

# SCIENCE IN PARLIAMENT

*The Journal of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.*

*The Committee is an Associate Parliamentary Group of members of both Houses of Parliament and British members of the European Parliament, representatives of scientific and technical institutions, industrial organisations and universities.*

*Science in Parliament has two main objectives:*  
*a) to inform the scientific and industrial communities of activities within Parliament of a scientific nature and of the progress of relevant legislation;*  
*b) to keep Members of Parliament abreast of scientific affairs.*



Sales of 'organic food' have passed the £1 billion mark for the first time. Market gardening/farming was part of my life until I escaped to university in 1958. We produced 'organic food'. It was difficult to keep the aphids off the lettuce and I have

dug many 'failed' crops under as a result of infestation. Our only pesticide in the 1940's was nicotine, which we burned in the greenhouses. Similarly, we lost tomatoes through 'rust' (fungal growth) on the stems of the plants, and our fruit was full of grubs and our root crops similarly infested. My father and others like him were extremely pleased when chemistry came to our rescue with its 'green revolution'.

How many of the 'organic' growers in Britain today could survive if they were not surrounded by non-organic growers that are keeping the pests out of the organic growers' crops? I don't want to go back to the 'good old days', thank you.

If residual pesticide on our food was as dangerous as the Soil Association would have us believe, how come that we are living so much longer than in the 1940's, when I was born? Indeed, copper sulphate, pyrethrum and the other chemicals used by organic farmers are probably more dangerous to the environment than modern pesticides applied by modern farming practices.

Is 'organic food' an idea now hijacked by modern marketing ploys? Please write and tell us what you believe.

The debate on embryology is hotting up as we approach a revision of the Human Fertility and Embryology Act 1990 this Autumn. The House of Commons Science & Technology Select Committee has produced 'Government Proposals for the Regulation of Hybrid and Chimera Embryos' (HC 272), which gets behind research on cytoplasmic hybrid embryos as a means of producing stem cells without involving human embryos. By contrast, three groups have reported their ability to re-programme normal skin cells to their embryonic state.

The Wellcome Trust-sponsored research that has found new genetic variants for seven common diseases is another remarkable breakthrough that is worthy of our attention.

Dr Brian Iddon MP  
Chairman, Editorial Board  
Science in Parliament

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