

EDITORIAL

Last issue, we talked about the role of instrumental music in the Canadian folk revival. We thought we'd balance the picture by talking here about the role of the singer. Though instrumental folk music has provided a link to the older, traditional cultures in Canada (particularly in Quebec and the Atlantic Provinces), the folk *song* revival has not yet made such contacts. We're talking here of style—and the history of the revival has unfortunately provided us with a mish-mash. On the one hand, we have seen the classically-trained singer attempt albums of Canadian folk music (of the type many of us remember from school days) and botch it: on the other, so many revival singers are still using the American accents of the Appalachians or of the Mississippi Delta.

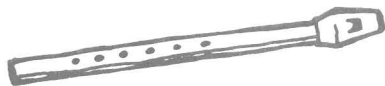
Part of the problem is the relative inaccessibility of good Canadian field recordings. Though Folkways have put out a good few, and others going back to the 'twenties (such as those of Edmund Henneberry of Devil's Island) are still obtainable, the revival is not yet informed by a sense of a national voice.

But would a wider knowledge of traditional styles of singing necessarily develop a distinctly Canadian voice—or would it merely encourage the replication of the dead aspects of the traditional style (the custom of reciting, rather than singing, the final words of a song, for example)?

The problem for many Canadian would-be singers is the absence of a singing community. Not many folk musicians in this country are thought of as good singers: most musicians' energies go into perfecting instrumental, rather than vocal, techniques. This in itself is a reflection of the isolation of the musician in this society, since these techniques are often best perfected by musicians working alone.

The development of a Canadian style of singing, related to the songs and the landscape around them, will depend in the long run on the bringing about of a large body of Canadian singers—and this is something that commercial folk music, with its division of the community into "performers" and "spectators", cannot do. It takes folk clubs and societies, and the local development of 'people' who 'sing' rather than 'singers'. It takes the creation of a milieu in which people can make music without becoming something special, where singing remains an ordinary activity, to produce a distinctive voice.

Canada Folk Bulletin stands behind this kind of development. This is why we emphasize the importance of the local community, without which the revival will merely become a passing fad of musical fashion.



"NOW, ALL TOGETHER—
AND I WANT TO
HEAR YOU!"

