

Tekst 7

Eating habits

Mac attack

FAST FOOD NATION: THE DARK SIDE OF THE ALL-AMERICAN MEAL. By Eric Schlosser. *Houghton Mifflin*; 356 pages; \$25

- 1 ARE burgers and fries a product of the profound social changes of the past 50 years, or were they to a large extent responsible for them? Eric Schlosser, the author of this attack on multinational restaurant brands opts for the latter explanation. "There is nothing inevitable about the triumph of the fast food nation," he concludes. But it happened nevertheless and, in his view, it is to be blamed for many of the evils of modern America and their global spread.
- 2 The modern phenomenon of fast food originated in California just before the second world war. Today, there is scarcely a corner of the world that is free from McDonalds' trademark golden arches, invariably spawning a cluster of rival chains selling hamburgers, pizzas, or fried chicken, doled out by smiling teenagers willing to accept minimal pay. They

are cheap, cheerful, popular and children love them.

- 3 So just what is Mr Schlosser's beef? Apart from his nutritional reservations – too much fat, salt and sugar – he documents how, as the chains expanded, they were able to dictate terms to the suppliers of potatoes and ground beef, their basic ingredients. This caused an upheaval in agribusiness, as a few large suppliers quickly forced less efficient producers out of the market. The drive to keep down costs and increase the speed of production led to the employment of cheap unskilled labour and to the widespread toleration of dangerous and unhygienic practices among growers and processors, which regulatory bodies have failed to police.
- 4 Mr Schlosser, who is a skilful and persuasive investigative reporter, sees all this as a damaging corruption of the free market. He is especially incensed by promotional techniques aimed at impressionable children. A 1997 giveaway of Teenie Beanie Babies increased the sale of McDonalds' Happy Meals from 10m a week to 10m a day. And a survey found that 96% of American schoolchildren could identify Ronald McDonald, the chain's mascot. Only Santa Claus scored higher.

The Economist

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- 1p **28** ■ How does Eric Schlosser regard fast food chains, according to paragraph 1?
- A As a bad influence on life in the US and the rest of the world.
 - B As a logical consequence of recent developments in US society.
 - C As an example of the worldwide popularity of US culture.
- 3p **29** □ Geef voor elk van de onderstaande aspecten aan of het wel of niet als punt van kritiek op fast food restaurants wordt gepresenteerd in de alinea's 2-3.
- 1 De grote hoeveelheid afval.
 - 2 Lage salarissen.
 - 3 Ongezond voedsel.
 - 4 Overdreven vriendelijke bediening.
 - 5 Uitbuiting van economische machtspositie.
 - 6 Weinig variatie in de maaltijden.
- Noteer het nummer van elk aspect, gevolgd door "wel" of "niet".