

REPORT of the ad hoc committee on establishment of a coffee house

TO The Folklore Society of Greater Washington

MAY 7, 1967

## 1. Non-profit Organization

We are preparing to charter a non-profit corporation, whose purpose will be the exposition of folksinging, folk dancing, and other art forms, and presentation of programs of civic interest and education.

The corporation, as its main business, will run a "coffee house" or whatever you want to call it.

The corporation, tentatively named "Folk Arts Club," will be a membership club, open to the public upon payment of (renewable) dues. Regular dues might be set initially at \$1.00 a year, and dues for a voting membership at perhaps \$10 or \$15, which gives a discount on entrance fees.

Functions of the club will be supervised by a Board of Directors. There will be five directors, three self-perpetuating (they elect their successors), two elected annually by the voting membership. The directors will choose their chairman, who will effectively be chairman of the club. The Board will be empowered to employ a manager and other staff, but cannot itself receive remuneration, except the chairman, who can be paid for managing when necessary.

A draft constitution of this club is included with this report. Articles of incorporation are being drawn up by a lawyer, with the help of a tax expert [both folk dancers who have volunteered their services]. Before incorporation, probably early in June, we will submit the organizational papers to the Internal Revenue Service for an advisory opinion on tax status, and revise if necessary.

## 2. The Coffee House

Entrance to the coffee house will be by presentation of a membership card (which can be purchased at the door), and payment of an entrance fee. This fee will be kept nominal, and might vary with the price of entertainment, but should in all cases be kept below commercial rates. A standard entrance fee of \$1.00 to \$1.50 might be appropriate, with maybe a token \$.50 on some nights or afternoons (open sing, juke-box folk dancing, etc.). Voting members will pay at some schedule less than the advertised or regular member rate.

Though serving beer was discussed, and not dismissed forever, there will be no alcoholic beverages served. There might be some free item of consumption, such as tea (self service). Whatever is finally decided, we hope that some creative approach to refreshment serving will be an integral part of the atmosphere.

The coffee house will rely heavily on volunteer labor, at least at the beginning. We hope this will not be a major problem. Already we have one person interested in being full-time waitress (for pay), and surely the end result will be some mix of paid and volunteer labor, with some recompense to the volunteers, such as tickets for free admission.

The coffee house is not to open on such a limited basis as to go unnoticed. Four nights a week, and possibly weekend afternoons should be active right from the beginning.

There will have to be a mechanism for creative ideas to find an outlet at the coffee house. For example, would performers who come through Stanley Williams and the Folklore Society want to give afternoon workshops? Are embassies staffed with people who can and want to exhibit the folk art of their countries?

The success of the coffee house will depend largely on the drive, ingenuity, and ability of the manager. We suggest there be no commitment of the club to a location until a manager is found. We are looking for such a manager, and have one person in mind already.

### 3. Location

This plan is not feasible if the rent is more than \$300 a month. We have spent some effort finding places, the most promising being on 12th St., N.E. We are looking only within the District of Columbia.

### 4. Financing

With a charter and a Board of Directors, the club can attempt to organize benefit concerts and approach foundations for support. A list of possible foundations has been made up, and in one case a line of communication is being established. We estimate the required capital for purchase of necessary equipment, all at minimum prices and maximum labor, is \$1500, not counting rental during setting-up time, or working capital for the kitchen (inventory of food supplies).

### 5. Affiliation

Provision is made in the charter for establishing an advisory committee. The Board of Directors would name several organizations which would appoint one person each to serve as advisers. Though these people would have no direct power in the Club, they would have the right to take any complaints or suggestions directly to the membership at least once a year. We hope this will aid Folk Arts in its desire to complement and integrate present activities, without undue conflict or irritation of established, more limited purpose, organizations. We trust that FSGW would be willing to appoint a member of the advisory committee.

### 6. Work In Progress

As was predicted at the FSGW meeting which created this committee, the committee sees fit to continue on its own to establish the coffee house. This report ends our obligation to, but certainly not our ties with FSGW. We are proceeding along the following course:

1. Incorporate, with non-profit status and some form of tax exemption.
2. Elect directors, establish working committees, find manager and other personnel.
3. Raise capital from benefits and/or foundations.
4. Find, rent, renovate an establishment.
5. Open for business, hopefully in the fall.

### 7. The Committee

This report is a consensus of the committee. Not all items were agreed upon without dissent. The names of the people who have worked on this committee and met to formulate this report are also submitted as part of this report.

### 8. Documents

1. This report of the committee
2. Draft Constitution of Folk Arts Club
3. List of committee members

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Ronie Bowie, secretary

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on a folky non-profit  
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