

Classic Labor Songs from Smithsonian Folkways

Compiled and annotated by Jeff Place and Joe Glazer

SFW CD 40166

PC 2006 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

1. Joe Hill Paul Robeson

Paul Robeson, vocal (From *Favorite Songs Monitor* 580)

*I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Alive as you or me.
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead."
"I never died," says he; / "I never died," says he.*

*"In Salt Lake City, Joe," says I, / Him standing by my bed,
"They framed you on a murder charge."
Says Joe, "But I ain't dead"; / Says Joe, "But I ain't dead."*

*"The copper bosses killed you, Joe, / They shot you, Joe," says I.
"Takes more than guns to kill a man."
Says Joe, "I didn't die"; / Says Joe, "I didn't die."*

*And standing there as big as life / And smiling with his eyes,
Joe says, "What they can never kill
Went on to organize, / Went on to organize."*

*"From San Diego up to Maine, / In every mine and mill,
Where workers strike and organize,
It's there you'll find Joe Hill; / It's there you'll find Joe Hill."*

*I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night, / Alive as you or me.
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead."
"I never died," says he; / "I never died," says he;
"I never died," says he.*

2. Bread and Roses Bobbie McGee

Bobbie McGee, guitar and vocal; (From *Bread and Raises: Songs of Working Women* Collector 1933, 1981)

*As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,
Are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing: Bread and Roses! Bread and Roses!*

*As we come marching, marching, we battle too for men,
For they are women's children, and we mother them again.
Our lives shall not be sweated from birth until life closes;
Hearts starve as well as bodies: give us bread, but give us roses.*

*As we come marching, marching, unnumbered women dead
Go crying through our singing their ancient song for bread.
Small art and love and beauty their drudging spirits knew.
Yes, it is bread we fight for, but we fight for roses too.*

*As we come marching, marching, we bring the greater days:
The rising of the women means the rising of the race.
No more the drudge and idler, ten that toil where one reposes,
But a sharing of life's glories: bread and roses, bread and roses.*

3. Casey Jones (The Union Scab) Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers

Pete Seeger, banjo and vocal; (From *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs*
Folkways 5285, 1955)

*The workers on the S. P. line to strike sent out a call;
But Casey Jones, the engineer, he wouldn't strike at all.
His boiler it was leaking, and the drivers on the bum,
And the engines and the bearing, they were all out of plumb.*

*Casey Jones kept his junk pile running; / Casey Jones was working double time;
Casey Jones got a wooden medal, / For being good and faithful on the S. P. line.*

*The workers said to Casey: "Won't you help us win this strike?"
But Casey said: "Let me alone, you'd better take a hike."
Well, Casey's wheezy engine ran right off the wheezy track,
And Casey hit the river with an awful smack.*

*Casey Jones hit the river bottom; / Casey Jones broke his blooming spine;
Casey Jones turned into an angel, / He got a trip to heaven on the S. P. line.*

*Then Casey Jones got to heaven way up to that Pearly Gate,
He said: "I'm Casey Jones, the guy that pulled the S. P. freight."
"You're just the man," said Peter, "our musicians are on strike;
You can get a job a-scabbing any time you like."*

*Casey Jones got a job in heaven; / Casey Jones was doing mighty fine;
Casey Jones went scabbing on the angels, / Just like he did to workers on the S. P. line.*

*Well, the angels got together; they said it wasn't fair
For Casey Jones to go around a-scabbing everywhere.*

*The Angel's Union No. 23 they sure were there,
They promptly fired Casey down the Golden Stair.*

*Casey Jones went to hell a-flying; / Casey Jones, the devil said, "Oh fine!
Casey Jones, get busy shoveling sulfur. / It's what you get for scabbing on the S. P. Line."*

4. We Shall Not Be Moved / Roll the Union On (organizing medley) Joe Glazer
Joe Glazer, vocal and guitar; backup from the Seldom Scene, Joe Uehlein, Laurel Blaydes and
Magpie. (From *Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs* Collector 1918, 1971)

Chorus:

*We shall not be, we shall not be moved. / We shall not be, we shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water, / We shall not be moved.*

*The union is behind us; we shall not be moved. / The union is behind us; we shall not be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water, / We shall not be moved.*

*Ah, we'll build a mighty union; we shall not be moved. / We'll build a mighty union; we shall not
be moved.
Just like a tree that's planted by the water, / We shall not be moved.*

Chorus:

*We're gonna roll, we're gonna roll, / We're gonna roll, we're gonna roll,
We're gonna roll the union on. / We're gonna roll, we're gonna roll,
Roll, we're gonna roll, / We're gonna roll the union on.*

*And if the boss is in the way, we're gonna roll right over him, / Roll right over him, roll right over
him.*

Well, if the boss is in the way, we're gonna roll right over him, / Gonna roll the union on.

