

of 1940's and 1950's "trained" singers singing Canadian folk songs, which regrettably persist on the shelves of our record libraries and schools.

The A or western side is particularly fine, as might be expected considering the ties that Jon and Rika have with their major source, Phil Thomas. Thomas' *Songs of the Pacific Northwest* (North Vancouver: Hancock House, 1979) has contributed a number of gems to this record, and "Far From Home", "Hard Rock Miner", and "The Doryman" are outstanding. All are wonderfully singable songs and Bartlett and Ruebsaat do them ample justice.

The B or eastern side, despite my comments on its over-ambitious scope, also has its moments I particularly like Rika's well-controlled rendition of "The Green Fields of Canada" with its "curly" Irish tune; also of note is "Les Raftsmen", one of two French-Canadian songs included. Curiously, the album ends with two Wade Hemsworth songs, "The Wild Goose" and "The Black Fly Song". Both are good songs, and the latter has certainly passed into oral transmission. However, with a shortage of time to represent eastern Canada, I question the inclusion of both: surely something Acadian, for example, would have been preferable.

Some may notice a lack of love songs, classical ballads, sexually symbolic songs or other categories which are certainly represented in the Canadian tradition. These apparent omissions probably result from a decision to maintain a distinctively Canadian flavour. So many great songs are pretty ambivalent when it comes to geography. Anyway, I think the scarifice is probably worthwhile to be able to present schools and libraries, not to mention folkies, with something good and recognisably Canadian.

Besides doing justice to some fine songs, this album may surprise those who, for one reason or another, identify Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat with some nebulous stodgy political-academic movement in folk music. Without entering into the eternal argument between the sticklers for social significance in song on the one side and the folk music hedonists on the other, I am bound to remark that *The Green Fields of Canada* is neither stodgy nor flippant. Bartlett and Ruebsaat, with producer Gary Marcuse and an excellent bunch of accompanists, have put together an entertaining and substantial record which will undoubtedly introduce the songs and the singers to the wider audience both deserve.

- Ian Robb
Bulletin 9



Review

Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat: *The Green Fields of Canada* (Canadian Folk Workshop CFW 001, 1537 Frances St., Vancouver, B.C. V5L 1Z2, \$8 postpaid).

The introduction to the sleeve notes on this album promotes it as "a representative album of Canadian folk songs". Well, *The Green Fields of Canada* is an excellent album of Canadian folk songs, but truly representative it is not. Jon Bartlett and Rika Ruebsaat, two of western Canada's foremost singers of folk songs, have chosen to cover western songs on one side of the album, and eastern on the other. The western side probably does justice to the relatively small collected repertoire that it covers, but it is not just eastern chauvinism that leads me to remark that you can't represent all points east of Winnipeg on one side of a long-playing record. Anyway, these introductory lines are not that crucial and a first playing of *The Green Fields of Canada* should quickly convince the listener that this is an important album which ought to grace the collection of every Canadian folk music enthusiast, and will hopefully replace some of the tired old volumes