

Milov, Sara. *The Cigarette: A Political History*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2019. 394 pages. Paperback, \$20.95.

The Cigarette: A Political History is a fascinating book in which the author, Sarah Milov, tells the story of smoking in the United States. She meticulously presents a struggle between the cigarette oligarchs on one side and the “heroic scientists” activists on the other side. The study is based on Milov’s interactions with farmers, laborers, and those in social movements to produce an insightful book to aid in understanding of the story tobacco’s rise and fall. The study demonstrates that cigarette companies are not juggernauts as usually portrayed, they are fragmented and vulnerable.

The objective of the book is to get the inner working of the cigarette companies and the truth out about how the chief executives and their lobbyists manipulated Congress to slow down and weaken efforts to cut down cigarette use despite the overwhelming evidence of the harm it causes. The book focuses on the following aspects, such as how America subsidized exportation of cigarette to foreign countries, the anti-smokers who championed for clean air campaigns, and the exploitation of farmers for the benefits of the cigarette industry. She also discusses the control and techniques that were used to determine prices to control supply and distribution, and the roles of the government and judiciary in this social movement.

In the thirties, government officials and tobacco farmers worked to ensure that regulations were used to promote tobacco rather than protect consumers. As evidence began to surface, the cigarette was linked with cancer. Consequently, the authorities decided to enforce regulation in the name of better health. What turned the tide, according to Milov, was the new kind of politics that emerged between non-smokers and activists. Consequently, activists took to the courts and argued for a smoke-free workplace. The smoke-free crusaders compared their efforts to Black struggles for equality in the sixties. The data that support the movement was

fueled by the scientific reasoning that underscored unpleasantness of smoking in the restaurants, planes and bus stations and the effect of smoking on secondhand smoke. This was exacerbated by the social cost of smoking in the workplace by workers who smoke, and the idea that secondhand smoke could be dangerous to non-smokers.

The Cigarette is an earth-shattering book that exposes the excesses of American capitalism and traces the rise and fall of the tobacco companies and the triumph of science over greed. The book is recommended for political historians, business, sociology, and economics majors. Milov narrates this insightful book with lucidity blended with a thought-out, fascinating narrative of greed and power. The book dramatizes how local politics engaged multinational American tobacco companies to listen to voice of the people. Overall, the experience of cigarette industry shows how profits can be a motivator that can cost millions of lives. If you have any time to read an informative book, be sure you read this.

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