



7 February 2007

To Carthage Smith
Deputy Executive Director
The Committee on Freedom and Responsibility in the Conduct of Science.

Re: Request for information by the CFRCS from the Royal Society of New Zealand

Dear Sir,

We offer the following response to your specific questions, received on January 5th 2006 by Dr Steve Thompson, Chief Executive. Further enquiries can be addressed to Dr Thompson or me: Kathleen.Logan@rsnz.org

Kindest regards,
Dr Kathleen Logan
Policy Analyst
Royal Society of New Zealand

Question 1. What are the main activities of your organisation regarding the responsibilities of science and scientists?

Answer 1.

- A) **Code of Ethics:** The Royal Society of New Zealand, as this country's Academy of Sciences, has developed a Code of Professional Standards and Ethics and a complaints procedure for its members and Fellows.
http://www.rsnz.org/directory/code_ethics.php We have invited all scientists in New Zealand to voluntarily comply with this Code of Ethics. We are implementing a learning resource (a course in conjunction with the Institute of Professional Engineers of New Zealand) to promote and support the Code.
- B) **Defence of Science and Advice:** We provide expert advisory papers to government agencies that defend research within ethical and regulatory boundaries. We also make recommendations on technical aspects of ethical and regulatory systems.
- C) **Science Communication:** We have a science communicators' scheme to assist researchers to inform the general public on progress in their areas of research. We also undertake a significant number of promotions of scientific achievements to the public, government and industry, and promote public awareness of the issues surrounding science and technology.

Question 2. What do you consider to be the main trends regarding freedom and responsibility for which international cooperation is required?

Answer 2.

- A) Freedom: We need to ensure the **freedom to publish results adverse to company or sponsor interests**. Similarly, scientists should be free to represent their research honestly and openly, say in a court of law or international conference, without censure by employers or funding agencies (within limits set by confidence agreements).
- B) Responsibility: Scientists need to recognise, and balance, the need for commercially sensitive information to be kept private while enabling openness about the general

progress of science. Scientists should be responsible when agreeing confidence clauses for commercial research and should encourage sponsors to allow some external scrutiny of research. Scientists should learn to avoid the dangers of **pressure to conduct non-ethical research** from commercial interests, for example some aspects of genetic or health experimentation. In this respect, the Code of Professional Standards and Ethics, backed by the Academy, provides a mechanism that supports scientists to make decisions to avoid unethical conduct even when under pressure.

Question 3. What is your experience regarding visa problems for scientists?

Answer 3. **No known problems** for New Zealand scientists attending conferences overseas or visitors to New Zealand.

Question 4. Do you have a mechanism to monitor visa problems?

Answer 4. In the small country of New Zealand, the mechanism is **word of mouth**. As the Academy of Sciences we would expect to be approached if there were consistent visa problems for academics and researchers, and we have had no complaints sent to us.

Question 5. Is your organisation involved in any activities related to the dual-use of research, in particular the BTWC? [NZ readers: BTWC = Biological and toxic weapons convention]

Answer 5. **No**.

Question 6. Would your union be prepared to play an active role in raising awareness on dual use issues?

Answer 6. The BTWC is not a major issue in New Zealand, and it may be outside the scope of interest for us to work specifically with the BTWC. However, we already have a role in promoting, among scientists and the public, the issues surrounding science and technology and the following specific activities are of relevance:

- A) Our **Code of Professional Standards and Ethics** for our members states that “In instances of conflict the welfare and the needs of the community must take precedence over responsibilities to clients, colleagues or other interests.” In addition, members must “not undertake any work they know will be in conflict with the standards and ethical requirements of this Code.” Within the Code are specific clauses that support environmental protection, animal and human welfare, and respect for different community values.
- B) Regarding the **BTWC, it is not our main speciality**. [For example, the government of New Zealand’s Biosecurity Strategy relates to economic threats to our native flora and fauna or primary production sectors, by imported animal and plant pest species or diseases carried by them.] In this small, isolated country of New Zealand, where we have tight controls over imported biological products, good border controls and established emergency responses to border incursions, a strong research regulatory framework (which requires specific approvals for virtually all research), open communications among scientists, and an observant and well-educated citizenry, it would be highly unlikely that research of the nature banned under the BTWC could be undertaken for any length of time.
- C) Since our country has a strategy for biosecurity research that includes a focus on high-technology sensing systems (mainly for cargo imports and arriving passenger terminals) we may be able to **contribute to the international expertise** in detection technologies for explosives, toxins and biological compounds.

[Sent to C. Smith via “Rohini RAO” rohini@icsu.org]