

## ATLANTIC REPORT

**Getting the word in;** or, the editor is not psychic. I have been having a hard time getting the Atlantic Region Report going, and I want to make a plea to anyone in the Atlantic region who may harbour information—now or in the future—about folk clubs, their concerts, coffeehouses, festivals, etc., etc., to speak up, drop me a line. Letters I have written to former contacts have so far either vanished completely or received replies from Winnipeg or other places not in the *PEI World Atlas*. Hence my Jan/Feb article on the folk club in Saint John, and the absence of any report at all in the Mar/Apr. issue! There wouldn't have been a report in the last issue, either, had I not cornered Sandy Greenberg in Keddy's lounge. So won't you help the grapevine grow in my yard? It's tiresome writing the kind of opinionated guff that fills out the rest of this column. . . . Roamin' folkies, lend me your ears!

**Getting the word out,** getting the people in: comments from an ex-publicity person. I have just stepped down after two years of promoting the **Saint John Folk Club's** concerts, and I want to jot down a few notes on what I learned.

A. As a greenhorn ad-man I was early disabused of the notion that our local newspaper was interested in our news. They would rarely print news we sent them of folk music concerts, and never undertook reviews. We had a much more

receptive "alternative" newspaper (*The Echo Community News*) for a while, but in spite of valiant efforts it finally went under, leaving us with only the *Evening Irving*. I'd be interested to hear from other folk clubs how they are regarded by their local press.

B. Fortunately there were other free sources of publicity, and we also spent money on advertising. The free sources included various radio and television community bulletins, and calendar columns in the local paper and telecasters, where we could list the who, where and when. The local CBC station has been very helpful, frequently interviewing concert performers the afternoon before the show, and spinning their records. Finally, of course, there is our newsletter.

B. Paying for advertising can be costly, depending on how far you go. We have blank Folk Club posters offset printed, onto which we hand write the specifics of the concerts. The posters cost about \$25 for 500, but they're nothing fancy. For "special" concerts (big name people who are getting a relatively large fee and for whom we expect a rather larger audience) we go to typeset posters with half-tone photos, but these cost about \$100 for 100 posters. (Our usual audience size is around 50 people; our "big" ones around 150.) Newspaper display advertising costs about \$5 a column-inch, which means \$25-30 for an ad big enough to catch anyone's eye. We regularly run one such ad a few days before a concert, and recently we started printing a 2 col-in reminder on the day of the concert. At least the local paper was actually helpful enough to print these ads on the entertainment/movies page.

C. The question of cost-effectiveness is an interesting one—but one we've never really addressed. Short of making everyone fill out a questionnaire about where they heard about the concert, it's hard to know which publicity is the most useful. For free sources, it doesn't matter, you can hit them all. But advertising for a special concert might cost \$150, and at (say) \$3 a ticket (our concerts are real cheap) that's 50 people just to pay for the

ads. One consolation: the best advertising is probably the satisfied members of the last audience.

C#. Our newsletter is potentially a great way of advertising, and now that I'm its editor I'm going to try to exploit that potential. At present the newsletter is sent to about 100 people on a mailing list, including, but not restricted to, paid-up Folk Club members. I will begin distributing the newsletter free through some record and book stores in Saint John, paying for the extra copies (and hopefully the whole newsletter) by printing ads for record and instrument stores, small record companies, and the like.

Y'all write now!

*Chris Lobban*