*We're gonna roll, we're gonna roll, / We're gonna roll, we're gonna roll,
We're gonna roll the union on.*

5. Roll the Union On John Handcox

John Handcox, vocals

(From Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, aluminum disc 30,
recorded 9 March 1937 by Charles Seeger and Sidney Robertson Cowell)

Chorus:

*We gonna roll, we gonna roll / We gonna roll the union on.
We gonna roll, we gonna roll / We gonna roll the union on.*

*If the planter's in the way, we're gonna roll it over him.
Gonna roll it over him, gonna roll it over him.
If the planter's in the way, we're gonna roll it over him.
Gonna roll the union on.*

Chorus

*If the boss is in the way, we're gonna roll it over him.
Gonna roll it over him, gonna roll it over him.
If the boss is in the way, we're gonna roll it over him.
Roll the union on.*

Chorus

6. Cotton Mill Colic Mike Seeger

Mike Seeger, vocal, guitar and harmonica (From *Tipple, Loom and Rail: Songs of the Industrialization of the South Folkways* 5273, 1966)

*When you buy clothes on Easy Terms,
The collectors treat you like measly worms.
One dollar down, then Lord knows,
If you don't make a payment they'll take your clothes.
When you go to bed, you can't sleep,
You owe so much at the end of the week.
No use to colic they're all that way,
Pecking at your door 'til they get your pay.*

Chorus:

*I'm a-gonna starve, everybody will.
'Cause you can't make a living at a cotton mill.*

*When you go to work you work like the devil.
At the end of the week you're not on the level.
Payday comes you pay your rent
When you get through, you've not got a cent
To buy fat-back meat, pinto beans,
Now and then you get turnip greens.
No use to colic, we're all that way,*

Can't get the money to move away.

Chorus

*Twelve dollars a week is all we get.
How in the heck can we live on that?
I've got a wife and fourteen kids,
We all have to sleep on two bedsteads.
Patches on my britches, holes in my hat.
I ain't had a shave since my wife got fat.
No use to colic, for every day at noon
The kids get to crying in a different tune.*

Chorus

*They run a few days and then they stand,
Just to keep down the working man.
We can't make it, we never will,
As long as we stay at a lousy mill.
The poor are getting poorer, the rich are getting rich,
If I don't starve, I'm a son of a gun.
No use to colic, no use to rave,
We'll never rest 'til we're in our grave.*

Chorus

7. The Mill Was Made of Marble Joe Glazer

Joe Glazer, guitar and vocal; with backup by the Seldom Scene, Magpie, and Laurel Blaydes

*I dreamed that I had died / And gone to my reward:
A job in heaven's textile plant / On a golden boulevard.*

Chorus:

*The mill was made of marble, / The machines were made out of gold,
And nobody ever got tired, / And nobody ever grew old.*

*This mill was built in a garden. / No dust or lint could be found;
And the air was so fresh and so fragrant / With flowers and trees all around.*

Chorus

It was quiet and peaceful in heaven; / There was no clatter or boom.

You could hear the most beautiful music, / As you worked at the spindle and loom.

Chorus

*There was no unemployment in heaven; / We worked steady all through the year.
We always had food for the children. / We never were haunted by fear.*

Chorus

*When I woke from this dream about heaven, / I wondered if someday there'd be
A mill like that one down below here on earth / For workers like you and like me.*

Chorus

8. Aragon Mill Peggy Seeger

Peggy Seeger, vocal and guitar; Calum MacColl, guitar (From *From Where I Stand: Topical Songs from America and England* Folkways 8563, 1982)

*At the east end of town, at the foot of the hill,
There's a chimney so tall that says "Aragon Mill."
But there's no smoke at all coming out of the stack.
'Cause the mill has pulled out and it ain't coming back.*

Chorus:

*And the only tune I hear / Is the sound of the wind,
As it blows through the town, / Weave and spin, weave and spin.*

