-GMO it won't cost you extra because the whole system will be non-GMO. So, it's a matter of cost. We know that Coca Cola did change its formula when just a tiny drop of market share disappeared when some people didn't like the change in taste.

Helke Ferrie: Yes, yes, it was a horrific mess and it was amazing how rapidly the company responded.

Jeffrey Smith: And then, people working with César Chavez were able to see a 4.2% reduction in sales. They were actually able to measure it. We know that typically, a whole system can be driven by a small coherent force of consumers. We think that 5% is more than enough. So, we are giving people these shopping guides (download from Jeffrey Smith's website for free at www.responsibletechnology.org) informing the reader which are the brands that are non-GMO and also the information to motivate people to avoid GMOs, such as the links to infertility, allergies, and to thousands of sick, sterile and dead livestock. We've documented all this with the science you can verify (see *Genetic Roulette – The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods*, (Yes! Book, 2007, \$ 30 plus HST & shipping; available from the same website or call Kos Publishing 519-927-1049 for a copy). We've shown how, once the correct research appears, the biotech industry pounces on the people who find these adverse reactions to GMOs and see to it that research funding is cut off and they usually cannot continue such rigorous research.

Helke Ferrie: Your book, *Genetic Roulette*, documents so much first-class science that there must be quite a database out there to show objectively the difficulties with GMOs in terms of people's health.

Jeffrey Smith: Yes, I would say it is overwhelming, irrefutable evidence at this point, [although] you don't have a single "smoking gun" because of the problems with lack of follow-up. What you have, are lines of converging evidence with which you build a case making it clear that GMOs should never have been introduced, should be withdrawn immediately, and should never be eaten. More research is coming out. I was recently able to interview some scientists that fed hamsters genetically modified soy and by the third generation, most of them had lost the ability to have babies. There was also a five-fold increase in infant mortality.

Helke Ferrie: Is it possible to trace the biochemical reasons for such a response over the three generations? Is there something that explains it biologically?

Jeffrey Smith: No. Those scientists said that the main issue currently is to identify the causality. We don't know for sure if it is the GM soy (although we see many other experiments with similar results), or if it is the extra glyphosate in the Roundup necessary to grow these GMO soybeans. It's not clear what is the direct cause. What we saw five years ago, were rats that were fed GM soy and then had a five fold increase in infant mortality, they also had problems getting pregnant, the pups were smaller, as well as changes in the testicles of mice and rats that were fed GM soy, and GM corn. So we're seeing systemic consistency [in the adverse reactions to such a GMO diet].

Helke Ferrie: If that's the case, what happened to the precautionary principle all countries are supposed to observe?

Jeffrey Smith: Many people believe that the approval of GMOs in the United States was illegal because it violated the Food and Drug and Cosmetic Act by allowing the biotech companies themselves to determine if their own foods were Generally Recognized As Safe (GRAS), while in the past such approval had always required rigorous scientific support from the peer-reviewed literature.

Helke Ferrie: In other words, those hurdles were simply quietly removed in order to get this stuff on the market.

Jeffrey Smith: Exactly. The normal approval process for something to be generally recognized as safe was completely sidestepped in an unprecedented way. GMOs were fast-tracked without any consensus on safety having even been sought or provided, without appropriate safety studies - only to promote the industry.

Helke Ferrie: I'd like to ask you a question I'm often asked. If you don't want to answer, I'll understand it. Why would it be fast tracked? It's plainly stupid, incautious, and it makes no sense. It's not an ordinary product and under normal circumstances, nobody would fast-track it.

Jeffrey Smith: There was a group called the Council for Competitiveness in the U.S. composed of top people in U.S. government under the first Bush administration (Bush Senior). Dan Quayle was the Vice President of Bush Sr. and he was Chairman of that council. They were given the task to increase U.S. exports because the US was suffering from serious trade deficits which was very bad for the American economy. They were convinced that genetically modified crops, for some reason, would increase U.S. exports. They saw GMOs as the solution.

Helke Ferrie: So they were being sold the idea by the food companies that this would actually translate into a political solution – this was the fix.

Jeffrey Smith: This is what we know. There may have been other influences coming from the biotech industry.

