

... from the Saint John Folk Club:

### COLLECTING OLD-TIME SONGS

A Progress Report by John Murphy

As you all know, in November of last year, the Club was given a grant from Canada Council to make a collection of old-time songs in the area. The project's official title was 'Rediscovery of Saint John: Traditional Song Heritage'. Seven people became directly involved: Becky Bourdage, Chris Lobban, Carol MacArthur, John Murphy, Steve Sellors, Gerry Taylor and Lillian Wauthier.

It has been interesting. We've contacted hundreds of people - by telephone, by letter, through friends, through organizations, putting on displays and concerts, using radio, television and newspaper articles. We've worked hard at publicizing the project and we have found songs.

So far we have over one hundred songs on file, with a little under half that number recorded on tape. Two "informants" in particular have been real 'finds'. John Nicholson, age 72, from Jordan Mountain, Nr. Sussex, has given us many old-time songs. Most of them he learned while working in the local logging camps as a young man, in the early 1920s. We still haven't exhausted his repertoire. Thomas Godsoe, who died in 1954, spent the last ten years of his life writing down all the old songs he could recall from his days in the woods. As well as being a fine axeman, he had the reputation of being a man of many songs with a good tenor voice. We have been given access to his hand-written scribbler packed full of songs. His family are being very helpful in giving us the background information which help to put these songs into context.

We still have recording sessions to do, but we plan to finish collecting by the end of August. From September to November we will be putting together a final report on what we have done for the Canada Council. Beyond that we may plan some kind of modest publication, and even a performance or two. The project's main aim however, will have been achieved when these songs take their place in a permanent collection at the N.B. Museum, and perhaps at the National Museum in Ottawa. A part of our local heritage, in danger of being lost forever, will remain intact and available to future generations.

