Singing In the News

The press generally has reported the upsurge of singing in meetings, on picket lines and in demonstrations. Soldiers overseas demonstrating in January and speed ing up demobilization were reported to have sung the old army song, 'Gee, but I want to go home'—with new words composed for the occasion. A high army officer in Japan is said to have been irritated by this song that he threatened to jail the singers.

The recent Western Union picket line was noted for its constant use of music via sound truck. Many actors and singers appeared in FDR FOR ACTION shows. The New York metropolitan press featured stories of mass singing on the picket line and reprinted several verses of songs.

Singing of the Jefferson Chorus and of Steel for action has been noted in the press as these groups have appeared on numerous picket lines.

Philadelphia papers called "Union Maid" the worst worn record in the C.I. strikers' collection of union songs. The wires and sound system were cut seven times, presumably by police. Irony of our times: "Peat Bog Soldiers", the famous German concentration camp song, is now number 1 on the Berlin "Hit Parade".

To New Readers

Last month, in our first Bulletin, we outlined our purposes and our reason for existence. Due to the fine response we are having this Bulletin printed by offset.

We send out this call to all union education directors, and to all farmers, labor, and People's organizations; to all poets and songwriters and musicians; to singers, performers, and chorus directors: Here are songs of democracy. We believe that songs should be concerned with more than "June-noon-croon". There is a need for songs that think in the world about us, and songs expressing the deepest aspirations of all people for freedom and equality.

Popular Song Writers Committee Formed

Popular songwriters have organized a working committee in People's Songs, with Paul Secon as secretary. The group has held several meetings and members have written songs with social themes, and jingles for radio spots. Discussions have been held on treatments of social problems which would be acceptable to the commercial market, as well as for the growing trade union market. A representative of the Political Action Committee of CIO has met with the group and described the program of PAC for 1946. He stressed the urgent need for new songs dealing with housing, full employment, high cost of living, and voters' registration.

Songwriters wishing to join and work with this group of professional writers should write Paul Secon at the national office.

The National Archive of People's Songs

Anyone paying regular membership fees to People's Songs can request material from the Archive.

WHAT IT IS: A collection of thousands of original songs and books, folk songs, new songs of the people, and historical material. Sample catalog titles: Steel, Miner, Textile, Union Heroes, Union Dances, Jailhouse, Lumberjack, Farmer.

WHAT IT DOES: Brings together in one library all the new songs being written for today's needs; makes available to singers and writers the old and new material; provides a source of material for educational programs for meetings, performances, etc.

WHAT YOU CAN DO: Send us manuscripts of new songs you are writing, to be filed in the Archive, and made available for use. All copyright and royalty regulations are strictly observed. Send older songs that you have used in the past. Even if they are out of date, they should be on record. Particularly needed are copies of old union songbooks and song sheets. Send listings of material which you have but cannot release.

Union Record Company Established

Union Records, a new record company, has just been established. Its purpose is stated in an announcement from the company: "The basic effort of the American people from revolutionary days through World War II has been to keep and preserve the spirit of democracy. Union Records will document this tradition of democracy as it is expressed in song and story and speeches of statesmen."

In keeping with this purpose, Union Records is starting out with three albums, Roosevelt's Inaugural Address of 1933, first in a series of FDR's broadcasts. Picket Line Songs, famous union songs sung by the Jefferson Chorus. Scent of Magnolias, a satire on southern prejudice by Joel Miller.

Woody Guthrie, Josh White, Peter Seeger, Harry Lou Williams, Huddie Leadbetter and other well known singers will be heard frequently on Union Records.

All pressings are on unbreakable plastic.

(Union Records, 119 West 46 St., N.Y.C. 19, N.Y.)
Temporary organizing committee: Robert Claiiborne, Horace Grenell, Herbert Haufrecht, Lee Hays, Lydia Infeld, George Levine, Simon Rady, Peter Seeger.


Dues for Active Members: $5 per year
Sustaining Memberships: $25 or more per year
Tape Memberships: 10 or more members of a chorus, dramatic, union, fraternal or other group may become members at $1 per person. State name of person to receive all copies of Bulletin for distribution.

