

[Page 57 - The Cape Breton Shelf: John Lorne Campbell's Book "Songs Remembered in Exile: Songs Collected in Nova Scotia and Antigonish County"](#)

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tions; delightful footnote references on everything from the reputation of Highland shoemakers to lazybeds and the difference between a "banchag" and a "banarach" and many other matters reflecting the author's credentials as an Oxford graduate in agriculture. Throughout this book, though, it is Gaelic oral tradition which provides the uniformity of topic and the 60 songs it contains, all with tune transcriptions, explanatory notes and the author's English translations, certainly justify the publisher's claim that it is "an important contribution to the ethnomusicology and the history of the Scottish Gaels." Given the virtual impossibility of translating the texture of Gaelic song into English, it has to be said that the translations here are a sheer joy and the pleasure in the book is added to by the adoption of the contemporary folklorists' practice of reproducing what people actually sang rather than "improving" the text for publication. Students of the 1930's will find many extra bonuses in Campbell's acute observations of social, economic and cultural aspects of that period and one senses that there is still room for a (perhaps slighter) publication featuring his own role in the formulation of many attitudes about Highland society which are now taken for granted. It was from Cape Breton itself in December 1937, for example, that he wrote that "Gaelic should be recognized in the Gaidhealtachd as French is in the Province of Quebec here, and a knowledge of it made an essential qualification for the holding of any civil-service or similar appointment in the Highlands and Islands." (Published in *An Gaidheal*, *An Gearran*, 1937, p. 76.) And on the question of co-operatives which he witnessed in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, he wrote to the Rev. Malcolm MacLeod, Editor of *An Gaidheal*, "...is iomadh buannachd a tha leantall an oibre-san • iasgairean agus tuathanaich bhochda a nis ag lonnsachadh gu de mar a dh'fhaodadh iad oibreachadh le cheile. Tha mi smaoinichadh gun deanadh a leithid moran feum dhlonn 'sa Ghaidhealtachd." (Ibid., p. 67.) (Many benefits flow from this work • poor fishermen and farmers teaming how they may work co-operatively. I think a similar approach would bring much benefit to the Gaidhealtachd.) Similar thoughts on transferring the idea of Nova Scotia Credit Unions (or People's Banks) have still to be attempted here. Critically, however, it should be said that the more re-

Suppliers of Commercial Recreational Fencing P. O. Box 98, King St., North Sydney, N. S. B2A 3M1 794-4773 HAVE OUR AUGER TRUCK DIG YOUR HOLES." Located between Baddeck and Sydney on the Trans-Canada Highway (Route 105) Overlooking the Bras d'Or Lakes Seal Island Motel and Dining Room (Licensed) Seafood Our Specialty 46 Modern Units Swimming Pool Air Conditioning 674-2418 TOUR BUSES WELCOME Country Living at the Seal Island Bridge cent research of Nova Scotian scholars such as R. J. Sacouman and D. MacInnes does not by any means support the view that the Antigonish Movement, operating from St. Francis Xavier University, has provided for the Canadian Maritime Provinces the salvation which is sometimes claimed. As this is a major writer dealing with a major theme, it's in its central treatment of Gaelic song that its enduring value will lie and more

particularly in the comparing of Nova Scotian versions with those recorded in Scotland and in this respect few provide more interest than the versions of "Annag a Ghaoil, Hao Hi O" recorded from Jonathan MacKinnon of Skye extraction in Cape Breton and that of Mrs. Annie Johnston of Castlebay, Barra, which is published in Campbell and Collinson's Hebridean Follcsongs, Vol. 1. One can imagine also the interesting discussions in Canna over the version of "O Dluram, E Diuram" recorded by Mgr. P. J. Nicholson from Angus "the Ridge" MacDonald of Antigonish County • one of the giants of this book • and that taken down by Margaret Fay Show from Mrs. John Currie (Pelgi Nill) of North Glendale, South Uist, in 1933. In the former version, for example, "MacRuairidh nan Lann" is translated as "son of Rory of the Swords" while in the latter "MacRuairidh nan arm" becomes "MacRury of the weapons." Every song and reference has its own compelling interest and to the lives and memories of those Nova Scotian Gaels is given a lasting dignity: prominent are Mrs. Davki Patterson of Benacadle, Mrs. M. B. MacLean of Beaver Cove, and Archibald James MacKenzie of Christmas Island whose distinguished son, Archie Alick, is still such an inspirational figure in Gaelic circles in Nova Scotia and well-known in Scotland. To the considerable extent that this book is concerned with the identity of the Gael and our cultural fate, it has relevance for everyone in Canada, Scotland and far beyond; as regards economic fate and political identity, John Lorne Campbell had written in 1953 that Nova Scotia "as a Canadian province has a far greater measure of Home Rule than does Scotland." Yet one may surely raise the question of why so few of her legislators have attempted to make the promotion or survival of Gaelic a serious public issue. From the vantage point of the Isle of Skye, with the Outer Hebrides clearly in view from my window, it's tempting to surmise that some of Cape Breton's other economic and social problems can be better understood if seen in the context of the decline and demise of the Gaelic language. And while it would be fanciful to suppose that the homogenous and cohesive society of which this book gives such a splendid picture, can ever again be reconstructed, it's surely reasonable enough to hold out the hope that there will yet be the necessary political and community will to maintain in Cape Breton the Gaelic language which was the unifying ingredient in the society of the older days. Around me here in Skye there is plenty of evidence, in Gaelic-only Nursery and Elementary schools, that that is quite attainable. John Lorne Campbell's prodigious achievement in recording and saving our songs is certainly an eloquent reminder of what once was. Everybody with an interest in Cape Breton will want to have a copy of this book.

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