In her obituary in the Globe and Mail (April 3, 1996), Val Ross identified Edith Fowke as one of a triumvirate of founding Canadian folklorists, each of whom approached the subject with a particular focus: "...her colleague, ... Marius Barbeau, was motivated by Quebec nationalism, and Maritime folklorist Helen Creighton by a deeply conservative reverence for the past, Ms. Fowke's inspiration sprang in part from prairie socialism. Explaining why she had devoted her life to folklore, she said: 'I'm an ordinary person, and what ordinary people do is important.'"

I once had a cat who weathered an extremely hard winter, growing increasingly edgy as it refused to pass, to die finally during the warm season; I’ve always felt that she knew that her time was coming and that she wanted to die in the sunlight. In the warmth of her own heart, Edith—whose own finances were not threatened—felt the coldness of the neoconservative winter; perhaps the saddest thing about her death is that she did not live to see the arrival of the spring. It seems to me that the most fitting tribute we can offer Edith is that we never cease to believe that it will, indeed, arrive. [GWL]

The following came to us, as noted, over the Internet last month. We know a Guest Editorial when we see one, and we know a cause that would have roused Edith, as well. (See page 22 for Fruitman’s tribute to her. Our thanks to him for permission to use these items.)

Date: Fri, 4 Oct 1996 15:26:45 -0400 (EDT)
From: Great North Wind <gnwind@io.org>
Subject: Give ’em Hell over CBC cuts

I’ve noticed that there hasn’t been any real dialogue about the cuts at the venerable institution, CBC. I don’t know how much you’ve followed this issue; we all know that government cutbacks have affected national unity (now matter how much they spend on toy flags) and that the government of Canada has lied in its Red Book of Bullshit to us all. They guaranteed the CBC stable funding and then slashed back in an unbearable way.

Let me illustrate the effects this will have on YOU in the music biz.

Last week, while doing research up in Sudbury, I interviewed Wolf Hess, host of CBC Radio Noon in Northern Ontario (regional service). I met him at the radio station just after he finished his show. Still carrying a stack of CDs which I imagine he was intending to consider for airplay, he sat down for this unexpected visit. While I didn’t ask to see the CDs, I did notice Tamarack, Kevin Close of Sudbury, and a number of other Canadian CDs.

Wolf informed me that his show was being cancelled. So is the regional drive home show (4-6 pm), which will leave only the morning show (6-9 am) on the Northern Ontario network. What this means is less likelihood of Canadian artists, especially regional ones who aren’t nationally known, receiving airplay at the CBC. It means that, after the programming changes, programming will originate from CBC central.

Instead of various regional producers and hosts choosing music for their programmes, only a very few National programmes will cater to the needs of the people.

For all those who followed the great SOCAN debates on Maplepost, this should be a major concern. While the CBC ain’t perfect, we do know that it is supposed to pay creators of musical works royalties for every time one of their creations is aired. What we are getting from Perrin Beatty and his board of destructions is slash and burn that will affect SOCAN royalties as well as CBC exposure for Canadian music.

After all the commissions, including the Juno Commission, reported back to the board on how the proposed changes to the huge CBC’s budget could be accommodated, they’re systematically killing the corporation from within. If the Liberals are to be believed—that’s an oxymoron!—their Red Book of Broken Dreams committed them to supporting stable funding to the national broadcaster after years of howling at Mulroney’s moon during the terrible years of Tory cutbacks. Ask Tony Manara about Liberal Cret-ability!

All commissions strongly urged changes to the CBC; however they were unanimous in their call to LEAVE CBC RADIO ALONE. Radio was the strongest component of the CBC’s mandate. It was doing its job and doing it well. Why then are they cutting it by the same percentage as television? This cutback scheme will take a third of their yearly allocation of funding from them because, as Beatty said on As It Happens: it’s only fair that all divisions of the corporation share equally in cutting costs. But why cut out the heart with the disease? How does this make the Corporation better, more efficient?

Wolf Hess told me that 2 years ago Sudbury (centre of regional broadcasting in Northern Ontario) installed a new digital studio. Due to cutbacks, it ain’t been used. It sits there, in all its splendor, collecting dust. Brand new equipment, state of the art, wasted. Is this being efficient?

I write this to you today to ask you to consider doing something about this. Bullshit is being shovelled at us, and we aren’t getting too angered by it. Sheila Copps is spending millions to inspire us with toy flags—unbudgeted money—while they are cutting the soul from this land.

What I propose you email fanatics do is to email your feelings to the Boyle at the top: Prime Minister Jean Chretien. Express your concern about his failed promises. Tell him that his Ministers, Sheila and Paul Martin, have not done enough to convince you that what they are doing is best for Canada and the Canadian people. That by allowing this transgression that will radically change our national broadcaster, they will be aiding the killing of our national identity. They are causing harm to the ones they are supposed to love.

