



MODEL TRAIN BUFFS TRY OUT EQUIPMENT
 . . . Willis Creighton and Lynn Zelman test turntable

Local Model Train Club Homeless After 17 Years

Growing enthusiasm accompanied by ever-increasing space requirements has virtually pushed 40 local model train buffs out of their club rooms onto the street.

Willis Creighton, president of the Calgary Model Trainmen's Club, says his club is without a home, after operating for 17 years in the Coste House and Allied Arts Centre, as members cannot pay the rent required to house all their equipment.

He hopes some arrangement can be made with either CP or CN to use a railway coach for the exhibits, but the equipment now set up in the arts centre must be sold by auction Jan. 12 as the backdrops, tracks, switches and other fixtures would not be suited to any room of different shape.

When miniature railroading enthusiasts first got together in 1948, they paid a small fee for the use of an attic in the old Coste House and turned over half of their profits from exhibitions.

Later when the arts centre moved into a warehouse on 9th Ave. S.W., the trainmen made

a verbal agreement with the Allied Arts Council to occupy an area of the building.

They built walls around their displays and built two more rooms on a suggestion by the council.

Later, when the arts centre was running into financial difficulties, the board of directors decided to charge the train club rent. The 30 members at that time paid \$5 a year for associate memberships in the council.

They paid the first year of rent by asking for payment for their work and materials put into the walls of their room, and a second year was paid for by donating \$1,000 received by putting on a show.

When the men were unable to pay for their space needs any longer, some broke away from the main body to hold meetings in members' basements. The Bow Valley Railroad Club on the north side and Southbank Shortline have about 15 members each.

The 40 men left in the main club will meet in basements until they can find a permanent

location. They hope to salvage a few personal things, such as a locomotive bell donated by the Canadian Pacific railroad. Equipment was bought from pooled resources of members, who had to put a \$10,000 insurance policy on the set-up at one time.

Value of the items to be auctioned is \$5,000 to \$7,000 but members expect to receive only a tiny percentage of this figure from the sale.

"We did go overboard a bit with such a grand layout," Bill Walters, president of the Bow Valley group, said.

He said the display should have been developed over a period of 10 years but it was rapidly put together under pressure of shows, and gave this as one reason for the group's disintegration.

He said a good model train hobbyist will build his own cars and engines with balsa wood, odds and ends and a minimum of cost, and will gain several weeks of relaxing pastime by doing each piece. "This is better than buying a plastic, mass-produc-

ed thing and plunking it on the tracks."

The men come from all walks of life, from truck drivers to doctors, and some are railway employees. The desire to build train models "goes back to a childhood desire to drive a steam locomotive," he said.

"At least when I was a child, all youngsters wanted to be either a fireman, policeman or engineer."

To add authenticity to their models, enthusiasts study trade magazines and encyclopaedias. Some members instruct youngsters in how to build sets at the YMCA and in hospitals.

Mr. Walters noted the model railroads of today are quite complicated, and a father must spend as much time as his son in setting one up. "Gone are the days when a model train could be set up in a half hour and torn down again. The hobby is good for father-son relationships in this way."

Another myth is that a person has to be "a millionaire" to enjoy the hobby, he said.