

Michael Schmidt

Immigrant

Provides raw milk to members of his cowshare program.

Charged with multiple counts of violating the Milk Act & over two years of legal battles. Found guilty of contempt of court.

No deaths of listeriosis ever recorded.

In one corner, we have an Ontario farmer, Michael Schmidt, who has immigrated here from Germany. His Glencolton Farms sells unpasteurised raw milk direct to interested consumers. Faced with the Milk Act which prohibits the sale and distribution of raw milk because of contamination fears, Schmidt eschews licensing and decides to create his own underground food distribution system. He develops "cowshares" so that his customers become subscriber-owners at \$3.00 per litre of milk. To deliver his milk, sometimes Schmidt hits the road in a very recognisable big blue school bus.

In mid 2006, the Ontario government is tipped off about possible distribution of unpasteurized milk. The province sends in an undercover investigator to become a member of the cowshare. Her purchases are tested at a lab in Guelph, Ontario. A search warrant is issued and 25 armed cops descend on Glencolton Farms in November 2006. Much split milk follows. Government is hot to trot, citing four cases of E.coli related to raw milk reported in Ontario the year before. None of which involve Schmidt.

Schmidt VS McCain The Battle of Listeriosis

Is food safety really the issue?



Since Schmidt does not deny anything, charges are laid. He gets hit with several counts of selling, distributing, storing and displaying raw milk in violation of the Milk Act. He also receives a cease and desist order.

A coalition of raw milk supporters emerges, starts blogging and has public events. He receives sympathetic media.

An award winning documentary *Michael Schmidt: Organic Hero or Bioterrorist* is produced. One report estimates that there may be 250,000 raw milk drinkers in Canada, all supported by a black market in milk. What seemed to be a minor enforcement matter becomes a lightning rod for an extended debate about the industrial food system, milk's place in it and the consumer's right to choose.

Despite the charges, Schmidt continues producing and selling milk, leading to more charges and complications. In October 2008 he pleads guilty to contempt of court, but the judge defers passing sentence until the Milk Act charges are resolved in May 2009.

Michael McCain

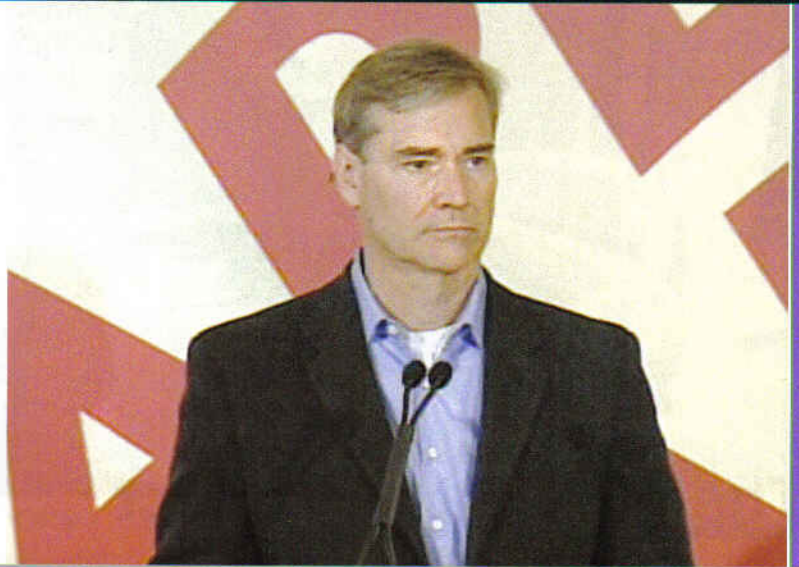
Canadian blue blood

20 plus dead from his cold cuts

\$25 million in settlements to victims

No criminal charges, no fines & delayed investigation.

Multiple continued incidences of listeriosis including one massive recall.



In the other corner, we have a scion of one of Canada's most influential and powerful families. Michael McCain's company, **Maple Leaf Foods**, has annual sales of over \$5.2 billion, supplying both branded deli meats and restaurant supply. Last year, faced with a high Canadian dollar, the food conglomerate switches to a new strategy of emphasizing value-added meats. Hwoops. Last summer, listeriosis-infected meat originating from his company's Toronto plant kills at least 20 people before health officials know what is going on. When the news breaks, it triggers the largest voluntary meat recall in Canadian history. The Toronto Bartor Road plant is closed for 28 days. A promised closed-door federal investigation, announced just before the writ is dropped for a federal election campaign, takes months to form.

Meanwhile McCain gets busy. He's front and centre, says "We're sorry" and appears on magazine covers, buys TV commercials and posts videos on YouTube.

In February, McCain heads off several class action lawsuits, with an estimated total pay out that could reach \$25 million. Maple Leaf Foods stock rebuilds to almost pre-outbreak levels, but bad news continues to dog the company. The same February 2009 day the company reports a \$14.6 million quarterly loss, they recall 1,000 cases of wieners that had broken quarantine from their Hamilton plant. Blaming human error, the company's stock falls down to post-recall levels. Four months after the Toronto Bartor Road plant reopens, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) releases new testing and sampling protocols for ready-to-eat meats. The new mandatory regulations take effect April 1st (no joke.)

It's not over yet. A recent University of Regina consumer survey suggests that while 65 percent of the public thought Maple Leaf had responded well to the crisis, 25 percent of self-identified Maple Leaf customers said they had stopped buying Maple Leaf. The researcher was surprised this number was so high. As well, only two percent of respondents said they checked out the website of CFIA during the recall (www.inspection.gc.ca), which quite frankly is weak and direly needs a facelift.

To date, Maple Leaf Foods has received no fines, and no charges have been laid. The delayed federal report on the recall is not due until July 2009, almost a year since the first listeriosis death.

