



News Release
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“RAFI” becomes “ETC Group”

International Advocacy Group Changes Name, President, and Widens Agenda

“ETC Group” (pronounced *etcetera*) is the new name for the former Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI). The full legal name will be “Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration”. The official name change took place September 1st as the organization began its 16th year of activity.

Etcetera: “We had hundreds of name suggestions,” Pat Mooney, Executive Director reports, referring to the name contest launched on the RAFI website earlier this year. “A surprisingly large percentage of the suggestions were actually complimentary,” Hope Shand, Research Director, recalls. “The most common suggestion was not to change our name at all.” (The change was advised in order to secure the advocacy group’s non-profit status in the United States. The ETC Group is incorporated both in Europe and in Canada, with headquarters in Winnipeg.

Silvia Ribeiro in the Mexico City office adds, “We wanted a name that translates easily.” Julie Delahanty, in Quebec, continues, “Given our extensive work with UN agencies, we kind of liked *Inter alia* but not enough people seemed to get it.” “We toyed with *Ad nauseum* but that seemed just a little too Canadian diplomat-ish,” Pat Mooney adds.

New Agenda: At its annual meeting in Uppsala, Sweden in late June, the board and staff agreed on Action Group on Erosion, Technology, and Concentration as the most accurate description of the organization’s expanded agenda (in keeping with our recent book, *The ETC Century*). It was agreed that the Group’s work should focus on human and cultural rights under the “Erosion” agenda; that research on new technologies such as human genomics and neurosciences, nanotechnology and biological warfare needs to become a priority under the “Technology” agenda; and that the “Concentration” agenda will explore “New Enclosures” – corporate strategies that go beyond intellectual property to strengthen monopoly control. The group insists however, that this expansion in programme work will be done without abandoning its more traditional work on agricultural biodiversity, biotechnology, biopiracy, intellectual property, and issues of international governance.

“Our expanded programme agenda is ambitious,” Pat Mooney admits, “but our present complement of six full time programme and administrative staff and two part-time staff will do our best to manage it. As always, we will have to rely upon our partners around the world to develop this agenda with us and to give us information and guidance.” In the coming weeks, ETC Group will issue a battery of new *ETC Communiqués* on corporate concentration; human genomics; nanotechnology; and new corporate monopoly strategies.

New President: The Uppsala board meeting also said farewell to Sven Hamrell, RAFI’s President since its incorporation in 1985. Dr. Hamrell - who led the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation for almost thirty years until retiring in 1994 - has accepted the position of *President Emeritus* of ETC Group. “It may seem honorary,” Pat Mooney says, “but we plan to keep Sven busy.” Olle Nordberg, who took over the reins of the prestigious Swedish foundation upon Sven Hamrell’s retirement, has agreed to serve on the ETC Group board and will help maintain the long and close relationship between the two organizations.

The new President of ETC group is Tim Brodhead who has been Secretary-Treasurer of RAFI for many years. In his “day” job, Mr. Brodhead is President of Canada’s largest private foundation and is the past head of the Canadian Council for International Cooperation.

Website: For practical reasons, ETC group will retain use of the name “RAFI” – and the “www.rafi.org” domain address for the foreseeable future. Until construction of the upgraded website is completed in mid to late-October, all RAFI and ETC group information can be downloaded from www.rafi.org and visitors who go to the new domain address (“etcgroup.org”) will be redirected to the old RAFI site in the interim.

Is it hard for RAFI’s staff to change names? “Extremely,” concedes Hope Shand, “but I expect the name will evolve comfortably into ETC and we’ll eventually get used to it.” “And,” concludes Pat Mooney, “think of all the free publicity - etcetera is the most commonly used word in UN documents!”