*There's no children at all in the narrow empty street.
All the looms have shut down; it's so quiet I can't sleep.*

Chorus

*Oh, I'm too poor to move, and I'm too young to die,
And there's no where to go for my family and I.
'Cause, the mill has shut down; it's the only life I know.
Tell me, where can I go, tell me, where can I go?*

Chorus

9. Talking Union The Almanac Singers

The Almanac Singers: Pete Seeger, vocal and guitar (From *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs* Folkways 5285, 1955)

*Now, if you want higher wages let me tell you what to do,
You got to talk to the workers in the shop with you.
You got to build you a union, got to make it strong,
But if you all stick together, boys, it won't be long;
You get shorter hours, better working conditions,
Vacations with pay. Take your kid to the seashore.*

*It ain't quite this simple, so I better explain
Just why you got to ride on the union train.
'Cause if you wait for the boss to raise your pay,
We'll all be a-waitin' 'til Judgment Day.
We'll all be buried, gone to heaven,
St. Peter'll be the strawboss then.*

*Now you know you're underpaid but the boss says you ain't;
He speeds up the work 'til you're 'bout to faint.
You may be down and out, but you ain't beaten,
You can pass out a leaflet and call a meetin'.
Talk it over, speak your mind,
Decide to do somethin' about it.*

*Course, the boss may persuade some poor damn fool
To go to your meetin' and act like a stool.
But you can always tell a stool, though, that's a fact,
He's got a yaller streak a-runnin' down his back.
He doesn't have to stool, he'll always get along
On what he takes out of blind men's cups.*

*You got a union now, and you're sittin' pretty,
Put some of the boys on the steering committee.
The boss won't listen when one guy squawks,
'Cause he's got to listen when the union talks.
He'd better - be mighty lonely
Everybody decide to walk out on him.*

*Suppose they're working you so hard it's just outrageous
And they're paying you all starvation wages.
You go to the boss and the boss would yell,
"Before I raise your pay I'd see you all in hell."
Well, he's puffing a big seegar, feeling mighty slick
'Cause he thinks he's got your union licked.
Well, he looks out the window and what does he see*

*But a thousand pickets, and they all agree:
He's a bastard, unfair, slavedriver;
Bet he beats his wife!*

*Now, boys, you've come to the hardest time.
The boss will try to bust your picket line.
He'll call out the police, the National Guard,
They'll tell you it's a crime to have a union card.
They'll raid your meetin', they'll hit you on the head,
They'll call every one of you a damn red,
Unpatriotic, Japanese spies, sabotaging national defense!*

*But out at Ford, here's what they found,
And out at Vultee, here's what they found,
And out at Allis-Chalmers, here's what they found,
And down at Bethlehem, here's what they found:
That if you don't let red-baiting break you up,
And if you don't let stoolpigeons break you up,
And if you don't let vigilantes break you up,
And if you don't let race hatred break you up,
You'll win. What I mean - take it easy, but take it!*

10. 1913 Massacre Woody Guthrie

Woody Guthrie, guitar and vocals

(From *Struggle Folkways* 2485, 1976/*Smithsonian Folkways* 40025, 1990)

*Take a trip with me in nineteen-thirteen
To Calumet, Michigan, in the copper country.
I'll take you to a place called Italian Hall
Where the miners are having their big Christmas ball.*

*I'll take you in a door, and up a high stairs.
Singing and dancing is heard everywhere,
I'll let you shake hands with the people you see
And watch the kids dance round the big Christmas tree.*

*You ask about work and you ask about pay;
They'll tell you they make less than a dollar a day,
Working their copper claim, risking their lives,
Oh, it's fun to spend Christmas with children and wives.*

*There's talking and laughing and songs in the air,
And the spirit of Christmas is there everywhere,
Before you know it, you're friends with us all
And you're dancing around and around in the hall.*

*Well, a little girl sits down by the Christmas tree lights
To play the piano, so you gotta keep quiet.
To hear all this fun you would not realize
That the copper-boss thug-men are milling outside.*

*The copper-boss thugs stuck their heads in the door
One of them yelled and he screamed, "There's a fire!"
A lady, she hollered, "There's no such a thing!
Keep on with your party, there's no such a thing."*

*A few people rushed, and it was only a few
"It's just the thugs and the scabs fooling you."
A man grabbed his daughter and carried her down
But the thugs held the door and he could not get out.*

