

MUSIC

Cape Breton's Diversity in Unity

Who Are They?

by Al Provoe, 21 June 1984
From the collection of John C. O'Donnell

Who are they who travel deep 'neath ocean floors
That cloak the glistening seams,

To leave behind each day a sunken shaft
Where sunlight never beams?

Who are they with shouldered lamps who crouch below
The saggy roof, on rakes that hurry down,

Riding low 'neath pressured stone
That oft times strike the crown?

Who are they who travel roads that need no picket fence,
Midst shiny fields where leafy fossils bloom,

And sometimes dust and gas
Can spell your doom?

Who are they with muscled backs, bared to cool the brow,
Who move this thermal stuff that warms

The ones way up above,
In mansions rich and college dorms?

Who are they who sweat and swear, then pause
To share the bread within the can and laugh again -

Down there they lead another life,
And friendship shall remain?

Who are they who poke and rile
And sing out names with humour bold,

Then load and chew and take the guff?
To ones above these tales are never told.

Who are they who lead the way when rescue is in store
Where men are trapped? and loving families weep

As torches fade and lamps go dim
And darkness slowly creeps.

Who are they who fought to break the company chain
And never shied when days were lean

To gain this way of life?
For now the fields are green.

Recording:

[Who Are They?](#) Al Provoe. John C. O'Donnell Tape Collection. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University.