

Bill C-205 is an attempt by the animal farming lobbies to muzzle exposure of the mistreatment of animals within their industry. The tactic adopted by Mr. Barlow and his backers is to exploit covid-19 fears around how the virus may have jumped from animal to human populations as a vehicle and excuse for pushing through this ill-advised piece of legislation.

Organizations such as Animal Justice have enumerated the faulty thinking underlying C-205. Apart from being possibly unconstitutional, the bill diverts attention from the real biological danger, which comes from unsafe practices within the walls of agribusiness. It seeks to blame the messenger (the person conducting undercover investigation of some barn or slaughterhouse) for the crime (the mistreatment of farm animals, resulting in poor sanitation and the spread of disease).

I refer the committee to Sarah Milov's *The Cigarette: A Political History*, Harvard University Press, 2019). One cannot miss the parallel between the efforts of the tobacco industry, over the second half of the 20th century, to suppress evidence of the health dangers of smoking and the current rearguard efforts by agribusiness to dampen the growing public concern about healthy diet and ethical farming practice. Tobacco farmers, like meat and dairy farmers, formed associations designed to lobby legislators (cf., Tobacco Growers Association from 1922/ Canadian Meat Council – and others cited by Mr. Barlow in his February 18th 2020 "Stakeholder Quotes"). Tobacco farmers, like animal farmers, were under the control of profit-obsessed corporations (British American Tobacco; Philip Morris International / Maple Leaf Foods; Premium Brands). In each case, the distance from front line worker back to shareholder, who is often a hedge fund stock investor under intense pressure to show profits on the portfolio, is too vast to enable socially responsible conduct at the pitface. Both tobacco farming and animal farming involve unhealthy workplaces which draw from a vulnerable, desperate part of the labour force. Both are (or used to be, in the tobacco case) enmeshed with government through subsidy programs).

With smoking, it took fearless public servants such as Luther Terry, author the famous 1964 US Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, to begin undoing the damage done by big tobacco. In Canada, only governments can control the damage to health posed by agribusiness. Undercover investigators are crucial to knowing what happens within animal farms. The Government of Canada and provincial governments should be sending their own undercover agents in to conduct investigations rather than contemplating a blatant "ag-gag" law such as C-205. Several decades having passed since tobacco producers at last came under scrutiny, we say now, "how could they have concealed the truth for so long?" Let us not have to say the same of the meat and dairy industry in 2050.