

they are moving all the time.

**CCFA:** How did their gas detection systems and machinery compare with what we use in Canada?

**Alex:** They don't have safety shoes for instance, they wear ordinary shoes. But they have helmets and they have made an awful lot of strides in gas detection machines and warnings of gas.

**Bill:** Some of this equipment they had built themselves for detecting gas and fighting fire was quite ahead of us.

**Alex:** And I think that a gas warning of 1.1 would be sufficient to take the men out of the mine there, while in Canada we have 2.1. They would come out sooner than we would. They are ahead of us in some respects, and the machinery they had in the pits; we went into this open pit mine, 390 feet down to the first level, and there were big tubes that took up 28 tons of coal every two minutes all day long. They also mined oil shale and five different sorts of minerals. It stretched as far as the eye could see. It must have been a mile down with shafts connecting with the same seam of coal. Three shifts were working there around the clock. Meals are prepared for all the shifts, all in a buffet style, and they could eat as much as they could carry I suppose.

**CCFA:** What happens to old people in China when they finish their working lives?

**Alex:** It seemed to me that the old people when they retire aren't just pushed aside. They still take part in things, whether on the commune or in the city. They're active, teaching and helping the younger people, telling them about Old China and things like that. Most of them live with their families and help out with the grandchildren. In China the young people honour the old and look after them. We went to one special home though, for retired miners. Some of them had worked in the mine for fifty years. There was only one man there that was married and his daughter lived in another province. The reason why there were single men was because when they were young they were too poor to marry.

**Bill:** The place was nice. The rooms were clean. They have games rooms and reading rooms. They all got together and sang us a song and we gave them Nova Scotia pins. The oldest guy is 92.

**CCFA:** Were there many examples in the mines for instance of the workers taking part in running the mines? Was there much evidence of that kind of thing?

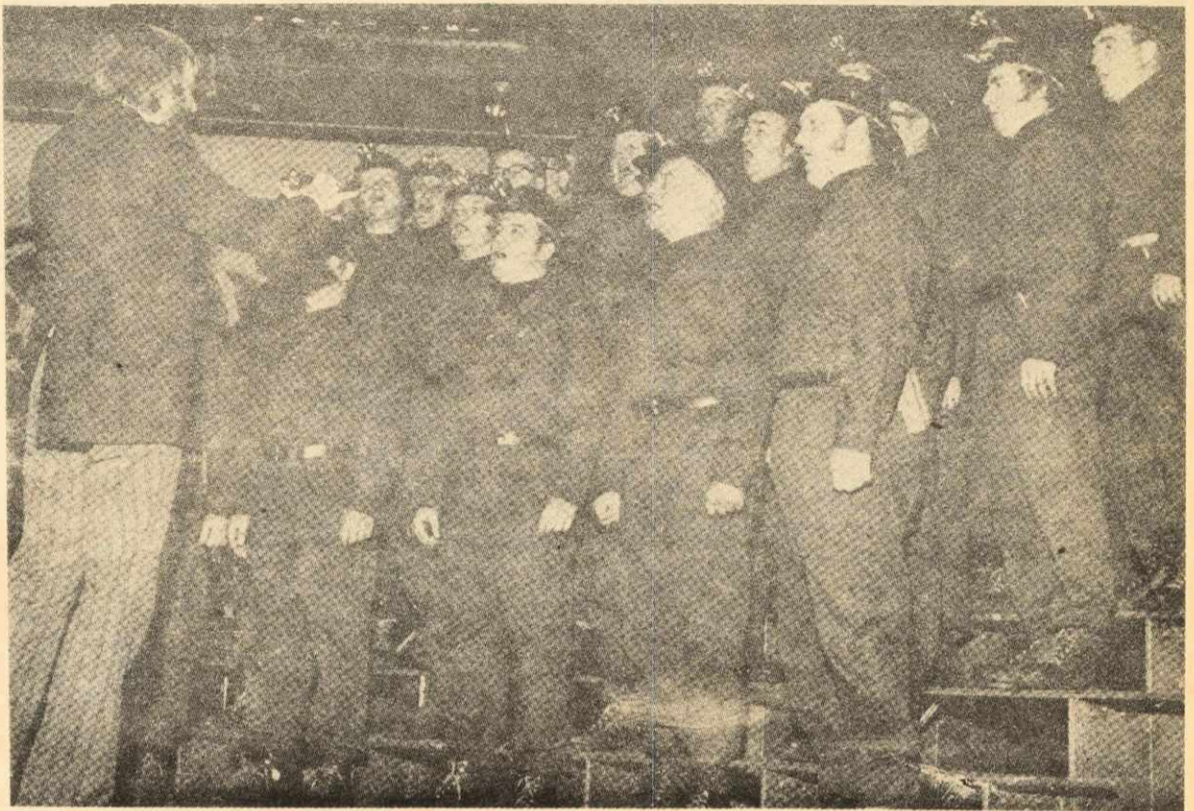
**Alex:** I thought that the whole thing was run by the people. At each commune and factory and colliery they elected the head of each particular part there, and they had general meetings to discuss what's to be done. I think it's done right from the ground, from the roots up to the top. I think much more so than they do in Canada for instance. We're told what they're gonna do in No. 26 colliery maybe six months before it's gonna happen, but the men don't have anything to say about what's gonna happen.