Helke Ferrie: And the questions about safety weren't asked because it didn't cross Dan Quayle's mind?

Jeffrey Smith: Because they told the FDA to *promote* it the question of safety was bypassed. We now know from the 44,000 secret documents from the FDA - that were eventually made public because of a lawsuit - and from the overwhelming consensus among the scientists at the FDA, that the FDA knew very well that GMOs are inherently dangerous, that they can create allergies, toxins, new diseases, and nutritional problems.

Helke Ferrie: This is all published information. Same as in Canada.

Jeffrey Smith: Yes. So, to bypass this problem they created a new position at the FDA for Michael Taylor, Monsanto's former attorney, and they made him Monsanto's Vice President. When he was in charge, every time a draft of the US policy was re-written, more and more of the scientists' concerns were removed. This document has become political and does not address the unintended side-effects, which in essence, means it is a biotech industry document. Once most the scientific concerns were removed, the document was then passed on to the Office of Management and Budget at the White House as well as to the White House Council. They, as it turned out, wanted it to be even more sanitized. One said that the extra pages about potential environmental dangers should be reduced because this would give the wrong impression, and the other issue was that it should be made clear that there is "no substantial difference".

Helke Ferrie: That is the substantial equivalency theory.

Jeffrey Smith: Yes. It was a political thing. As the process went further up the political chain the foods got "safer" and "safer."

Helke Ferrie: So that's how the myth was created. But now we have a trade deficit that is beyond belief and far worse than in the days of Bush Sr. and we also have the European Union, which is a giant in terms of population and purchasing power, saying about GMOs: Forget it. Surely it must begin to dawn that this hasn't worked for anybody's economy?

Jeffrey Smith: By this time, the biotech industry was so deeply embedded in the government and the lobbying effort has been so phenomenally successful, that you have someone from the Clinton administration, Dan Glickman, the US Secretary of Agriculture, and a pro-biotech cheerleader for eight years, admitting that "What I saw generically from the pro-biotech side was the attitude that the technology was generally good and that it was immoral to say that it wasn't; that it was going to solve the problems of the human race and feed the hungry and clothe the naked." You felt like you were almost an alien and disloyal by trying to present an open-minded view. And now in the US you have the Secretary of Agriculture, who was Monsanto's biotech governor; you have the person who is responsible for negotiating agricultural relationships with other countries who is a pro-biotech guy; you have the person who is allocating money for research who is a pro-biotech guy. You have Michael Taylor, Monsanto's former attorney and former Vice President, who now is the U.S. Food Safety Czar. You have equipped the US government with people from the biotech industry who don't really care about that terrible trade deficit. They want to push GMOs on other countries rather than acknowledge their failure.

Helke Ferrie: Then their idea must be that if they keep pushing, they will eventually succeed.

Jeffrey Smith: That's their intention.

Helke Ferrie: And they have enough money to be able to push for a while longer.

Jeffrey Smith: The spokesperson for the US State Department, said back in May of this year that the US State Department is now going to be confronting the nay-sayers - like me probably - and try to neutralize our effectiveness.

Helke Ferrie: How do you think they might be able to do that from their point of view?

Jeffrey Smith: I don't know, but I'll certainly report it on my Huffington Post blog.

Helke Ferrie: One of the things I find astounding, and it's obvious that it is the same in the States, is the fact that even decent people in government, who are not necessarily trying to pull the wool over our eyes, are so unbelievably ignorant. Last week, there was an interview that took place in Ottawa in which the Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture, perfectly genuinely said to this person who was talking about GMOs, "well, if you can get me some information that genetically engineered foods are in fact dangerous to human health, I would be very interested. I have never seen any." How is that possible? I have already sent five copies of your *book Genetic Roulette* to the organization to meet with him again and give him a copy. It's as if they simply listen to one kind of lobbyist.

Jeffrey Smith: The biotech industry has incredible access with their financial campaign contributions and with their paid lobbyists. There is a kind of chorus effect where they have certain talking points and they all believe and say that GMOs are safe, well regulated, feed the world, increase yield, reduce the use of agricultural chemicals, the wave of the future and that they are here to stay. So they pass on these myths and they are all wrong and false. But because everyone says them, they come in like a chorus and then many of the people they are trying to convince become convinced – because they have no other information to make them doubters. The other very effective myth that they put out is this: if anyone is against this, they are luddites, they are stupid. So, they convince the government officials that those of us who are asking for more science are actually anti-science.