*And then others followed, a hundred or more
But most everybody remained on the floor.
The gun-thugs they laughed at their murderous joke,
While the children were smothered on the stairs by the door.*

*Such a terrible sight I never did see
We carried our children back up to their tree.
The scabs outside still laughed at their spree,
And the children that died there was seventy-three.*

*The piano played a slow funeral tune
And the town was lit up by a cold Christmas moon.
The parents they cried and the miners they moaned,
"See what your greed for money has done."*

11. The Preacher and the Slave Utah Phillips

Utah Phillips, guitar and vocal, with Saul Brody and other members of the chorus. (Also known as "Pie in the Sky" and "Longhaired Preachers"; from the 1971 Festival of American Folklife, archive reel FP-1971-7RR-0029; recorded 3 July 1971)

*Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked about something to eat,
They will answer in voices so sweet:*

Chorus:

*You will eat, bye and bye, / In that glorious land in the sky (way up high).
Work and pray, live on hay, / You'll get pie in the sky when you die. (That's a lie.)*

*And the starvation army they play,
And they shout and they clap and they pray.
When they've got all your coins on the drum,
Then they tell you when you're on the bum.*

Chorus

*Holy Rollers and Jumpers come out
And they roll and they jump and they shout
Give your money to Jesus they say,
And you'll eat on that glorious day.*

Chorus

*Working folks of all countries unite,
Side by side we for freedom shall fight;
When this world and its wealth we have gained,
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:*

Last chorus:

*You will eat, bye and bye, / When you've learned how to cook and how to fry
Chop some wood, it'd do you good / And you'll eat in that sweet bye and bye. (That's no lie)*

12a. Which Side Are You On? Florence Reece

Florence Reece, vocals (From the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, archive reel, FP-1971-7RR-0067, recorded 3 July 1971)

12b. Which Side Are You On? The Almanac Singers

The Almanac Singers: Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, Millard Lampell, et al., vocals and instruments (From *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs* Folkways 5285, 1955)

*Come all you poor workers, / Good news to you I'll tell,
How the good old union / Has come in here to dwell.*

Chorus:

Which side are you on? / Which side are you on?

*We're starting our good battle, / We know we're sure to win,
Because we've got the gun thugs / A-looking very thin.*

Chorus

*If you go to Harlan County / There is no neutral there;
You'll either be a union man / Or a thug for J. H. Blair.*

Chorus

*The Almanac Singers:
Come all of you good workers, / Good news to you I'll tell,
Of how the good old union / Has come in here to dwell.*

*Chorus:
Which side are you on? / Which side are you on?*

*My daddy was a miner / And I'm a miner's son,
And I'll stick with the union / Till every battle's won.*

Chorus

*They say in Harlan County / There are no neutrals there;
You'll either be a union man / Or a thug for J. H. Blair.*

Chorus

*Oh, workers, can you stand it, / Oh, tell me how you can?
Will you be a lousy scab / Or will you be a man?*

Chorus

*Don't scab for the bosses, / Don't listen to their lies.
Us poor folks haven't got a chance / Unless we organize.*

Chorus

13. Hold the Fort Joe Uehlein

Joe Uehlein, vocal and guitar; Laurel Blaydes and Tom Moran, vocals and mandolin; John Gower, banjo (From *Two Roads—28 Years* by Joe Uehlein, 2002; recorded 19 September 1991)

Chorus:

*Hold the fort, for we are coming, / Union workers be strong!
Side by side we'll battle onward, / Victory will come.*

*We meet today in Freedom's cause / And raise our voices high;
We'll join our hands in union strong / To battle or to die.*

Chorus

*Well, look, my comrades, see the union / Banners waving high;
Reinforcements now appearing / Victory is nigh.*

Chorus

*Well, see our numbers - they're still increasing, / And hear the bugle blow;
By our union we shall triumph / Over every foe.*

Chorus

*Well, fierce and long the battle rages / But we will not fear,
Help will come whene're it's needed, / Cheer, my comrades, cheer.*

14. Union Maids The New Harmony Sisterhood Band

The New Harmony Sisterhood Band: Deborah Silverstein, vocal and guitar; Kendall Hale, vocal and fiddle; Katie Tolles, vocal and fiddle; Marcia Deihl, vocal and mandolin; Pat Ouellette, bass (From *and Ain't I a Woman* Paredon 1038, 1977)

