

Purdy became bored with life in Chicago as, apparently, did her husband. Mr. Purdy sold his business and the couple decided to use their capital to seek opportunities in Canada's Yukon Territory. The Yukon was in the midst of its famous gold rush. The couple, with their two sons, proceeded west. The husband went off to tend to some business, read some material on the Canadian north and decided that Hawaii was more attractive. Martha Purdy disagreed, so she abandoned her husband and deposited her sons with her parents. With a couple of companions she then went north from Seattle to Skagway and proceeded via Dyea and the Chilkoot Pass into the interior of the Yukon. She finally settled in Dawson.

The trip through the Chilkoot Pass was clearly awful, but was successful. Life in Dawson was difficult, but Mrs. Purdy entered some successful business ventures and did well. She finally married George Black, a Conservative activist, who was appointed Commissioner of the Yukon. Hence, she became the first lady of her territory. In 1921 George was elected to the House of Commons for the territory. There he sat until 1935 when he was incapacitated by a mental illness of some sort and could not contest the 1935 election. So Martha stepped in and won the constituency. She held it until 1940 when her husband was well enough to run and he went back to the House of Commons.

The story of Martha Purdy/Black is of some interest, although key incidents (like why she left her first husband) are not really explained. The basic problem with the book is that Martha Black was neither particularly interesting nor really important. The result is a short biography that adds little to our understanding of Canada, with the exception that it underscores the extent to which the Yukon territory was for all intents and purposes an appendage of the United States.

The little biography is worth reading and many young readers will enjoy it. At the same time, it is a minor book written about a minor figure. It is certainly not worth \$8.95.

**Donald Swainson**, *Professor of History, Queen's University, is the author of Sir John A. Macdonald: The Man and the Politician (2nd ed., revised, Quarry Press, 1989).*

## CANADIAN REFLECTIONS

**Alexander Graham Bell.** A. Roy Petrie. Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd., 1983. 62 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-88902-209-7. **Herbert Richardson.** Paul Masterson. Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd., 1992. 64 pp. \$7.95 paper. ISBN 0-88909-339-5.

Imagination is the key to paradigm shift.

(Buckminster Fuller)

With our country being shredded by NAFTA shrapnel and globalization, undermined by various forms of separation and threatened disassociation from sea, to sea, to sea, one recalls the words of Thomas Jefferson, who bemoaned:

Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just.

Yet, a glimmer of light still brightens our horizon. The source of this beacon originates in the publishing house of Fitzhenry & Whiteside with their series, *The Canadians*. This is good history for the young reader. Each book consists of a well-researched biography of a deserving Canadian, both those well-known and those whose achievements have gone unnoticed.

The illustrated balance between their personal lives and their professional lives informs the reader that these people used their imaginations, skills and determination to reach great milestones. No false mythology exists here, just Canadians at their best.

These editions are a great credit to the publisher and the authors, who offer history designed for young readers, based on the assumption that students can successfully tackle works constructed with an *adult* style. Each comprehensive biography includes a table of contents, index, photographs and diagrams, reference and illustration credits, as well as a list of further readings. The text is clear, concise and challenging without being overwhelming, nor (significantly) underwhelming.

As each author of *The Canadians* provides his own unique perspective on the biographies, the potential for disagreement between works covering similar topics provides an excellent basis for classroom discussion and debate: another hallmark of good history! The variety of potential subjects in this series could provide infinite avenues into Canadian history and might promise that each student explorer could find his or her interest in the past.

These books also provide an insight into some of the problems facing contemporary Canadians, as well as explaining how people in our near and distant past faced similar hardships and concerns. This important optimistic link (all too often neglected) helps anchor the student firmly as each youngster prepares to face an uncertain future.

**N.J. Gossage** is a history graduate and former elementary school teacher.

## HEROES LARGE AND SMALL

**William Hall.** Bridglal Pachai. Four East Publications, 1995 (Famous Canadians). 40 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-920427-35-9. **Alfred Fitzpatrick.** James H. Morrison. Four East Publications, 1995 (Famous Canadians). 55 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 0-920427-45-6. **Paul Bunyan on the West Coast.** Tom Henry. Illus. Kim La Fave. Harbour Publishing, 1995. 56 pp. \$12.95 paper. ISBN 1-55017-109-7.

The two latest slim volumes of Penguin's *Famous Canadians* illustrate both the strengths and weaknesses of an ongoing series that seeks to bring to light lesser-known Canadians, those who, while not necessarily forming a part of the regular school curriculum, deserve wider recognition for their contribution to Canadian