on the other hand, may be one of the risk factors associated with some diseases, but does not necessarily cause them. Indeed, the book favours the view that fat and skinny people are part of the natural range of human diversity; and that the sickness and misery of fat people depend not only on their weight but on their sensitivity to persecution on account of their weight.

While research on the link between weight and health remains inconclusive, some parts of the weight control industry seem to present a considerable health hazard. In the chapter on the medical wing of the industry, the author presents detailed information on the various drugs and surgical procedures used by the medical profession to control weight. As yet, there seems to be no satisfactory drug which can lead to the permanent loss of large amounts of weight. The available surgical procedures are often dangerous and have limited success. Whatever the case, medical practitioners in Australia do not receive adequate training in diet and nutrition. Indeed, the author argues that fatness in itself is not a disease. White middle class doctors, however, tend to see the body shape acquired by the women of their class as the ideal, and assume not only that other social groups share their ideals, but that poorer women, too, have the time, resources and inclination regularly to attend fitness clubs and purchase health foods.

The food industry and many of its products are subject to even stronger criticisms. Even those who tend to be sceptical of the claims of advertisers will find some surprises. Did you know that Weight Watchers International is owned by Heinz (of the Heinz beans)?; that a Weight Watchers brand of breakfast cereal contains more kilojoules per 100 grams than the same kind of breakfast cereal produced by the same company under its own name?; that Purina toasted muesli contains 26 percent sugar?

In terms of quick profit, however, perhaps the highest stakes are involved in commercial weight-loss centres, dieting clubs and similar enterprises. Although little systematic information is available about these, Ramona Koval documents some of the rip-offs and dangerous practices involved. In particular, she points out that, for some people, some forms of exercise can lead to a serious deterioration of health. Once the first visit is over, however, health fitness club staff seem to offer little professional guidance to their clients. Several of the "miracle diets" analysed in the book do not fare much better: they might give miraculous profits to their promoters, but are based on misleading medical information, are dangerous to health — and do not work in the long run.

Unlike most books about food and dieting, Eating Your Heart Out leaves the readers guilty about their innermost desire to lose weight and, unintentionally, makes skinny people feel somewhat uneasy. Unintentionally, since the main message of the book is undoubtedly: "Feel good about your body, whatever size and shape it is". Those readers who remain convinced that they, for whatever reason, need to lose weight, will have to read between the lines to work out the best way to do it.

The problem remains that in our society many people do have unhealthy jobs and lifestyles, and often develop serious disorders such as anorexia and bulimia associated with food. In her chapter on strategies for change, the author discusses two ways forward. On an economic level, this is a thorough and stringent regulation of the weight control industry. On an individual level, she discusses the possibilities opened up by feminist psychotherapists working with groups of women who have problems with food. Yet, in the long run, increased self-esteem and feeling good about our bodies is not enough. In the end, we must demand healthy, meaningful livelihoods for all people, adequate incomes and leisure (even for women), and cheap, widely available healthy foods. In other words, the emphasis should be only partly on feeling good about ourselves, but also on making sure we all have a lot to feel good about.

I highly recommend the book —it is not often that we can chuckle our way through a readable, scholarly demolition job on a major social institution.

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**Shelflife**

How times change! Twenty years ago, Australian books about socialist history or politics were a comparative rarity. Almost all of those published came from a handful of sources, usually closely tied to the organised left. The most prolific sources of progressive literature were Current Book Distributors (run by the Communist Party) and the Australasian Book Society.

Current Books, apart from being the distributor of almost all the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin available in Australia, published hundreds of pamphlets, booklets, and books about Australian politics, usually written by leading figures in the Communist Party. The Australasian Book Society concentrated more on fiction with a progressive bent, with a range of
authors such as Judah Waten, Frank Hardy, Mary Gilmour and John Morrison, and was responsible for making available, through its subscription list, a range of new writing long before Australian literature became widely fashionable. It was also a publisher of non-fiction, including Noel Ebbels' pioneering book, The Australian Labor Movement 1850-1907. There were other small left publishers, including magazines like Dissent and Outlook. Major commercial publishers, though, would have little or nothing to do with the left. Companies like Cheshire or Angus and Robertson published the odd book of interest to socialists, but virtually nothing which could be described as radical.

