

Folk Artists Collect from Around the Nation



Perley Hare from Newcastle

By RON LEES

As a procession of people carrying guitars, concertinas, madolins and banjos made their way into Fredericton by road, rail and sky last Thursday and Friday, the feeling quickly grew that our hopes for an epic weekend of folk song and music were going to be more than amply realized. The occasion was the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Folk Music Society, hosted by the Folk Collective, and many of the major figures of the traditional folk scene across the country were here.

Helen Creighton from Halifax, who is Honorary President of the Society and perhaps the most famous collector of Maritime folk songs, was in attendance at the meeting, along with Edith Fowke from Toronto and Phil Thomas from Vancouver, both well known collectors of traditional Canadian songs. Singers and performers from coast-to-coast were here as well, from Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat of the Vancouver Folk Song Club to Neil Rosenberg and Ted Rowe of Memorial U. in St. John's. To give a strong local flavour in addition to our friends from Woodstock, Moncton and the Saint John Folk Club, we had Marie and Perley Hare up from the Miramichi. Marie is a perennial performer at the Miramichi Folksong Festival and sang last year at the Atlantic Folk Festival and this year at Mariposa in Toronto, she is no stranger to traditional audiences.

While the Executive of the Folk Music Society was meeting early Friday evening, the musical action got underway at a wine and cheese reception and song circle at Rona Richardson's and by the time the Executive members arrived, the party was really jumping. Musical tastes gradually sorted themselves out and by around midnight you could choose between rousing shanties in one half of the house, or red hot bluegrass across the hall in the other.

On Saturday, the more formal business of the Annual General Meeting got underway, with reports and elections. Jon Bartlett of Vancouver was elected as the new President of the CFMS, succeeding Jack O'Donnell from Antigonish (founder and director of the Men of the Deeps, the Cape Breton miner's chorus). Of local interest was the election of Marc Lulham as one of the eight Directors of the Society. In the afternoon, Jon and Rika conducted a workshop on Folk Music in the Schools and played a tape of one of their series of radio

Photos by Jean-Louis Tremblay



left to right: Neil Rosenberg, from Newfoundland, Tim Rogers, from Calgary, Ted Rowe, Newfoundland.



Jim Stewart, from Saint John, Steven Sellors, John Murphy from Hampton, Bernie Houlahan from Moncton — Hal An' Tow



Chris Lobban of Saint John

folksong programs describing early settler life in Canada. Neil Rosenberg, Chairman of the Folklore Department at Memorial U. then showed a videotape of the pioneer accordion player of Newfoundland. The afternoon wound up with a banquet at the SUB.

The action then shifted down to the Folk Collective coffee house at Memorial Hall, where a packed house was treated to a monster concert of traditional music. M.C. for the first half was Reg Hayes, who opened the evening, followed by Phil Thomas with Jon and Rika from Vancouver. They sang such Canadian songs as La Famille Latour, a virtuoso French-Canadian high-velocity chorus song from Rika, a more realistic version of the Red River Valley (it's 40 below in the winter...) and one of Phil's collection about the Cariboo Road in B.C.

Debra Meeks next sang us two of the songs she has recently collected in Cape Breton, then was joined by Marc Lulham and Steve Peacock. After Marc and Steve came one of the highlights of the concert for hard-core traditional buffs, the performance by Marie Hare of several of her characteristic Miramichi un-accompanied style

Marie was followed by Ian Robb of Ottawa, one of Canada's finest singers in the folksong revival, accompanying himself on the concertina. Ian's second album has just been released on the Folk Legacy label, this time with his group, Hang the Piper.

The first set then closed with some tuneful Irish numbers, for which John was joined by Marc and Steve, Bernie Houlahan from Moncton and John Murphy, Alan Stanley and Jim Stewart of the Saint John Folk Club.

For the second set, Ron Less took over as M.C. and delivered some professional remarks on the Maidens of New Brunswick. Perley Hare again showed us the traditional singing of the Miramichi with samples of Peter Emberley and the popular Larry Gorman song, The Scow on Cowden's Shore, followed by the ballads of Guy Reed and Peggy Gordon. Neil Rosenberg and Ted Rowe next displayed some Newfoundland picking and singing after which they were joined by Tim Rogers, the yodelling psychologist from Calgary, who blew down the house with some high-spirited cowboy numbers. Paul McCavour from Saint John proceeded to kick the British out of New Orleans again, and then Jon Soderman laid down a pair of

his own solid and evocative songs. More traditional music returned with Hal an Tow, the Saint John Folk Club group consisting of John Murphy, Jim Stewart, Steve Sellors and Bernie Houlahan who all played at the Atlantic Folk Festival this last summer. After this, Chris Lobban sang one of the ballads that the Saint John Club has been busy collecting over the last year. Finally CFMS President Jon Bartlett gathered all his troops together on stage and finished off with a rousing shanty finale, Rolling Down to Old Maui, with a cast of thousands and a tired but still enthusiastic audience.

Altogether, it was a great show, and one that won't be soon forgotten. Traditional singers and musicians of that quality are hard to come by, and to have them all together at UNB was a rare experience. The consensus among the CFMS members, as they departed after the conclusion of the Annual General Meeting the next day, was that this had been one of the best AGM's they had been to, and the Folk Collective is proud to have put it on.



Debbie Meeks from Cape Breton.