



## Editorial - September 2001

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News and comment from the Editor.

Whilst childhood can never be culture free, two recent books put forward cogent arguments about the dangers of a consumerism that is affecting our children's health and increasingly invading education, including children's access to books. In *Stealing Innocence: corporate culture's war on children* (Palgrave), Henry Giroux argues that the triumph of democracy is not, after all, related to the triumph of the market.

Read Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (Allen Lane/Penguin) and you will never want to eat at McDonald's or Burger King again: Schlosser wants you to know what really lurks between those sesame seed buns?. Even more disturbing is his account of how the fast food industry in America (and increasingly in Britain) both feeds and feeds off the young?, insinuating itself into all aspects of children's lives whilst leaving them prone to obesity and disease. His points are reinforced by Giroux's *Stealing Innocence*, a compelling account of the way that corporate culture is encroaching on children's lives. In the States, it seems, school notices and class displays may now carry advertisements. A particularly chilling example, given Coca Cola's recent deal with J K Rowling which will enable them to use Harry Potter in their promotions, is the case of two high-school students in Georgia who were expelled for wearing shirts with the Pepsi logo during an aerial photo-shoot of students dressed in red and white to form the Coke logo as part of a Coca Cola sponsored event.

Publishers of children's books inevitably look for marketing opportunities in our schools ? hence, for example, the HarperCollins/Walker crisps promotion. Should we be worried that teachers and parents were put in the invidious position of encouraging their children to eat crisps so that their school could have free books? And what about the Rowntree Nestlé sponsored Smarties prize, not to mention Sainsbury's sponsorship of the Sainsbury's Baby Book Award? These prizes play a genuine and important role in promoting interest in children's books and reading but if there is a line to draw in relation to the commercial interests of the corporate giants, where should that line be drawn?



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