

## REVIEW

*"And Now the Fields Are Green": A Collection of Coal Mining Songs in Canada.* By John C. O'Donnell. Sydney: University College of Cape Breton Press, 1992. 229 pp. \$24.95.

John O'Donnell, professor of Music at St. Francis University and Director of the miners' chorus, the Men of the Deeps, has filled a big gap in Canadian folk music studies. We have many books presenting songs of our sailors and lumbermen, but this is the first devoted to the songs of the miners. He has done for Canada what A.L. Lloyd did for England and George Korson for the United States.

Archie Green, leading scholar of industrial songs, writes:

The songs are moving testaments in their humanity, particularly with [our] current knowledge that miners have long been engaged in a cosmic battle with Mother Earth. Every page holds a surprise, from adventures in Red China to yesterday's tragedy at the Westray mine.

The book contains some 115 songs, most drawn from Cape Breton but including some from British Columbia, several by contemporary Nova Scotia singers, and a few British and American items, all known to Canadian miners. While few texts are traditional in the sense of having been transmitted from generation to generation, at least half have traditional tunes and all reflect the life of industrial workers. Many came from a song-finding contest the Miners' Folk Song Society of Cape Breton organized when the Glace Bay Miners' Museum was being established, and other contests conducted by Sydney radio station CJCJ. They range from the eighteenth-century "Collier's Rant" to Rita McNeil's "Working Man," together giving a vivid picture of the miners' lives and history.

Songs are grouped as "An Historical Perspective," "A Miner's Life and Loves," "Hard Times," "Join the Union or You'll Die," "Danger – Tragedy – Disaster," "Jolly Wee Miner Men," "Premonitions and Supernatural Phenomena," and "Their Lamps Eternity to Light." A photograph precedes each section and notes place each song in perspective. Appendices give related and international songs, and a brief history of the Men of the Deeps, followed by a glossary of technical terms and colloquial phrases, notes on the contributors, a selected discography, bibliography, and index of songs and tunes.

John O'Donnell has done a fine job. This is the most important book of Canadian folk songs to appear in quite a few years.

**Edith Fowke, York University**