*There once was a union maid / Who never was afraid
Of the goons and the ginks and the company finks / And the deputy sheriffs who made the raids.
She went to the union hall / When the meeting it was called,
And when those company boys came 'round, / She always stood her ground.*

Chorus:

*Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union,
I'm sticking to the union, I'm sticking to the union.
Oh, you can't scare me, I'm sticking to the union,
I'm sticking to the union, 'till the day I die.*

*This union maid was wise / To the tricks of company spies,
She wouldn't be fooled by company stools / She'd always organize the guys.
She'd always get her way / When they asked for higher pay.
She'd show her card to the National Guard, / And this is what she'd say:*

Chorus

*You gals who want to be free, / Just take a tip from me:
Find you a man who's a union man / And join the Lady's Auxiliary.
Oh, married life ain't hard, / If you've got a union card.
A union man leads a happy life / If he's got a union wife.*

*We modern union maids are also not afraid / To walk the line, leave jobs behind
And we're not just the ladies auxillary / We'll fight for equal pay
And we will have our say. / We're workers too, the same as you / And fight the union way.*

15. Too Old to Work Joe Glazer

Joe Glazer, guitar and vocal (From *Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs* Collector 1918, 1971)

*You work hard for a living until you get old,
And sometimes they push you right out of the cold.
When you're working time's through, you don't want charity,
You'd like to retire with some dignity.*

Chorus:

*And you're too old to work, / Too old to work,
When you're too old to work and you're too young to die.
Who will take care of you? / How'll you get by,
When you're too old to work and you're too young to die?*

*They put horses to pasture, they feed them on hay,
Even machines get retired some day.
The boss gets a pension when he is too old;
You helped him retire, you're out in the cold.*

Chorus

*There's no easy answer, there's no easy cure.
Dreaming won't change it, that's one thing for sure!
But, fighting together, we'll get there some day*

And when we have won, we will no longer say...

Chorus

16. Black Lung Hazel Dickens

Hazel Dickens, vocal (From the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife; archive reel FP-1971-7RR-0028, 3 July 1971)

*He's had more hard luck than most men could stand.
The mines was his first love but never his friend.
He's lived a hard life and hard he'll die.
Black lung's done got him, his time is nigh.*

*Black lung, black lung, you're just biding your time.
Soon all this suffering I'll leave behind,
But I can't help but wonder what God had in mind
To send such a devil to claim this soul of mine.*

*He went to the bossman but he closed the door.
Oh, it seems you're not wanted when you're sick and you're poor.
You're not even covered in their medical plan
And your life depends on the favors of man.*

*Down in the poor house on starvation's plan,
Where pride is a stranger and doomed is a man,
His soul full of coal dust till his body's decayed,
And everyone but black lung's done turned him away.*

*Black lung, black lung, oh, your hand's icy cold,
As you reach for my life and you torture my soul.
Cold as that water hole down in that dark cave,
Where I spent my life's blood digging my own grave.*

*Down at the graveyard the bossman came.
With his little bunch of flowers, dear God, what a shame!
Oh, take back those flowers, don't you sing no sad song,
The dye has been cast now, a good man has gone.*

17. Been Rolling So Long Larry Penn

Larry Penn, guitar and vocal

(Also called "Truck Driving Man"; from *Still Feel Like Rollin': Songs About Trucks and Trains* Collector 1943, 1987)

*Where have you been today, truck driver man?
Where have you traveled across the wide land?
I've been to the East, I've been to the West,
The North and the South and the roadsides to rest.
I've been to the centers of commerce and trade
And every big city that industry made.*

Chorus:

*I've been rolling so long, but I'm still in the hole.
The fever is gone and the coffee is cold.
But each mile of highway has calloused my soul.
Rolling it all home to you.*

*What did you haul today, truck driver man?
What did you carry across the wide land?
Peanuts and lumber and parts for machines,
Castings and cookies and rose-colored dreams.
There was boxes and bags and barrels of oil,
Cement by the yard and steel by the coil.*

Chorus

*What took you so long today, truck driver man?
What was the delay as you traveled the land?
It rained in the morning, it snowed in the night.
I made a left turn, I should have gone right.
I watched for the crazies, I watched for the bears.
I waited for scales, I was down for repairs.*

