

Biotechnology Forces

(Continued from Page A1)

such as growth hormones for cattle and swine.

Bentley said the USDA is committed to supporting basic and applied biotechnology research and is an active participant in the development of coordinated research and regulatory guidelines. We need to be able to make the scientifically sound risk/benefit analysis required to establish reasonable criteria for evaluating the performance under natural conditions.

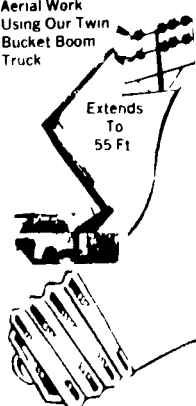
"Fundamentally," Bentley said, "we have to realize that we do in science and in the development of new technology has a great deal to do with the competitive position of U.S. industry, and especially our great American agricultural industry."

Mark Cantley, chairman of the Unit For Biotechnology in Europe under the commission of the European communities, used a quote from Gulliver's Travels dated 1726. The quote by Jonathan Swift says, "And he gave it for his opinion that whoever could make two ears of corn or two blades of grass to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before would deserve better of mankind and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together."

However, Cantley said Jonathan Swift didn't see the problem of producing 10 ears of corn or 10 blades of grass. Now the politicians are engaged in selling them, storing them, or reducing the number of ears or blades of grass. The difficult things to communicate in biotechnology include four key characteristics. One, the inherent scope for further scientific discovery and hence vast but unpredictable technological potential, which have been opened up by the cumulative and recently accelerating progress in the life sciences. Two, the onerous competitive economic challenge agricultural and industrial between the major blocks and between the major companies of which advanced technology is of growing importance. Three, the justified hopes of reducing or even eliminating hunger and disease. And four, widespread popular apprehension about nonunderstood science and socially or culturally unacceptable innovation.

"I have no doubt that occasions like this forum are of high value in drawing attention both to the marvels of biotechnology and to the challenges of its political management," Cantley concluded. "I think that the open societies of the western democracies have two strategic advantages in biotechnology. Firstly, our open flow of information stimulates our science in both cooperative and competitive activities. Secondly, our open processes of challenge and inquiry enable us to control the new technologies in the service of human needs. As individuals in society, we have much to learn from one another."

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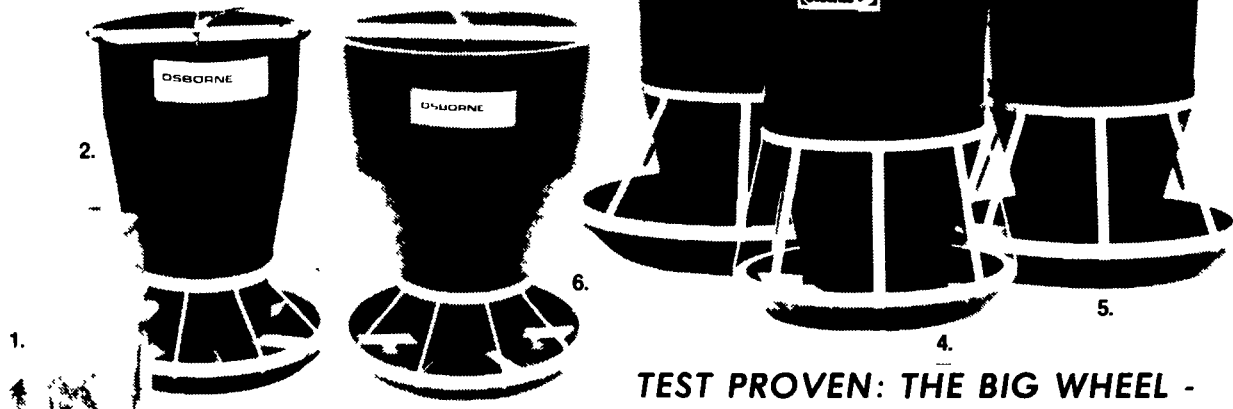
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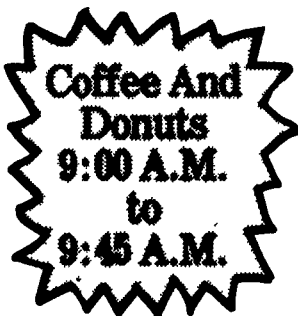
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