

The story of Arpad Pusztai Part II of III

By mark phillips

At last month's meeting I began the Arpad Pusztai Story. After a remarkable 35 year career at the Rowett Research Institute (RRI), he was dismissed in retaliation for his honest comments.

The Rowett began an intense effort to discredit Pusztai. This included comments suggesting Dr. Pusztai's research was either unreliable or fraudulent. They incorrectly informed the press about the particular lectin Pusztai used. He was unable to correct these false and slanderous statements because he had been placed under a gag order. Speaking out, even to correct erroneous statements by the Rowett, could land Arpad in prison.

The Rowett assembled an audit committee to conduct an investigation into the affair and concluded that the evidence did not support Pusztai's claims. But it is interesting to hear Dr. Pusztai describe how the process at the RRI worked:

“Although the Rowett is regarded by many as the “Premier Nutrition Institute of the UK (if not the world according to its Director) they could not “find or delegate” a nutritionist to the Audit committee ... even though they had to pass judgment on a basically nutritional work. They never gave me a chance to speak to them. They also did the whole “work” in five and a half hours ... and produced a nearly 80- page document that has in fact not been published at the time, except a summary.”

The Royal Society also got in the act, conducting its own review using 6 hand selected, anonymous, reviewers. As with the RRI audit, none were experts in nutritional studies but they went one further and only supplied an internal RRI document for review. This document did not explain many of the details of Dr. Pusztai's work as it was designed for an audience that was already familiar with these details. Thus, many of the reviewers complaints about incomplete descriptions could have been easily prevented.

These facts prompted the editor of the Lancet to comment:

“Last week ... we reported that the Royal Society had reviewed what it could of Pusztai and colleagues' evidence and found it flawed, a gesture of breathtaking impertinence to the Rowett Institute scientists who should be judged only on the full and final publication of their work.”

In short, it was another in a series of hits against a scientist who dared to speak out against the GE Food industry.