

Dylan reminds us charity starts at home

By ELLIOTT SHIFF

More than 1.6-billion people tuned in to the Live Aid broadcast which raised millions of dollars for the starving continent of Africa. Technological expertise combined with the commercial drawing power of the music industry made this the most successful charitable event ever held.

An interesting element of the Live Aid broadcast was that the music never eclipsed the overall premise of the telethon. The organizers made it quite clear that the purpose of the concert, above all else, was to raise money. Some performances were joined halfway in progress while others were cut off, and the viewer was never able to become comfortable with the music. This brought images of larger than life rock stars into proper perspective as the performers appeared, above all else, as concerned people who were aware of their ability to contribute to a worthy cause that demanded swift and large monetary results.

The concept of using music as a vehicle for raising money is not new. In the early 1970s George Harrison organized the Concert For Bangladesh followed half a decade later by the highly forgettable No-Nukes benefit. There was, however, a strange paradox at work in Live Aid. Although the actual nature of the music itself today is largely depoliticized as compared to protest music of the past, the end result in this case is much more substantial than anything previously attempted.

A great deal of the music generated in the 1960s prided itself on its ability to question and in turn make other people question perceptions of society. Pete Seeger, followed later by Country Joe and the Fish, vociferously condemned American involvement in Vietnam. The Jefferson Airplane and other psychedelic bands advocated drug experimentation as a means of social re-evaluation while the Beatles provoked re-examination "both within and without."

Interestingly enough, the Philadelphia portion of the broadcast was opened and closed by the two greatest protest voices of the 1960s—Joan Baez and Bob Dylan. While Baez, and other holdovers Crosby, Stills and Nash appeared somewhat tired and worn out, Dylan demonstrated that he has not lost any of his regard for social issues. As the concert was building up to its celebratory crescendo Dylan delivered a sobering jolt to the proceedings by suggesting that a few million dollars be skimmed off the top of the concert's earnings to help bankrupt farmers pay off their mortgages. The irony is that these same farmers grow the food that is to be shipped to the famine victims.

Although some might have been upset with Dylan's outburst, he did everyone a service by bringing things into proper perspective. While everyone was patting each other on the back, participant and viewer alike were reminded that there are very serious problems on our own continent and that, in a sense, charity begins at home.

The bottom line is that many lives will be saved from this remarkable act of charity. At the same time we must realize that one day of charity will not solve some of the more seemingly mundane problems emphasized by Bob Dylan. Hopefully the Live Aid broadcast will serve as a precedent for further charitable endeavors on several levels.

Lighter side of Leacock doesn't shine through in unimaginative biography

by LAURA LUSH

Stephen Leacock wrote in the preface to *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town* that he would "sooner have written *Alice in Wonderland* than the whole *Encyclopedia Britannica*." With that kind of emphasis on creativity, it is doubtful he would have wanted his biography to be thorough, concise, and unimaginative. *Leacock—A Biography*, by Albert and Theresa Moritz, is just that.

Apart from excerpts taken from Leacock's humour collections, and the witty testimonies of his associates and reviewers, the text reads more like a research report than an intimate look into the writer's life. Instead of evoking Leacock's gentle spirit and subtle wit, the biography is filled with irrelevant details that bring us no closer to understanding the man. Did you know that 1869, the year Leacock was born, margarine was also invented?

What the authors have managed to do in this biography is to depict Leacock as a Canadian hero. Instead of moving to foreign literary centres like London or New York, or sur-



FRENZIED FICTION: Stephen Leacock runs a close second to margarine in new biography.

rounding himself with his literary contemporaries, we are told that he chose to cultivate his Canadian identity by living his winters in Montreal, where he was a professor of economics at McGill, and his summers in Orillia, the community that inspired *Sunshine Sketches of a Little Town*.

The authors praise Leacock's decision to stay in Canada, saying that "his world reputation may well have been limited" by this decision.

Leacock clearly is also a hero of the Moritzs, who go so far at one point as to compare him to St. Paul. Leacock's humanism, widely appreciated and already widely critically explored, is once again presented as the soul of the man. His ability to parody social foibles without malicious intent, and his keen sense of the ridiculous are once again remarked on and admired.

A curious quality of Leacock's art that the Moritzs point out is that he did not seem to have the discipline to contrive complicated plots and characters. Some of his pieces are no longer than 1,000 words, comprised of only snatches of conversation and fleeting observations. In fact, Leacock was often criticised for being too rushed in his pieces. In his defence, he wrote: "the writing of solid, instructive stuff fortified by facts and figures is easy enough...but to write something out of one's own mind, worth reading for its own sake, is an arduous contrivance." The authors of this biography have done the first, and created an arduous contrivance—an encyclopedia of facts that seldom offers new insights or breaks from arduousness into inspired passages. Those looking for a good summer read are better off picking up one of Leacock's books instead.

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Peterson's balking on increased funding begs student response

By GARY SYMONS

It is a cliché that politicians are better at making promises while in the opposition than at keeping them once in power and Premier David Peterson's performance so far is no exception.

To his credit, Peterson seems far more committed to his promises that was Frank Miller to his ridiculous throne speech or Brian Mulroney (who successfully de-indexed his credibility) to anything. The Liberals have made a commendable start in launching legislation for tougher environmental protection laws and providing grants for separate schools. Nevertheless, Peterson's government has saddled itself with an overwhelming number of campaign pledges, and there are already disturbing noises emanating from Queen's Park that the more cynical might interpret as stall tactics. Treasurer Robert Nixon, stealing a page from Mulroney's standard script, is bemoaning the financial mess bequeathed to him by the provincial Tories, and the Liberals have already backed off on introducing equal pay for work of equal value legislation for the private sector.

Of more direct concern to Ontario's university and college students are the statements of rookie Colleges and Universities Minister Gregory Sobara to the effect that the government is "not going to be able to provide the kinds of funds that the universities will be requesting." Last January, however, Peterson prom-

ised that a Liberal government would sell Ontario's share of Suncor to finance the \$91-million modernization of the province's universities advocated by the Bovey Report. Now, according to Sobara, the question of increasing funding to post-secondary institutions is "being studied." Call me naïve, but after reading through the dozen or so position papers Peterson sent to *Excalibur* last year, I thought the matter had already been studied and decided upon. Certainly it should have been; without a firm commitment for increased funding in the near future the universities will be forced, as they were forced last year and the year before that, to limit accessibility. Peterson has said in the past that this situation has been intolerable. I agree, but I and 10,000 aspiring university students are still waiting for some action to back those pretty words.

It seems that, for the moment, the question of university funding has been put on the back burner while the fledgling Peterson team deals with the controversial issues of separate school funding and affirmative action. Possible the Liberals have forgotten the mass student protests that shot the Bovey Report down in flames earlier this year. If so, perhaps it's time student representatives in the Ontario Federation of Students and locally in the CYSF gently reminded our new government that we're still here and still waiting.



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