Chorus

*What do you think about, truck driver man?
What are your dreams as you travel the land?
I dream about playing all day in the sun,
While somebody younger is making the run.
I dreamed about finding two perfect fried eggs,
Resting my eyes and the waitresses' legs,*

*Never, no more, nights all alone,
Not being more than an hour from home.*

Chorus

*Where have you been today, truck driver man,
Where have you traveled across the wide land?
I've been to the East, I've been to the West,
The North and the South and the roadsides to rest.*

18. VDT Tom Juravich

Tom Juravich, vocal and guitar

(From *We Just Came Here to Work Here, We Didn't Come Here To Die* Collector 1953)

*You don't know my name but you sure know me; / I work in New York, Boston, and D.C.
I used to be a typist, a secretary, / But now I enter data on my VDT.*

I tell you it's not like they show on TV; / It's hell to earn a living on a VDT.

*You won't hear me say that typing was fun, / But at least I could see the work that I'd done,
And the boss couldn't test my productivity / By punching up my number on his VDT.*

I swear the screen's staring back at me; / It's hell to earn a living on a VDT.

*My supervisor says it's safe for me. / She shows me a study done at M.I.T.
You can see what it's done to my eyes. / Heaven only knows what it's doing inside.*

I tell you it's not like I thought it would be, / It's hell to earn a living on a VDT.

*When you think of "union" what comes to your mind? / A guy driving a truck or working the
line?
But if you've ever spent hours behind a VDT / You know, no one needs a union more than me.*

*Eyes are aching but now I can see / It's hell to earn a living on a VDT. (repeat)
I tell you it's not like I thought it would be, / It's hell to earn a living on a VDT.*

19. Automation Joe Glazer

Joe Glazer, guitar and vocal, Charlie Byrd, guitar
(From *Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs* Collector 1918, 1971)

*I went down, down, down to the factory
Early on a Monday morn.
When I got down to the factory
It was lonely, it was forlorn.
I couldn't find Joe, Jack, John or Jim
Nobody could I see,
Nothing but buttons and bells and lights
All over the factory.*

*Well, I walked, walked, walked into the foreman's office
To find out what was what.
I looked him in the eye and I said, "What goes?"
This is the answer I got:
His eyes turned red, then green, then blue,
And it suddenly dawned on me,
There was a robot sitting in the seat
Where the foreman used to be.*

*I walked all around, all around, up and down
And Across that factory.
I watched all the buttons and the bells and the lights
It was a mystery to me.
I hollered, "Hank, Frank, Ike, Mike, Joe, Jack
Don, Dan, Roy, Ray, Ed, Fred, Pete!"
And a great big mechanical voice boomed out:
"All your buddies are obsolete." (repeat line three times)*

*Well, I was scared, scared, scared, I was worried, I was sick
As I left that factory.
Decided that I had to see the president
Of the whole darn company.
When I got up to his office he was rushing out the door
With a scowl upon his face,
For there was a great big mechanical executive
A-sitting in the president's place.*

I went home, home, home to my ever-loving wife,

*I told her 'bout the factory.
She kissed me, she hugged me, she cried a little bit,
As she sat on my knee.
Now I don't understand all the buttons and the bells
But there's one thing I will say –
I thank the Lord that love's still made
In the good old-fashioned way.*

20. I'm Union and I'm Proud Eddie Starr

Eddie Starr, vocal and guitar with additional instrumentation
(From *We are the Working Class: Songs by Eddie Starr* Collector 1951, 1991)

Chorus:

*I am union and I'm proud / And my membership talks loud,
Where I'm concerned / I won't get burned.
'Cause the union is my shield / My protection when I feel
That I've been wronged. / It makes me strong.*

*I'm trying to make a living / So I'll give 'em all I got
And I'll work real hard, / But I'm never gonna give in;
When it comes to corporate greed / I'm on my guard,
I've got my card.*

*Says I'm union and I stand / And no company's demand
Will make me fall, / And I will not crawl;
'Cause the union is the key / To make working people free,
And I won't back down / And lose my ground.*

*I'm living in a country / Where everybody's got
The right to choose. / So, if you're gonna tell me
That what I think don't count / Then heed the news.
I've paid my dues.*

Chorus

*My father before me was a labor man / And he walked the picket line.
For all that he gave me I won't give back / And if I must, then I'll walk mine;
It comes my time.*