Don't Kill the Goose

Although the membership of PEOPLE'S SONGS includes many singers, it does not operate as an organization of performers. But since no organization dealing with the special problems of singers and writers of progressive songs exists at present, we feel obligated to call attention to a practice injurious both to these artists, and to the groups which need their services.

Planners of meetings or parties take it for granted that their budget must include rent, advertising, tickets, and like expenses. They rarely include a fee for entertainment. Singers can't pay rent with applause.

If the labor movement is aware of the importance of songs composed for picket lines and meeting halls, and desires to use them, then it is the responsibility of the labor movement to help support the singers and writers who produce these songs. It is true that very few of these artists expect to earn their entire living from this work. But it is easy to see that singers and writers will be able to give more of their time and talent to the service of the labor movement in proportion to financial support offered.

It isn't wise to kill the goose who lays the golden egg; feed her and she'll produce bigger and better ones.

A Mark to Aim At

When we stated in our last issue that PEOPLE'S SONGS intends to exchange material with groups in foreign countries, one of the groups which we had in mind was the Workers Music Association of Great Britain. It is a model for us to aim at.

In the ten years of its existence, it has built up a large membership, with over 200 affiliated groups in the trade union and cooperative movements. It publishes a monthly magazine, and songbooks, sheet music, and critical and historical monographs, such as: "The Singing Englishman," "Background of the Blues," and "The Composer Must Live."

Attention, Songwriters:

Song writers should begin thinking about songs that will be needed in the fall campaign.

Writers should visit their local PAC offices and talk with union leaders about plans for the fall campaign. Songs of general purpose, and songs which may easily be adapted for specific candidates and local issues should be prepared during the summer, and recordings made at that time.

IMMEDIATELY NEEDED: Songs about Gerald L. K. Smith, the Paterson murders, the high cost of living, pictor lines, labor unity. Housing for veterans, the fight against Rankin and Bilbo, Hearst and Pogler, should be put into songs.

Not to be neglected are the serious compositions stating the people's demand about atomic power, about labor's role in the peace, and our concern for suffering minority peoples everywhere.

Choruses Must Get Together

One of the main purposes of PEOPLE'S SONGS is to provide a central office to which trade union choruses can apply for new material. We now send out a call to all such choruses to help us establish this music exchange. What arrangements do you have which may be used by other groups? In a subsequent issue we will announce the due, trio, quartet and choral arrangements which have been made available.

CHORUS MEMBERSHIPS

Ten or more members of choruses, unions, fraternal or other groups may join PEOPLE'S SONGS with the Group Membership plan. Fees are $1 per person. Copies of the Bulletin will be mailed to a person designated by the group to receive and distribute them.

Request for "Boo, Boo, Boo."

In stories of the Paterson textile strike of 1913, we are told that John Reed wrote a song for the strikers which the chorus was "Boo! Boo! Boo!". Big Bill Haywood told how he taught the song to strikers in Ireland, to sing to the police, who shortly thereafter went away. Such a song should not be lost. Who can give us more information about this and other songs of that day?

**

Who can supply words and music for "Bill Bailey"?
Record Notes

Now that the war is over, established recording companies are rushing to re-record new material and re-press old material which went out of stock when shellac was hard to get. Small independent outfits as usual are turning out records of interest to members of PEOPLE'S SONGS.

Keynote Records (522 5th Ave., N.Y.C.) announces that within three months they will reprint the Almanac album, "Talking Union"; and the following numbers:

"Picketline Priscilla", sung by Beatrice Kay
"Horse with a Union Label", sung by Tony Kraber
"Joe Hill", sung by Michael Loring

Asch Records are now issuing a new label, DISC. Their first albums continue with the type of material that made Asch well known during the war: classical music, hot jazz, Calypso, folk, and unique foreign recordings. (DISC Recording Co., 117 West 46 St., N.Y.C.)