Helke Ferrie: So, how does one deal with this attitude? I was trained as a scientist. We were trained to look at any scientific evidence as an object that needs to be falsified, at least in theory. If you can't set up a test that would question the validity of whatever conclusion, then it's a belief system, not a scientific finding that can be verified by others.

Jeffrey Smith: There is a statement in our culture that says "No, Virginia, there is no Santa Claus." So I would say, "No Helke, there is no objective science that comes out of the industry." We've analyzed industry research and it's absolutely pathetic. It is *designed* to avoid finding problems [that contradict the original intent]. I wouldn't say that everyone working in that industry has that bias, but there is so much evidence that the research that is being produced by the biotech industry to claim safety, is a flimsy, superficial façade, or is specifically designed to avoid finding problems.

Helke Ferrie: For example, any questions about the safety bovine growth hormone [rBST; see Dr. Shiv Chopra's book *Corrupt to the Core – Memoirs of a Health Canada Whistleblower*, Kos 2009, call 519-927-1049 for a copy) were answered by saying that the science had proven safety – until the actual raw data finally became available. Then it became very clear that they had simply avoided the raw data, just not recorded them in their final published material. The fact that the calves of cows treated with bovine growth hormone were dying, they were being born with birth defects etc. All that was simply swept under the carpet. But how does one counter this? What do you think is the most effective way?

Jeffrey Smith: I have a very specific strategy. First of all, I believe we have won the scientific argument with scientists – we won it years ago. If someone is an open-minded scientist and is presented the evidence from the pro-biotech side and the anti-biotech side, and there really is strong for and against, the independent scientist will clearly see that there is no justification for having GMOs in the market and that there is overwhelming evidence that they are unsafe. In fact, one of the most famous biologists in the world, Dr. P.M. Vhargava, is 81 years old, works in India. Twenty-five of his former friends and students have Nobel prizes – he’s at that level. He was asked by the Supreme Court of India to evaluate the approval process of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee. That took eight months - he said it was basically a sham, that they didn’t look at any adverse findings, that they didn’t even read much of the material, that not a single GMO crop in the world has been approved properly, that of the 29 different categories of tests that should have been conducted only 10% are actually conducted, and that even those were done by industry and were worthless. He then reviewed 600 journals looking for articles pertaining to GMOs and came to the conclusion that GMOs are not safe, and that there should be an immediate moratorium [which India’s Minister of Environment did declare – see Shiv Chopra’s article in July/August issue of *Vitality*]. So, we’ve won the scientific argument, but we don’t have the bandwidth to make that clear to the politicians necessarily. We need to focus on our strength, which is consumers. In Canada, if you can reach the politicians and present the evidence to them, that would be great. In the United States, I am not convinced right now that we have the money sufficient to counter that army of lobbyists and by now systemic disinformation that is presented by the biotech industry. But it’s very easy to convince people to avoid GMOs and to give them a shopping guide. Once they become convinced by the counter evidence, there is no antidote, they understand it is dangerous. Once they pull themselves out of the GMO food supply and put themselves into the non-GMO food supply, we build those numbers. Then two things will happen: one, we will get a tipping point so that the food industry will eliminate GMOs, and two, when the food industry starts eliminating GMOs, and the people start becoming more alert to it, then the politicians will come along. In the United States in 2009, the fastest growing products in store brands were those that declared they were non-GMO.

Helke Ferrie: We also have support from Europe. To a certain degree this has already happened in what used to be called alternative medicine. In the mid-1990s, the use of natural medicines and alternative medicine was in the 30% range. Now it is in the 60% range. And it has become a really serious problem for the pharmaceutical industry.

Jeffrey Smith: You mention environmental medicine. The American Academy of Environmental Medicine has officially urged all doctors to prescribe non-GMO diets to all patients, saying that the animal feeding studies link GMOs to infertility problems, etc.

