

Monsanto's High Level Connections to the Bush Administration

From SourceWatch

While much of the controversy over Monsanto has centered on its products and technology, many have raised concerns about the company's high level connections to the administration of George W. Bush.

"The connections between Monsanto and the new Bush administration are also very solid. G.W.'s pop, Bush Sr. appointed Clarence Thomas, a Monsanto attorney, to the Supreme Court. Thomas played a key role in the selection of G.W. as president. John Ashcroft, the current attorney general, was the top recipient of Monsanto contributions when he recently tried to get reelected to the U.S. Senate. Donald Rumsfeld, the current secretary of defense, was president of Searle Pharmaceuticals, now owned by Monsanto. Tommy Thompson, now the secretary of Health and Human Services, helped the biotech industry by getting the state of Wisconsin to set up a \$37 million biotech zone there. He received \$50,000 from the biotech industry for his reelection campaign. The current secretary of Agriculture, Ann Veneman, was on the board of directors of Calgene Pharmaceuticals, an affiliate of Monsanto. Recently, Linda J. Fisher, a former Monsanto official, was nominated by Bush to be second-in-command at the EPA. She was Monsanto's representative in Washington from 1995 to 2000 and coordinated the company's strategy to blunt resistance to genetically modified food" [1] See also GM lobby takes root in Bush's cabinet. Other high level government connections include Stansfield Turner, former Director of the CIA and member of the Monsanto Board [2] and Earle H. Harbison former president of Monsanto and CIA officer for 19 years [3]. For still more connections see [4]. See also Revolving Doors.

Monsanto's close ties are paying off now in Iraq. Article 81 (one of the "100 Orders" Paul Bremer issued "means that in future Iraqi farmers will be forced to plant 'protected' crop varieties defined as new, distinct, uniform and stable.... Where ownership of a crop is claimed, seed saving will be banned, and royalties will have to be paid by the farmer to the registered seed "owner". Farmers will be required to sign contracts relating to seed supply and, probably, to the marketing of the harvest. Where GM crops are involved (and possibly in other cases as well) they will also be required to sign contracts for the purchase of herbicides, insecticides and fertilisers.... The control of all protected varieties will last 20 years for field crops and 25 years for trees and vines. Farmers who save seed or otherwise break their agreements, and farmers unlucky enough to find the adventitious presence of 'registered varieties' in their fields, can be prosecuted; or else their harvests, tools and buildings will (may) be destroyed. Conversely, farmers will have no right to claim compensation from the seed owners who, for example, allow their GM crops to pollute organic crops and destroy livelihoods in the process.[5]. "In 2002, FAO estimated that 97 percent of Iraqi farmers used saved seed from their own stocks from last year's harvest or purchased from local markets. When the new law - on plant variety protection (PVP) - is put into effect, seed saving will be illegal and the market will only offer proprietary 'PVP-protected' planting material 'invented' by transnational agribusiness corporations" [6] [7]. See also Mutant Seeds for Mesopotamia.

Monsanto and the American Farm Bureau have teamed up to sponsor a PBS program called America's Heartland. The idea, they say, is to educate citizens about farming, but others see a more suspicious motive - the softening of Americans views toward factory farming and genetic

engineering. "Having built its California audience with a typically cheerful tone and general avoidance of controversies underlying the state's food supply, the new national "Heartland" has a two-year financial commitment, station officials said, from the powerful voice of the nation's farming establishment, the American Farm Bureau Federation, and St. Louis-based agribusiness giant Monsanto Co. Both sponsors decline, as does KVIE, to say how much they're spending. But the investment is significant. 'It takes seven figures to produce a show like this,' said Jan Tilmon, KVIE vice president for content and a creator of "California Heartland." "We project that the first season of the program will be available in markets totaling more than 60 percent of the nation's viewers ... reaching more than 71 million households." says Jim O'Donnell, Director of Program Marketing, KVIE-TV [8]. See also [9] [10]. "Former U.S. Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman of Modesto has also helped introduce the new national show by talking up 'a tremendous amount of viewers' for the California version". This comes at a time when public broadcasting is increasingly coming under major control of Republican interests [11].

[http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Monsanto%27s High Level Connections to the Bush Administration](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Monsanto%27s_High_Level_Connections_to_the_Bush_Administration)