

A Step in the Right Direction: Our President Comments

by John Leeder

Less than eight months ago as I write this, the CFMS board decided that, since we were "in the record business" (handling mail order sales of "Songs of the Newfoundland Outports" on the mainland), we might as well solicit a few other records of Canadian traditional music and set up a small mail order outfit. We set initial criteria of (1) significant traditional music content and (2) records not usually available in record stores. And we innocently went about getting hold of some records to handle.

Less than eight months later, we're amazed! The Mail Order Service has caught on beyond our wildest imaginings. The records have been steadily rolling in — we've already passed 200 items, and more are on the way. Some labels have donated the first stock (for which we heartily thank them), and the vast majority of participants have been kind and trusting enough to deal on consignment for their initial shipment. Many members have written in praising the idea, and some have made donations earmarked for the operation of the service (a very useful contribution — although consignment dealing keeps the initial operating costs down, the printing of a proper catalogue will be a significant expense). Most important of all, the service has been heavily patronized — we've sold over \$4000 worth of records and books as this goes to press.

I'm not going to go into details on the aims and organization of the service — you can read about these in the last Bulletin (18:4, p. 24) and in the catalogue that is part of this issue. I do want to re-emphasize two significant points. Almost all the items carried by the service have major Canadian traditional music content. (And even the singer-songwriters in the New Songs section of the catalogue are Canadian by feeling as well as by provenance.) Secondly, our service is aimed especially at folks who haven't previously had easy access to folk music records. If you have a local speciality record store or a favoured mail order house, by all means please continue to patronize them, and please urge them to get hold of some of the items which they haven't been carrying. Our goal is to get Canadian folk music to the Canadian people, and we're happy to encourage others to pursue the same goal.

The wildfire growth of the Mail Order Service has taught us something and confirmed some of the intuitions we've gained elsewhere. Some of these gleanings are:

Canadians want to hear their own traditional music. Despite what some people in the music-selling business and the culture-selling business would like us to believe, our own music and our own the culture are *not* automatically a pale shadow of that emanating from the "mother countries" and our impressive neighbour to the south. They've got lots of good stuff, and we've got lots of good stuff. The problem in the past has been that their good stuff has been easier to get hold of than our good stuff. We hope a small step has been taken in the direction of redressing the balance.

Canadians like their own traditional music. Our experiences with the Rocky Mountain Folk Club have taught us that our audiences don't have to be conned into accepting Canadian music — they hunger for it! Even people who haven't had a lot of explicit exposure to the music usually are instinctively comfortable with it on first hearing, just as Canadian city-dwellers are never far from the forest or the farm or the sea in their feelings.

Canadians enjoy the music of the entire country. Despite what some politicians would like us to believe, the music of French Canada is part of the musical life of the entire country; the music of the native peoples is part of the heritage of us all; the same can fairly be said of the music of people whose roots lie elsewhere than Britain, France or America. And the traditional music of English-speaking Canada is in fact part of the cultural life of all Canadians — again despite what some politicians would like us to believe. It's all *all* our music, and it's all becoming available to all of us.

We are immensely proud of the rapid growth of the Mail Order Service and at the response to it by our members.

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The Society wishes to thank several members who made large donations and chose to remain anonymous. You know who you are — we very much appreciate your support.

We also wish to congratulate two individuals

who, under the provisions of the new constitution, have been designated "Honorary Life Members" for their past and present contributions to folk music in Canada: *Barbara Cass-Beggs* and *Edith Fowke*. Many of the songs we love might never have reached us without the work of these dedicated people — we all owe them a debt of gratitude.

La Société veut remercier plusieurs membres qui nous ont fait des donations importantes et qui ont choisi de rester anonymes. Nous apprécions beaucoup votre appui.

Nous voulons aussi féliciter deux personnes d'avoir été nommées "Membres honorifiques pour la vie" (sous les dispositions de la nouvelle constitution) à cause de leurs contributions dans le passé et au présent à la musique folklorique au Canada: *Barbara Cass-Beggs* et *Edith Fowke*. Il se peut que beaucoup de chansons bien-aimées nous resteraient inconnues sans le travail de Barbara et d'Edith — elles méritent notre gratitude.

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Plusieurs membres ont commenté la qualité du français dans le Bulletin et à quelques-unes des formulaires, etc. (notamment la formule de renouvellement), et je veux donc expliquer un peu. La Société n'engage aucun fonctionnaire professionnel — nos moyens ne nous le permettent pas. Nous avons cherché une subvention chez le Secrétaire d'état pour payer la traduction professionnelle des matières importantes se rapportant à la Société (comme la constitution, les notes de l'assemblée générale, les formulaires, etc.), mais le secrétaire a rejeté la requête. Par conséquent, pour faire faire la traduction il faut trouver des individus (1) qui habitent à Calgary (pour les fins des dates limites du Bulletin), (2) qui s'intéressent à la musique folklorique, (3) qui acceptent de ne pas être payés, et (4) qui ont une aptitude pour la traduction. Évidemment il est assez difficile de trouver des personnes convenables à tous ces critères!

Nous continuons à chercher des octrois pour payer la traduction, et nous faisons des efforts continuels à améliorer la qualité du travail de nos volontaires (même surtout). Dans l'intervalle, nous prions que nos lecteurs francophones soient instruits de nos problèmes et soient patients quand notre français est imparfait.

Nous remercions les membres qui ont commenté cette situation -- les opinions des membres sont toujours acceptables!