Helke Ferrie: A couple of weeks ago, the President’s Cancer Panel published their 2010 report [see Helke Ferrie’s article in the June issue of *Vitality*]. This report determines what kind of money goes to the National Institute of Health for cancer research. They have, on page 111, which just blew my mind, the summary of what needs to be done to prevent cancer. They start with recommending to eat organic, avoid any meats from animals that are not naturally raised or treated with hormones and antibiotics.

Jeffrey Smith: Can you send me a copy of this?

Helke Ferrie: In the New York Times, they had a review on it on April 22nd where the person

writing it said that this is the “Mount Everest of cancer research policy”. How is this going to play out when government policies with regard to food are based on the exact opposite? The report didn’t specifically mentioned GMOs, but that people have to eat organic and that is based on the prohibition of genetically engineered seeds. One of the real kickers in the recommendation is to drink filtered water. I would have thought they would say this in order to avoid pesticides or chlorine or fluoride. But the real reason is to avoid the residues of pharmaceutical drugs because they are carcinogenic. What are they going to do with that in the US? Funnily enough, the President’s Cancer Panel members were appointed by George Bush, Jr.

Jeffrey Smith: There’s a lot of evidence that gets ignored regularly. There is science and then there is politicized science. We have a lot of evidence in the United States that the political appointees quashed EPA scientists’ concerns. There was a huge number of complaints among workers at the EPA that they were not having their science represented or that they were being manipulated. In fact, there is so much evidence now that the funders of science in general have been able to quash the publication or even have asked scientists to change their outcome. When the outcome is so clearly against the mainstream food industry, then it’s very possible that no one in America will hear about it.

Jeffrey Smith: It would be very interesting if the organic lobby can convince the FDA to put into the labels of organic products that these are specially recommended by the President’s Cancer Panel. I like the idea of having the organic industry request from the FTC or the FDA, to be able to say as part of the cancer prevention strategy on the label.

Helke Ferrie: You may also want to read what the American Cancer Society published recently on the costs of cancer, which have more than doubled over the past decade, and that is not entirely because of any changes in screening or because of inflation of one kind or another. These costs have doubled in real terms and it’s because of the increase in cancer incidence. So, in Canada, we now know that within the decade, the number of cancer cases will increase by over 40%. There is no way any medical system can deal with that. It’s not possible. One in four people, according to the President’s Cancer Panel, will definitely get cancer.

Jeffrey Smith: And obviously GMOs might be playing a big role in that.

Helke Ferrie: And even if it’s not the GMOs themselves, it is the requirement of the pesticides in the GMO agricultural process.

Jeffrey Smith: RoundUp has been shown to disrupt the cell cycle which is possibly linked to cancer – thus there is a theoretical support for a cancer link with the RoundUp herbicide.

Helke Ferrie: And the French Supreme Court has ruled last year that the entire information with which Monsanto brought RoundUp into France is entirely bogus. Apparently the sales of RoundUp went down 46% in France in one week and have not recovered.

Jeffrey Smith: There is also the potential for pre-cancerous cell growth in rats that were fed genetically modified potatoes. Those were experimental potatoes, but it showed that it was the process itself that was almost certainly the cause of the changes and it is this same process that is currently used in the crops that are being fed to the general population.

Helke Ferrie: What is your experience with consumers? How do they respond? When we began talking about GMOs 10 years ago, people thought it couldn’t be that bad. Now I find that

people listen.

Jeffrey Smith: I've travelled in Canada, east and west, and north and south and in 38 US states and 32 countries. I find there are more knowledgeable, enthusiastic, anti-GMO people than ever before. So we're seeing our message being taken home. If I'm giving a lecture on health dangers and people attend the lecture, they will make changes to their lifelong eating habits immediately. But not only that – we are now spreading the knowledge about non-GMOs to others. So we actually have an enormous team and network of people in North America who are equipped with correct information to convey to others. We are also equipping them with tools like audio CDs, and videos which they can copy and/or that are available for free online, newsletters that they can receive every month, books for the right brain, non-GMO shopping guides, brochures, a PowerPoint presentation to teach people on how to speak about GMOs, a webinar, and so on.

Helke Ferrie: So, all of this is based on the notion that there should be freedom of choice and that there is a choice. But I am concerned about the environmental and ecological contamination because we know how easily genetically engineered seeds can contaminate non-GMO crops and create an irreversible process. How do you see that problem?

