

One man's international relations

by Peter Martin

Capitol Offences: Dr. Foth Meets Uncle Sam by Allan Fotheringham. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 1986, 250 pages, \$19.95.

Every good Grub Streeter knows that the only way you can make anything like a decent living as a journalist is to sell the same story over and over again. And that is what Allan Fotheringham, a.k. self-styled a. Dr. Foth, is doing in this much-promoted

recycling of his newspaper and *Maclean's* material.

Here, again, is the saga of the brash boy from the Prairies making it to big-time Washington via Vancouver and Ottawa. Here again Fotheringham's superficial inspections of the byways of the Great Republic to the South. Here again, cheap shots and innuendo passed off as inside information. Ho and hum.

Forced wit and pseudo-insight are relieved here by quite astonishing flashes of ignorance. Why, Foth, have you not found out how it is that Washington taxis don't have meters? Any cab driver in the town will tell you. And how could you possibly not have run before into the hoary old joke J.K. Galbraith tells in *The Scotch?*

Still, it's moderately interesting

to read yet again Fotheringham's strangely diffident account of the Sondra ("amusing to those who know her") slap record.

And, if you haven't had a surfeit of Fotheringham from other sources, *Capitol Offences* will be mildly diverting. Even occasionally worth taking seriously. As in: "I'm rather a fan of the general American ignorance of Canada. . . . It's when the United States starts to become interested in foreign countries that the trouble starts. Ask Chile. . . . Iran. . . . Grenada. . . . Nicaragua."

The book is full of names. There is no index.

Peter Martin is publisher of International Perspectives and of Balmuir Books.

Letters to the Editor

Sir,

I was vastly amused to read David Lord's attempt to review my book, *Eldorado*. He seems to have had some trouble with it, first because it is a history and therefore deals with the relatively remote, pre-1961 past, and second because it does not conform to his view of what a rough, tough, description of colourful characters and their actions should be about. His insight here is useful, since he obviously distrusts the version of events that I proffer. As he emphasizes, "according to Bothwell, Howe never set foot in an Eldorado mine, the refinery at Port Hope," etc. Presumably according to Lord there is an alternative reality, which a "truly critical" and totally up-to-the-minute book would present. That may be; to match your reviewer's tastes I would suggest that it be about thirty pages long, furnished with bright colourful action drawings and replete with emotive words like "Pow! Zap! and Zowie". In that book Howe would travel to Great Bear Lake, and great issues of morality could be presented in words of one syllable and in primary colours.

People who like to get their information in dull prose, and according to an admittedly dull standard of proof, are referred to the original *Eldorado*—the one that happened.

Robert Bothwell
Toronto

Sir,

Studies — pessimistic and ambivalent — on the environment and human prospect have grown increasingly over the past decade. Bharat H. Desai's article, "Destroying the global environment," (*International Perspectives* November/December 1986), is one such article which aims to disclose the paramount problems which put our world in jeopardy.

Present day problems, especially our deteriorating ecosystems, Desai informs us, are a result of human behavior, and are thus capable of amelioration by the alteration of that behavior. While Desai may be commended in calling our awareness to an

oppressive anticipation of the future, the central thrust of his article sounds not as a warning and challenge, but as an immediate threat. That hollow echo from Desai certainly leaves him in the category of the prophets of doomsday.

Admittedly, while "conservation of the environment is a *sine qua non*, without which any development is a misnomer," the issues which Desai raised are not new to our world. Desai's grim Malthusian outlook has always been there. As an aside, doesn't Desai consider that today's threat from nuclear annihilation certainly seems worse?

Present day policy makers, scientists and the public will not see "growth" or "development" carried beyond the point where our ecosystems can sustain us. Desai's distressing disclosures do reveal problems. But the impending catastrophe which he sees does not really exist. Man, with the help of the forces of circumstance, has always strived to make it a better world.

Sridatt Laxhan
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