Tell the Prime Minister that he must stop Perrin Beatty from implementing his malignant ideas, just the way he stopped the CRTC from awarding a death-star license to his nephew’s competitors.
One last thing: cutbacks are difficult to comprehend until they hit home, and by that time it is usually too late to do anything to alleviate the harm. Let me illustrate:

We all witnessed the cutbacks to passenger rail service in Canada. We saw it on TV, read about it in the papers, saw stations close. But when I went home to Timmins in 1989, I saw it from a different perspective. I went to the train station and asked the clerk what happened: "Oh, they bus them in from Porquis Junction now." Seeing the tracks ripped out ripped my heart out. It was irreversible: once they're out, they'll never put 'em back in again. It's one thing to cut the service, but when the rails are gone, so is all hope.

The email address of the Prime Minister is as follows: pm@pm.gc.ca
They do respond promptly to your letters. Tell others to do the same; if hundreds of us show concern (as we did with the Harbourfront Centre fiasco last year), they may modify their position. Who knows, Perrin Beatty might resign and go back to collecting his $7 Million pension?

—Steve Fruitman

The Great North Wind

Our Society's 1996 AGM was held in Toronto, conjointly with the annual conference of the international Society for Ethnomusicology. Among the 66 scholarly sessions (the SEM booklet, printed in the same format as this Bulletin, runs to roughly twice the length!), CSTM offered three panels, a film, and a Showcase Concert.

Judith Cohen chaired Canadian Collectors and Songwriters, which featured papers by Gordon E. Smith, Ellen Sinatra, and Susan Hanson Brotzen, on such various figures as Ernest Gagnon, Loreena McKennitt, and Gordon Lightfoot. Pauline Greenhill hosted a session entitled On Not Being Academic, which included a paper by herself, offering current insights from her research in the field of ethnomusicology itself, was a high point of the entire conference. (It will appear in a future Bulletin.) During the final hours of the weekend, a table from the University of Alberta presented a discussion of Initiatives in Community Based Research. Presenters included Kenneth Chen (chair), Angela Taranger, Vernon Charter, and Brian Cherwick; topics ranged from Chinese-Canadian piano prodigies to Black Gospel music to research in Ukrainian-Canadian communities.

The Saturday night Showcase was splendid, in terms both of variety and quality of music. It was opened by the Six Nations Women Singers, led by Sadie Buck. These strong singers delighted an audience which has heard a great deal of music with their humor and power. The Six Nations Singers were followed by Lenka Lichtenberg, a graduate of the Ethnomusicology Department at York, who sang a variety of folk and popular songs from eastern European nations in a trained and beautiful voice, accompanying herself on the guitar. The first half of the concert was concluded by Judith Cohen, her daughter Tamar Cohen Adams, and Rob Simms. Judy played oud, medieval fiddle, and percussion, and sang; Simms (an ethnomusicology PhD from the University of Toronto) played oud and percussion; Adams added a strong second voice.

Following the intermission, Esmeralda Enrique presented a stunning (and far too short) example of flamenco dancing, to the accompaniment of David Hollowell's guitar. I do not remember ever seeing such a subtle presentation in that idiom. Saskatchewan's Paddy Tutty represented the folk music revival, offering songs from Britain, the US, and the prairie west on Appalachian dulcimer, fiddle, and guitar. The concert concluded with west African music on cora and guitar. The former, a variety of harp with a skin soundboard, was played by Daniel Janke, another York graduate; guitar and vocals were by Ghanaian Canadian Kobena Aquaa-Harrison, who leads two African bands out of Toronto, where he also hosts a radio show.

The CSTM business meeting began with a quiet reminiscence of Edith Fowke, led by Jay Rahn, her co-editor on the Journal. (That publication's name has now been changed to Canadian Journal for Traditional Music.)

Reports from the various Directors tended to echo the words with which Judith Cohen began hers: "... this year has been one of marking time...." James Prescott reported little change in the Society's membership. Bulletin co-editor JL concluded, "... the Bulletin is not exactly healthy, and not exactly in trouble, but will probably continue to live from hand to mouth unless something drastic happens." We hope that the "something drastic" would be positive: remember that with the return of our charitable status (gratitude for which was heartily expressed to outgoing Treasurer Gordon Smith, who put in hours of his time), the CSTM can be attractive again to potential donors. GWL's report included a proposal for honoraria for Bulletin editors, contingent upon the availability of funds (which would likely have to be raised by the editors themselves). This proposal was tabled until next year's meeting because it would require constitutional amendment; discussion of this matter will appear in a future issue.

Changes in the Board are relatively few. Judith Cohen agreed to continue another year as President, but she indicated that she would like to have someone appear to take the chore next year. Leslie Hall has taken over the English Vice-President's chair. LaVern Wentz of Calgary was voted Treasurer. Paula Conlon resigned as Secretary, but no one has as yet stepped forth to take the role: any volunteers? Minutes of the AGM are available to any Society member who requests them. [GWL]