

# Encounter..Pete Seeger

Glenn Walton and Paul Clark of the Gazette had the opportunity to interview folk singer Pete Seeger at this year's Atlantic Folk Festival at Moxam Farm. Seeger, at various times called "a reincarnated troubadour", "America's tuning fork" and the "Thomas Jefferson of folk music", was a life long friend of singer Woodie Guthrie, the father of Arlo (with whom Seeger played at Moxam Farm). Well known for his public activism and sense of social injustice, Seeger has had

a large number of followers, among people of all classes. In the fifties his insistence on freedom of speech and association brought him into conflict with the House Un-American Activities Committee and resulted in him being blacklisted by television networks. Today, at 61, Seeger is active in the anti-nuclear movement and an avid supporter of other ecological causes.

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**Gazette:** In light of current events, do you think the folk tradition can play a role as a protest movement?

**Seeger:** Of course it can, but I don't think of it as *the* protest movement. There is a great disagreement between what I call stratics and trategy. Old friendships get busted up but there are new alliances formed. The key is people who realize who they are and are ready to start where they are to do something.

Back in the frightened fifties when a lot of people were scared to speak their minds, a 20 year old kid was once standing in Time Square holding some kind of protest sign. He was asked, "Do you think you can change the world?" He said, "I don't know, but I'm not going to let the world change me". When you are at that point, I suppose, that's when you can start changing the world.

**Gazette:** What kind of issues are you speaking about?

**Seeger:** They are some which will be local in some respects but take on an international significance. Like at Seabrook people wanted to save their homes, but they also knew they were part of a world-wide movement. Across the world people are becoming aware of the actions of multinational companies in their countries, that scientists have to learn to care about the effects of their work.

**Gazette:** This seems apparent in many countries in the world, but it seems all we get is reactionary politics from the U.S.

**Seeger:** Don't believe the press. To have read the pres you would have believed we were winning in Vietnam. There's only freedom of the press if you can afford it. There are lots of battles going on and you have to learn to read between the lines.

**Gazette:** But, again to read the press, it seems the American people are really militant right now. They're mad about Iran, mad about Afghanistan, and so on.

**Seeger:** There are a lot of perplexed people around, but don't make broad generalizations about America.

**Gazette:** Do you support any political party, Barry Commoner's Citizen's Party, for instance?

**Seeger:** I think Commoner would be great, but he doesn't have a chance. He doesn't get on TV.

**Gazette:** What musicians do you admire?

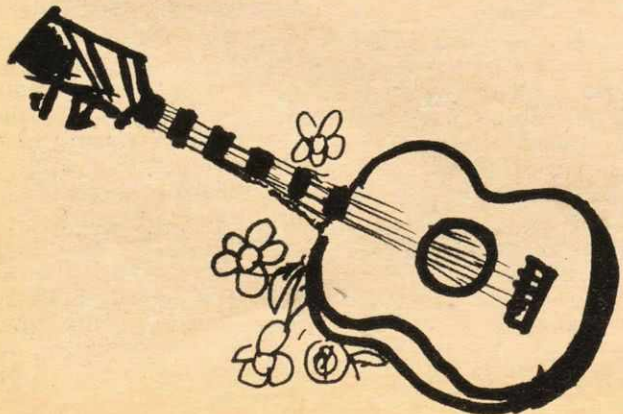
**Seeger:** A lot of people, young and old. My favourites are not famous at all.

**Gazette:** What do you think of Arlo compared to Woody Guthrie?

**Seeger:** They are very different people in many ways.

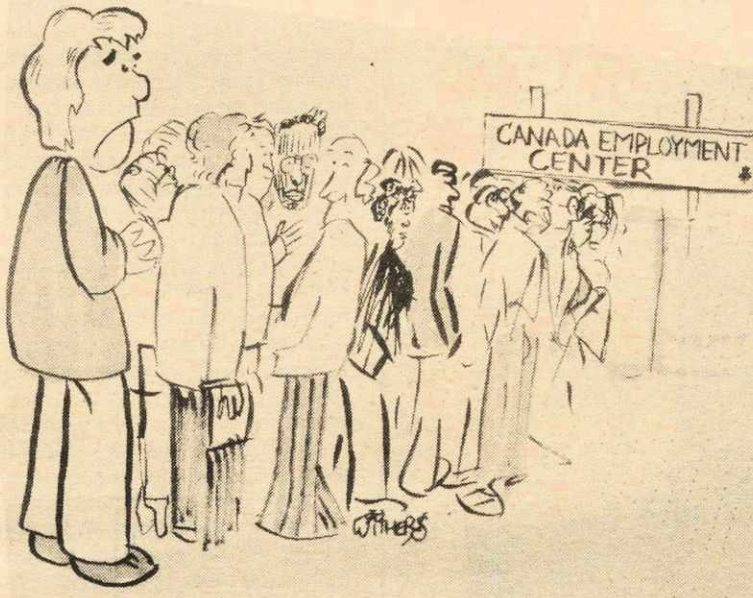
**Gazette:** Woody struck one as being a staunch union and people's man, whereas Arlo seems to be more a pop child of the sixties. How fair is that characterization?

**Seeger:** Don't come to quick generalizations. You can strive for simplicity but I learn to distrust it. Someone should never speak more clearly than that person thinks and I refuse to commit myself.



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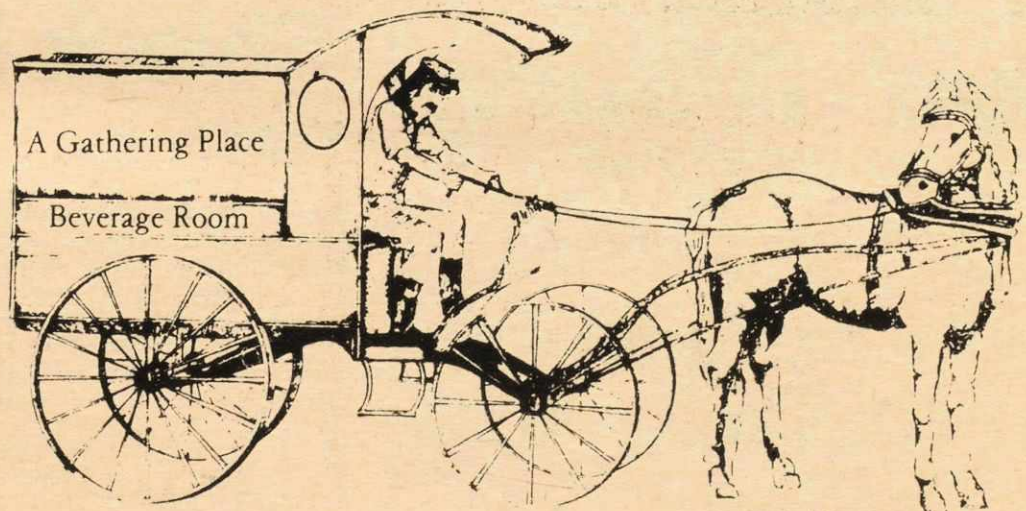
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