**Bill:** I found the same thing true. They have what they call night classes there. They work all day long in the fields and factories and in the night time they get together as a body, as a group of working people and they pick their leaders. Where we have what you call an overman in a mine, or a manager, they have leaders; when you go to a meeting there's a leader, when you go to the schools there's a leader, there's one in the mines, everyone has their own leaders. When you go to a meeting and you are briefed, the leader tells you all about their system, how it runs, how it is operated. They're the ones that administer the work and tell the others what to do. That's how things are run in North East China.

**Alex:** And it makes a big difference to the working people. Now, down our way when someone invents some machinery that'll throw men out of work, only the people who invented the machines and the people that are using it get the benefit of it see. But China spreads the benefit across the populace and brings everybody up at the same time, not a few millionaires here and the richer you get the poorer you get like in Canada and the

United States and all that.

**Bill:** Everybody there works. They don't get big money. The factory guy, or the man there in the mines, he was making 80 yuan a month and that's only \$40. We asked one woman there what she was paying for her lights for the year and it was \$1 for the lights and the power. Her medical was 50 cents for the year and the children's was 20 cents, so you can



*The "Men of the Deeps" is a group of male singers who have worked in the coal mines of Cape Breton. In July 1976, the group toured China for three weeks performing songs about the mines and the men who work them.*

figure how cheap they live compared with us.

**CCFA:** Was that one of the things that impressed you most about China?

**Bill:** What amazed me most was the people themselves. Their culture, their ways of living, their confidence, their determination.

**Alex:** No matter what position they have there, they have to spend so much time working in the factories and in the fields. The people who go to school the professors, everybody. They level everybody out, more or less.

**CCFA:** What do you think it comes from, that confidence?

**Bill:** I think that it is taught in their youth. They learn it from learning what their forefathers went through the last while back.

**Alex:** You know they never forgot to tell you how bad it was years ago. Now I know that over in England and Wales and Scotland as well as in Canada and the United States years ago things were pretty bad. Over in Wales, for instance, if a man got killed in a mine and he had no family old enough to go into the mine, the wife had to go and they worked until they dropped, just the same way they did in China. But we forget about that, we don't keep on telling everybody and keeping it in mind; but they don't let the people forget.

**Bill:** You know, their own people misused their own people, the kings, the big business people, the landlords. And the British went in there and the Japanese and the rest and they exploited the country. Those poor guys didn't receive much money and they were pushed around and oppressed over the years. You can't blame them for being a little bitter. I think I'd be bitter myself. They had a long, hard struggle to get where they are today.

**CCFA:** Did they show you any monuments or museums, anything like that, to commemorate the fight they had?

**Bill:** There was one place we were taken to, a valley where the Japanese invaded in 1931 or 1932. In this valley there were 3,000 people, poor people, farmers, peasants. They had no ammunition and they worked in this valley; the Japanese raided them and killed them, and only three of them escaped out of the 3,000. They beat them and shot them and beat their brains out and spread gas over them to hide the evidence and burnt them. Some of them weren't even dead. They burnt them

alive and then threw earth over them. So the Chinese sent an army up there and killed every one of the Japanese. It was a real slaughter-house. Anyhow the Chinese started looking around and they moved the earth back and found bodies. So what did they do? They built an immense building over them of concrete, and they built a small ridge around. You walk around it and you look in and see all

the skeletons there. A little baby with its skull crushed in, a man and wife with his arm around her.

**Alex:** And another man lying on a small skeleton like trying to protect a kid. They found them that way so they left them that way. It's the most gruesome thing you ever saw in your life.

**CCFA:** After the revolutionary wars were over did they get any help from other countries to build themselves up again?

**Bill:** Joe Stalin was the first to give them a lift, they all tell you that over there. They like Joe Stalin and he sent experts to their country to start them out. After they got a start and Joe Stalin passed on they continued improving themselves and improving their machinery and all the rest they did themselves. But they are not very friendly with the Russians at the present, there's a little bitterness there.

**Alex:** They are terribly scared of war with Russia. That's the reason why they are going underground in Peking. We went into their shelters. We went into a store behind the counter and all of a sudden the floor opened up, and as far as the eye could see there were miles and miles of tunnels going in every direction. They took us to a briefing room where they have the whole thing displayed in lights; they could light up the whole panel, or just sections of it and they could tell you where all the tunnels went. If a bomb drops on one section there is another dozen ways they can get out. They have a sort of fire drill twice a year. They say they can evacuate the whole city. At some of the schools the students were doing their own excavating. And they are starting to plan their underground railroad.

**CCFA:** It seems as if China has made great progress since the People's Republic was established in 1949; how do you see the future of China?

**Bill:** I think that today it's the first time down the centuries they've had their freedom and that's why they're staying with the system. There's no doubt about it, it's working for them over there. They are happy with it, they get along. And there's no doubt about it, China's on the move. In the last 26 years there's an awful difference there and if you put another 30 years on you'd never know China if she keeps on going the pace she's going now.