I was very pleased to see my song "Britannia Beach" printed in the September issue of Canada Folk Bulletin. I was also flattered that you thought it would be of some interest to your readers. There is one thing, though, about the publication that has me worried, and that is the copyright sign and date beside my name. I'm not sure just what a copyright signifies, but I have never at any time copyrighted a song, and I hope I will never feel the need to. As far as I am concerned, anyone who wishes to may feel free to sing any of the songs I have made, or those passed on to me from my family. The same thing applies to the printing or the recording of the songs. If a person wishes to acknowledge the source, that's fine, but not necessary.

I feel songs are to be sung, whether for the sheer joy of singing or to express a political opinion - for any reason and without restriction. If any of my songs find their way into the "idiom of the people" or the "folk tradition", all I can say is, "Right on!"

All the best to you and to the readers of the Bulletin.

Paddy Graber,
Vancouver, B.C.

The organizational body of the Calgary Folk Club has reached certain decisions concerning the direction in which this club should proceed. We are not too influenced by those who have a superficial interest in the music; neither are we influenced or all impressed by the academic "gurus" of folk music who preach but do not practise.

A folk club should have a philosophy derived from what it feels to be the most important component factors of the music. Mr. Lyon may have made an error in looking at the Calgary Folk Club, among others, from an American point of view, a point of view oriented to the "coffeehouse" scene. I must emphasize that the Calgary Folk Club is modelled on the British Folk Club, which has quite a different attitude towards such subjects as "beer" and "good times"!

We follow a format and philosophy found to be highly acceptable and successful in hundreds of British folk clubs. The British club is traditionally held in the upstairs room of the local pub. Now, where's there's a pub, there's beer! The British-style club is an extension of one's home and the social value equals the musical value. This is the crux of the whole matter and is a most important consideration to us.

The Calgary Folk Club opens at 7:30. music starts at 8 p.m. with sets of 30 minutes. There are 15-minute bar breaks between sets and we normally finish around 11:30 p.m. In any one night the bar is open a total of 1 1/2 hours - hardly the place for hard drinking or beer chug-a-lugging. The Bar is closed when the music is being performed. The beer is incidental to, but part of the social setting. The audience is there for the music and a chance to meet friends, colleagues and performers, but when the music starts, the performers get total attention and response.

We have a "good time" setting - although I prefer to think of it as being a night of interaction between performers and a healthy cross-section of the community. That cross-section reflects the "extroverted" character of the music; the music is public and does not belong to a select few.

I can see "good times" degenerating into "bad times" for an organization that does not have the strength or experience to deal with the task of keeping performances, guest musician quality, audience management, and the internal organisation at a high level of efficiency. "Good times" do not come easily!

The Calgary Folk Club has an organisational group of fifteen with a great deal of past experience upon which to base judgements and decisions. We believe in what we are doing, and we believe that what we have to offer aids the development of the music and our community.

We are very discriminating in our choice of guests and consequently have great confidence in our guests' abilities to relate to the audience (social value) and to present music of merit (musical value). Most of our supporters have developed a deep interest in the music and are pursuing it; these, too, are the people who are supporting the record store of which Mr. Lyon writes. Readers of the Bulletin will see published, each issue, the guests appearing at the Calgary Folk Club. Those who may have heard these musicians will know that they are neither inept or indifferent.

I hope that this letter has explained the position of the Calgary Folk Club. As far as other clubs are concerned, good luck to them and long may they prosper.
We feel that Mr. Lyon's one visit to our club in the last five years did not really provide enough insight into what we are doing or the business of providing an outlet for folk music.

Yours sincerely,
Mansel Davies, President
Calgary Folk Club

* * *

I must disagree with my friend's George Lyon's letter published in CFB Vol. 1, No. 5.

George contends that the enjoyment and appreciation of genuine traditional folk music is incompatible with the atmosphere produced by the presence of a bar. I agree that this is often the case, but I know from experience that it doesn't have to be that way. George feels that the folk clubs, as they exist in Calgary at present, create an atmosphere of mindless frivolity - "good times" - which is irrelevant to real folk music. Again, I know from experience that this is simply untrue, and suspect that George's conclusions are based on outdated information.

I have been heavily involved, for the past two years, with one of the folk clubs which George decries. During this period, our club has had a conscious and deliberate policy of creating an audience who are familiar with traditional music and who enjoy and respect it. I feel that we have succeeded, and I believe any traditional singers who have played at our club would agree. Our audiences enjoy themselves, but they listen to, participate with and respect performers who respect them as people.

I would not have the slightest hesitation in putting Roscoe Holcomb, Harry Cox or Almeda Riddle on our stage (the only reason I don't include Robert Pete Williams is that we have under-emphasized the blues, so our audiences aren't familiar with that body of music as they are with the Canadian, British and Appalachian music.)

Although I speak for no other folk clubs than the one with which I'm involved, I am sure the same can be said in varying degrees of Calgary's other folk clubs.

I feel that one of the strengths of the Calgary "Folk" Scene (George's quotes and capitals...) is its diversity. The type of atmosphere which George enjoys is here; the kind of people who enjoy it are here; I would not for the world put it down. But there are alternatives, and they're all valid ones. Including the folk clubs.

If this be self-congratulation, make the most of it.

John Leader,
Calgary

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Folk News (England)
January, 1978

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