A short browse through the shelves of any good bookshop these days shows how much things have changed. Particularly over the last decade, there has been a real explosion of left publishing in Australia. Part of the reason for this has been the growth of small left presses such as Kibble Books (an offshoot of the journal Arena), the Melbourne feminist collective Sybylla Press, Sydney's Alternative Publishing Co-operative, and Stained Wattle Press, which have been responsible for the availability of an increasing range of socialist and feminist publications.

In addition, there is a number of new Australian publishers who cannot really be described as radical publishers, but whose lists include numerous socialist and feminist titles. Probably the most notable of these is the Sydney company Hale and Iremonger who, alongside such delights as Stumpjumpers: A New Breed of Australians, with its profiles of Bob Ansett and his kind, have published or republished a wide range of books on labour history and politics and various feminist writings, including two collections from the Women and Labour Conferences. Others who are publishing radical work include Hyland House and Kangaroo Press.

What has been most important, though, in widening the availability of radical writings in this country is the readiness of major international publishers to handle books which are explicitly socialist or feminist. With one important exception — Pluto Press Australia — these companies are straightforward capitalist concerns, and their willingness to publish such books is basically because they believe they can sell enough to make a profit. Of course, there are socialists and feminists working for such companies but, ultimately, decisions about publishing programs in what are merely local branches of multinational enterprises have to get past the accountants.

The number of these companies which have been tempted to explore the radical market in recent years, and the successes of those who have developed a good list of books from the Australian left, is an important reminder of the potential size of the left in this country. For major publishers like Penguin and Collins to print 3,000 copies of a book is to do no more than break even, and most of their publications have much larger print-runs. I think the beginning of Penguin's radical publishing was with A New Britannia in 1970 (a book which they are about to reissue in a revised edition) and their persistence with such publishing ever since points to their ability to reach an audience far larger than those of us on the left usually contemplate.

Pluto Press is somewhat different — being the Australian branch of an established radical publisher in Britain. Of course, radical publishers are still motivated by concerns of profit, even if only to pay for more publishing, but their reason for being is to develop a strong list of left books. In the short time it has operated in this country, Pluto has certainly started to do that, with local publications like Moving Left, Health and Safety at Work, Thank God for the Revolution, and The Accord... and Beyond. It has also done an excellent job of producing and promoting Australian editions of books like Red Brotherhood at War and The War Against East Timor.

At least in scale, however, the biggest publisher of radical books in Australia today is Allen and Unwin, the local branch of a very old and established British publisher. It is certainly not just a radical publisher — one of its recent lead titles was Thoroughbred Studs of Australia and New Zealand — but its lists include numerous titles on feminism, labour history, and contemporary Australian society, politics and culture from a radical standpoint.

Anyone who knows Allen and Unwin's British publishing concern would probably get a big surprise to see what it is doing in Australia. Apart from a solid, conservative academic list, the UK parent company survives on books on cricket, cooking and railways, and the novels of J.R. Tolkien. Who could have guessed that all those readers of Lord of the Rings would end up paying for the publication of books like Lloyd Edmonds' Letters from Spain, Game and Pringle's Gender at Work, or the works of Bob Connel? In one way, though, the wheel has come full cycle. Allen and Unwin has been formed over the years by the merger of various smaller publishers, and one of the original ones was a company called Swann Sonnenschein — the original publishers in English of Marx's Capital.

But the problem for the left in relying on publishers who are simply in it for the money is that, in a world of takeovers and mergers, the publishers whom we now rely on for dissemination of our writings may end up, in a year or two, concentrating on publishing texts for business management. One of the more enthusiastic sharks of recent times in British (and Australian) publishing is an American named Rupert Murdoch — a figure quite capable of making decisions about cutting radical publishing, even if it does make a profit. Similarly, Allen and Unwin UK has recently been sold to a new owner. At this stage, it seems that this won't make any difference to the way the Australian branch works — but the possibility that it could show up the difficulties, as well as the possibilities, inherent in the present state of publishing on the left.

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