

Monsanto Hijacks Safe Food Coalition

- corporations
- food safety

The Safe Food Coalition calls itself "an alliance of consumer advocacy, senior citizen, whistleblower protection and labor organizations." Formed in 1987, its members include such public interest heavyweights as Michael Jacobson's Center for Science in the Public Interest, Ralph Nader's Public Citizen, and Public Voice for Food and Health Policy, which was begun by now Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Ellen Haas.

Another former Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Carol Tucker Foreman, is the coordinator, spokesperson and lobbyist for the Safe Food Coalition, and therein lies the rub. Foreman is also a well-paid Washington lobbyist for clients that include Aetna Life and Casualty Company and the United Food and Commercial Workers union. In early 1993, she became a personal lobbyist for the chemical giant Monsanto, working to promote its highly-controversial milk-inducing cow drug, recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH).

For what is rumored to be an unusually large fee, Monsanto hired Foreman onto their BGH lobby team. With her help, Monsanto has successfully prevented Congress from overriding FDA's decision that milk from rBGH-injected cows need not be labeled, despite the food safety concerns of many including the publisher of *Consumer Reports* magazine. (See *PR Watch* #2, p.8.)

Foreman told *PR Watch* that she saw no conflict of interest between lobbying for rBGH and for the Safe Food Coalition. "The FDA has said rBGH is safe," she explained, adding "Why don't you call CSPI, they say rBGH is safe too?" When asked how much money she has received from Monsanto to lobby for rBGH, she angrily declined, saying "What in the world business is that of yours?"

Carol Tucker Foreman's potential "safe food" conflicts go much deeper than rBGH. Her client Monsanto is also the world's largest producer of herbicides, whose residues are consumed in food and groundwater. People are eating fish, milk and meat contaminated with Monsanto's cancer and birth-defect-causing PCBs. Monsanto is also the producer of NutraSweet

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