Chorus

22. I'm a Union Card Kenny Winfree

Kenny Winfree, vocal and guitar, with Phil Rosenthal and His Bluegrass Boys, banjo, mandolin, and bass (From *Blue Collar Bluegrass* Collector 1949, 1991)

*Well, I was thumbing through my wallet just the other day
Well, I came to a certain spot, and I coulda swore I heard someone say,
"Hey, I'm your union card; now don't you forget about me."
Now listen to this story and just see if you don't agree.*

*"You may not know it but I do a lot for you;
I protect your benefits and all your wages too.
I might even keep you from getting fired
Praise the Lord that I'm a union card."*

Chorus:

*"Praise the Lord that I'm a union card.
Could have been a Visa, could have been a Master Charge.
Don't worry about your money long as I'm on guard;
Just praise the Lord that I'm a union card."*

*"Could have been the joker, could have been the old maid,
Could have been the rooker, could have been the ace of spades.
Living in your wallet here, it sure is hard,
But praise the Lord that I'm a union card."*

Chorus

*"I'm a postal worker who delivers mail to you;
I'm a textile worker and I work on airplanes too.
I'm carried by millions over near and far,
Just praise the Lord that I'm a union card."*

Chorus

22. Carpal Tunnel John O'Connor

John O'Connor, guitar and vocal (From *We Just Came Here to Work Here, We Didn't Come Here To Die* Collector 1953)

*Early in the morning at the start of the day
I force my fingers 'round the handle of the blade.
Start in to cuttin' just as fast as I can.
By the end of the day I can hardly move my hands.*

*Chorus:
I got that old carpal tunnel and my hands won't move
But the foreman tells me to stay in the groove.
You cut that cattle as fast as I do,
You'll get that carpal tunnel too.*

*Oh, ten years ago I started in the kill
Now ten years later, well, I got my fill.
But I keep on cuttin' though the line's twice as fast.
Well, I don't know how long these arms will last.*

Chorus

*I work with a knife and a blade in my hand
I cut them cows with a big iron band.
But it feels like a knife is cuttin' me all the time,
'Cause the carpal tunnel lives in the big nerve line.*

Chorus

*There ain't five minutes that passes a man,
That he don't feel the carpal tunnel deep in his hands.
He feels it in his fingers and wrists all the time,
It's the curse of the speed upon the carcass line.*

Chorus

*Now I'll go in for an operation once more,
But I'll come right back to the killing floor,
And I'll tell them darling children of mine,
"Don't you ever go to work on the packinghouse line."*

Chorus

Oh, the foreman tells me to stay in the groove.

I got that old carpal tunnel and my hands won't move.

23. We Just Come to Work Here Anne Feeney

Anne Feeney, vocal and guitar; Michael Organ, drums; Garry Tallent, bass; Danny Torroll, guitar, Tony Bowles, saxophones; Billy Bremner, guitar; Jack Irwin, piano; Nanette Britt, harmony vocal (From the Joe Glazer Collection, compact disc sent by Anne Feeney, *Union Maid*, n.d.)

*Working at this job is dirty and dangerous
And I'm taking risks anyway.
Oh, if I had the time and the proper equipment,
I could do my job safely each day.
Everybody here says they're sticklers for safety,
And I'm not here to say that they lie;
I'm saying we just come to work here,
We don't come to die.*

*Now I don't want your chemicals clouding my brain,
I want to keep all of my fingers and toes.
I want to hear those cheers with both of my ears,
When my working days come to a close.
Work that I do here is dangerous enough
Don't you rush me and I'm telling you why;
"We just come to work here,
We don't come to die."*

*Now, while you're up there talking in an air-conditioned office
On a telephone that's OSHA-approved,
Go on and tell me how much you've been spending on safety,
Pardon me, I'm not moved.
There's only one way to put an end to the slaughter,
Just look your boss right in the eye,
And say, "We just come to work here,
We don't come to die."*

*Now, you know, we sat still through eight years of Reagan,
Watched OSHA brought down to its knees;
Saw lots of union busting and watched our plants rusting,
While our jobs were shipped overseas.
Sixty thousand workers that we buried last year*

*Found the cost of doing business too high.
We just come to work here,
We don't come here to die.*

*Now, while you're up there talking in an air-conditioned office
On a telephone that's OSHA-approved,
Go on and tell me how much you've been spending on safety,
Pardon me, I'm not moved.
There's only one way to put an end to the slaughter,
Just look your boss right in the eye,
Tell him, "We just come to work here,
We don't come to die."
We just come to work here,
We don't come to die.*

