Howard Kaplan is a 42 year old songwriter and occasional performer living in Toronto. He began to take his songwriting seriously in 1978, when he started work on the first of what are now six frog songs, a number which he suspects makes him Canada’s most prolific composer in that rather specialized genre. In the 1980s, his composing interests grew to include a much wider range of interests: the environment, peace and disarmament, co-operatives, food and farming, safe sex, the turning of the seasons, and the textures of peoples’ everyday lives. Many of Howard’s songs use a humorous approach to carry a social or political message: some of the topics he has treated in this way include condoms, British traffic signs, airsickness bags, recycling of waste, and recycling of defeated Members of Parliament. His active repertoire now includes about sixty of his own compositions, plus occasional songs by other contemporary songwriters. He can also sing "Farewell to Nova Scotia" backwards but not forwards.

Professionally, Howard is not a musician, but a scientist, specializing in computer applications in experimental psychology and pharmacology. He is also interested in computer applications in music. Several years ago, he wrote the software which was used to prepare the songs printed in this issue, and one of his plans for the winter is to improve both the output appearance and the user interface. Prior to assuming his position as English language Song Editor for the Bulletin, he was active as a volunteer in several folk music organizations as well as in his local food co-operative. He describes his interest in being Song Editor as follows:

"I am not an especially good singer or guitar player, and am unlikely to ever make really satisfactory recordings of my work. Nonetheless, I would like my work to get into other performers’ hands. As I can produce written versions of my songs that are a lot truer to my intentions than are most of my performances, that is the principal medium I personally use. That is one reason I have a special interest in written music."

I also think that the process of writing out a song helps to separate the song from the performance. Unlike, say, sym-
Song Editor, Howard Kaplan

phonic music, where the only legitimate interpretive options are very subtle, most folk music can be successfully interpreted in widely varying ways. To reduce a song to its underlying melody line and its text, with the understanding that the key can be transposed, that the chord names are only suggestions, and that the accompaniment is entirely up to the performers, is to separate the role of the songwriter from the equally important but different role of the interpreter. Writing out a song also helps some musicians, the less skilled but enthusiastic amateurs, whose ears may not be good enough to pick up the song correctly from recordings or performances, especially when the performers have chosen an arrangement that makes the text difficult to hear accurately.

There are many ways to get good songs into people’s hands. Festivals, recordings, radio programs, and coffeehouses are fairly well-established parts of the Canadian folk music experience. What I want to do as Song Editor is to add another route for the sharing of well-written songs."

Temagami Round
[c] 1990 by Marie-Lynn Hammond

If we lose this forest if we savage the land
we might as well be cutting off our own right hand
for we and the earth are one
under the moon under the sun.