Jeffrey Smith: There's good news and bad news. The bad news is you're right. There's no 100% going back. You can certainly reduce the percentage of contamination dramatically, but we have no technology today to fully clean it up. So the genes that are being introduced today can outlast the effects of global warming and nuclear waste. The good news is there's an NGO called the Non-GMO Project, a non-profit organization that operates both in Canada and the U.S. that has established a third party verified standard for making non-GMO claims which does require testing. They can't require 0% contamination, because that's not practical, but they are enlisting and enrolling thousands of brands they are going to be testing and verifying, so the system will only allow a very small level of contamination.

Helke Ferrie: From an economical point of view, as a business man, there must be many businesses that find this very profitable to cater to this need for GMO-free foods.

Jeffrey Smith: Yes. In fact, even organics say there may be some contamination, so even organic products are going to be third-party-verified. You will see a little seal that will say "non-GMO project verified". October is non-GMO month and it was created by the non-GMO project. 10/10/10 is non-GMO day. We are getting on board to get educational materials to consumers for the first of that month. We're actually going to be launching the campaign to create the tipping point in consumer rejection on 10/10/10 and 11/11/11 – a year, a month and a day to make a GM-free North America.

Helke Ferrie: Well, the fact that you're even planning something like that means that you think there is at least the possibility of victory is around the corner.

Jeffrey Smith: Oh, I think it's imminent. I'm very confident. You have Supermarket News predicting an unprecedented surge of consumer concern in America about GMOs in 2010. The Neilson Survey showed the fastest growing claim among store brands in 2009 was non-GMO. I'm seeing higher levels of activism and education that is consumer based than ever before. We have many people wanting to become speakers on GMOs. We have the entire natural food industry rallying around this third-party-verified claim so that the natural food industry can become more bold in educating consumers about non-GMOs so virtually all the products in the store will be non-GMO very soon.

Helke Ferrie: Did you follow that amazing and truly popular grass roots uprising in India about the GMO eggplants?

Jeffrey Smith: I didn't just follow it, I had something to do with it.

Helke Ferrie: You were involved in India?

Jeffrey Smith: Yes. There was an Indian movie called "Poison on the Platter" which is available at www.poisononthepatter.com. It's a 30 minute movie from a top Bollywood producer and famous director. It was explicitly based on my book, *Genetic Roulette*. I was there when it was released in February this year in Delhi. It became one of the most talked about films in the country and galvanized public support against GMOs. It brought the whole GMO food safety issue out to the public. So, when they tried to introduce GMO eggplant a furor erupted against it.

Helke Ferrie: The Minister of the Environment completely went against it.

Jeffrey Smith: What he did was to decide to hold public consultations. We had seven of them and 8,000 people showed up. One hundred thousand people announced publicly that they were fasting for a day to protest against the GMO eggplant.

Helke Ferrie: That's a typical Indian routine. I lived in India for many years. When they want to make a point, they go on a fast.

Jeffrey Smith: I was very involved in it. My book was published in India last year. I did a speaking tour in India to inform doctors and scientists and the general public. Then the film was released.

Helke Ferrie: India is pivotal in this struggle. They have a long history of being under the thumb of an imperialistic system. They are very sensitized to any kind of imperialism. When it comes to food, they go as ballistic as the French. Food is sacred. I was not surprised that they reacted that way. What surprised me was that they succeeded to the point that the government actually put the brakes on.

Jeffrey Smith: In India, what's happening in terms of GMOs is cataclysmic. The UK's Daily Mail estimated that nearly 125,000 cotton farmers that planted Bt committed suicide because the cotton was unable to pay back their high interest loans. You have reports of thousands of farm workers getting allergic reactions and itching all over their bodies from touching the Bt cotton engineered to produce this toxin. You have thousands of animals (sheep, goats, buffalo) reported to have died from grazing on the Bt cotton. I interviewed villagers that lost 13 buffalo after eating GMO cotton plants for one day.

Helke Ferrie: Is it true that the Monsanto's India branch had someone spill the beans from inside?