24. One Day More Elaine Purkey

Elaine Purkey, guitar and vocal (From the Ralph Rinzler Memorial Festival, New Market, Tennessee, 9 April 1995)

*One day more, one day more,
People let me tell you what we're fighting for:
We're fighting for our future, don't you understand?
And we don't need your pity, we just need your helping hand.*

Chorus:

*To fight one day more,
One day more,
If the company holds out 20 years,
We'll hold out one day more.
One day more,
One day more,
If the company holds out 20 years,
We'll hold out one day more.*

*If Emmet Boyle thinks he can win
He'll get a big surprise,
'Cause we're honest folks and we will
Shut down him down to size.
We'll throw out the Guards, clean out the yard
Cut that big Boyle down,
But we'll still be around.*

Chorus

*We've got to change the way things are,
Make people understand,
Our working class is banking on
The rights in a free land.
Our government lets criminals run free to steal again,
And then takes the jobs of honest working women and men.*

Chorus

*Let's change the laws, remove the flaws
And start all over anew.
Demand our rights, take back our land,
Square freedom through and through.
Keep the scabs out of the White House,
Vote union brothers in,
And then the Feds can't ever take us off
In a ball and chains again.*

Chorus

*One day more,
One day more,
People let me tell you
What you what we're fighting for:
We're fighting for your future,
Don't you understand,
You won't need our pity,
You'll just need our helping hand.*

Chorus

25. We Do the Work Jon Fromer

Jon Fromer, vocal and guitar; David Fromer, guitar; Reed Fromer, vocal and keyboards; Owen Davis, congas; David Lovel, bass; Michael Spiro, percussion; Alex and Harriet Bagwell, Christine Hauptert-Wemmer, Francisco Herrera, Brenda Savage, Walter Turner, background vocals (From the Joe Glazer Collection, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian, Jon Fromer self-produced tape, *We Do the Work*)

We plant the food. We drive the cab.

*We load the ship. We run the lab.
We build the bridges. We fly the plane.
We do the work. This is our day.*

*We do the work. We do the work.
We do the work. This is our day.*

*We type the page. We clean the streets.
We sew the clothes. We change the sheets.
We sell the goods (yes, we do). We lay the stone.
We do the work. This is our home.*

*We do the work. We do the work.
We do the work. This is our home.*

*We dig the ditch (yes, we do). We serve the meal.
We give the care. We mold the steel.
We teach the kids. We lend a hand.
We do the work. This is our land.*

*We do the work. We do the work.
We do the work. This is our land. (repeat)*

26. De Colores Baldemar Velasquez

Baldemar Velasquez with Aguila Negra (from the Ralph Rinzler Memorial Festival, New Market, Tennessee, 9 April 1995)

*De Colores, De Colores se visten los campos en la primavera.
De Colores, De colores son los pajaritos que vienen de afuera.
De Colores, De colores es al arco iris que vemos lucir.
Y por eso los grandes amores
De muchos colores me gustan ami.
Y por eso los grandes amores
De muchos colores me gustan ami.*

Translation:

*The fields are dressed in colors
In the spring, painted in colors
Painted in colors are the little birds*

*Which come from the outside?
Painted with colors
Painted with colors is the rainbow that we see shining brilliantly above*

*Chorus:
And that's why great loves of many colors are what I like*

27. Solidarity Forever Joe Glazer
Joe Glazer, guitar and vocal
(From *I Will Win: Songs of the Wobblies* Collector 1927, 1977)

*When the union's inspiration
Through the workers' blood shall run,
There can be no power greater
Anywhere beneath the sun,
Yet what force on earth is weaker
Than the feeble strength of one,
But the Union makes us strong.*

*Chorus:
Solidarity forever, solidarity forever, solidarity forever,
For the Union makes us strong.*

*Now, they have taken untold millions
They never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle
Not a single wheel can turn;
We can break their haughty power,
Gain our freedom when we learn
That the Union makes us strong.*

Chorus

*And in our hands is placed a power,
Greater than their hoarded gold,
Greater than the might of armies,
Magnified a thousand fold;
We can bring to birth a new world,
From the ashes of the old
For the Union makes us strong.*

Chorus (twice)

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