Jeffrey Smith: The former Director of Monsanto India was interviewed and said that Monsanto has given falsified information to the government and that he actually left the company years earlier because of Monsanto's inappropriate behaviour. He was not around when GMOs were introduced, it was then more the agricultural chemicals, but he was explaining the

corporate culture in such a way that lying was shown to be the norm.

Helke Ferrie: How would you summarize, what we can do? You and I both write. You run around the world and talk as well. What can one tell the ordinary person to do aside from shopping for non-GMO organic foods? I often ask supermarket managers why they don't have non-GMO organic foods. What would you advise us to do in Canada?

Jeffrey Smith: There are a number of "mellow" revolutionaries here in Canada. There are three points to convey to the public: one is the health dangers, the second is how to avoid GMOs, and the third is that we are close to a tipping point. When you tell people about the tipping point, they become excited and the message goes forward exponentially by word of mouth. As far as the health dangers go, we've packaged them in a variety of ways. Canada has its writers as we do. We have audios, videos, and PowerPoints, etc. Greenpeace has a Canadian website on non-GMO shopping in Canada. I have a non-GMO shopping guide available at www.nongmoshoppingguide.com as well – it's more about American products, but we are going to be switching over so that we are going to be requiring non-GMO project enrolment and then both U.S. and Canadian products will be included. As for the tipping point, we've seen this happen in Europe with leaks from high profile GMO scandals hit the papers. There have been major leaks from virtually every major food company that uses GM ingredients. Dr. Arpad Puztai was able to speak to the press more than a decade ago.

Helke Ferrie: Wasn't that because Prince Charles asked him to speak?

Jeffrey Smith: Parliament had invited him to testify. So you can also see the tipping point against bovine growth hormone in the U.S., and you can see the tipping point on the horizon against GMOs in general. Empowerment and knowledge will bring about that tipping point

Helke Ferrie: I have the job of getting the information to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa. MPs tend to have short attention spans.

Jeffrey Smith: That's why I wrote *Genetic Roulette* in a specific way. You have to tell them to look at the left side for the snapshots of the studies. They only have to read the conclusion and maybe some bullet points from scientists and flip the pages. It's like a flip chart. They will see they can get through the whole thing in a few minutes. I wrote it for that kind of person. It was crazy for me to spend two years writing a book for very limited use, but it turns out it is now being used all over the world by a lot of people. I was actually writing it for the policy maker who has a very small attention span.

Helke Ferrie: Is there something like a half hour video that summarizes it?

Jeffrey Smith: Yes, there is actually an 84 minute video and a 73 minute audio, so if he's too busy, you can give him the audio to listen to in the car. It's called "Don't Put That In Your Mouth". You can download it for free from our website. You can order it for \$1 and you can make as many copies of it as you like. And that's to give to busy people who say they don't have time. They can listen to it in the car as they are commuting to and from the office.

Helke Ferrie: We had an event that was in the main ballroom of the House of Commons. The MPs interested in the issue of pesticides and organic farming did organize this meeting. We had four or five people who were experts on pesticides and their health effects, from various places and who were invited to speak. At the time, I was the only member of the press. The Globe and

Mail wasn't there. The Toronto Star wasn't there. No one from any of the big outlets was there. I was really depressed. I thought, if this is all, if only *Vitality* Magazine is represented, what is going to happen? Well the fact is, we have a new national pesticide act in spite of the lack of interest from the media back then, because the MPs were listening to this evidence. What I'm hoping to do is to do the same for non-GMOs. You should be one of the speakers.

Jeffrey Smith: I'd be happy to, but they may only want Canadians. But I may speak to the Canadian GMO bill.

Helke Ferrie: The Atemanenko Bill – Bill C474?

Jeffrey Smith: I think so. The one about marketing. The biotech industry claims they have been able to counter the evidence in my book, but it's all rubbish. They are actually just repeating the same old arguments.

Helke Ferrie: Then who else do you think I should ask?

Jeffrey Smith: Michael Hansen comes to mind.

Helke Ferrie: Yes, Michael Hansen was at the CODEX meeting in Quebec City this spring. CODEX was forced to acknowledge that Europe is not one monolithic zone, as the biotech industry likes to think, but that there are 27 countries many of which have declared themselves GMO-free zones. Thank you so much for this!