General Records is trying to get Earl Robinson's "Songs for Americans" re-pressed, but is having trouble with the pressing companies, as are other companies. Reports are that one company refused to handle the Robinson album because of the "political nature" of the songs. (General Records, 1600 Broadway, N.Y.C.)

New companies are having the hardest time of all. Until new pressing factories are built, established concerns can charge what they like. One new company is anxious to record union songs but has had to delay its program for at least six months.

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Fifty Cent Butter and Fifty Cent Meat

Words: Almanac-Young
Tune: Traditional

1. Come all you people and listen while I sing, this high cost of living is a terrible thing. You buy a loaf of bread and some corned beef hash, all you got left is petty cash. Now every day you go to the store, prices hit the ceiling, just a little bit more. (CHORUS) WITH FIFTY CENT BUTTER AND FIFTY CENT MEAT, HOW IN THE HELL CAN A POOR MAN EAT?

2. Now, everyone'll tell you I worked all my life Supportin' three kids and a loving wife. But I'm a-somnia I'm pretty darn sick. There'll better be action and it better be quick. My congressman spends his whole darn day Trying to kill my O.P.A. Go and write my congressman something to remember He'll better start thinking of next November With fifty cent butter and fifty cent meat, How in the hell can a poor man eat?

3. When wintertime comes there's hell to pay. Coal's gone up the same old way. Higher rent, kids to dress, How I'm gonna do it is anybody's guess. Even the bugs in the kitchen sink Have gone on strike for more food and drink. Well, I better get food and clothes to boot Or I'll starve to death in my birthday suit! With fifty cent butter and fifty cent meat, How in the hell can a poor man eat?

4. Now, when you ask the cause of it all, They'll hand you a lie about six foot tall. They'll cry and scream and tear their hair About the high cost of being a millionaire. Take a full page ad in the Daily News, To blame it on the strikers, the reds and the Jews. Well, I'm born in the bushes and raised in the woods, but you can't sell me that bill of goods. With fifty cent butter and fifty cent meat, How in the hell can a poor man eat?

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The Scabs Crawl In

Words: Anon. Tune: The Worms Crawl In

The scabs crawl in, the scabs crawl out, the scabs crawl under and all about.

2. They crawl by day, they crawl by night, They crawl because they're afraid to fight

3. They crawl in early, they crawl in late, They crawl in under the factory gate.

This is not a "performance song" but is one of the very best chants for a bunch of pickets to take up when they see some scabs sneaking in or out of the plant.
Homeless Blues

Words and music by Paul Kent
Copyright 1946 by Paul Kent

So blue, I got ta give in, So blue, I got ta say, Can't find a house to live in, Can't stay. The O. P. A. is dandy. They keep some rentals low, But no a-part-ment's handy, And so I have a'nt found a place to stay since my discharge, A pack ing box, a house box or a river housing is right on the way. But bun-ga- lows for beg grand ain't so low to barge. I'm seek ing some thing med i um or small or large; The one place that I day, If I could ever find one, why I'd have to say, That kind of dough is found, I could a'nt pay the charge. No vac an cy, The man says, 'Move with your fa mi ly' But those are not the answers for me. So long, I'm gonna leave here, So long, I got ta roam, Ain't gonna stay and grieve here, No home!

Listen, Mister Bilbo

Listen, Mister Bilbo, listen to me; I'll give you a lesson in history.

Words by Bob and Adrienne Claiborne
Tune: Traditional

Copyright 1946 by Bob and Adrienne Claiborne. Not to be reprinted without permission.

Listen while I show you that the foreigners you hate, are the very same people made America great.

2. In fourteen-ninety-two, just to see what he could see, Columbus, an Italian, looked out across the sea. He said, Isabella, babe, the world is round, And the U.S.A.'s just a-waiting to be found.

3. In sixteen-o-nine, on a bright summer's day, The Half Moon set anchor in old New York Bay. Henry Hudson, a Dutchman, took a good look around, said "Boys, this is gonna be one helluva town."

4. When the King of England started pushing Yankees around They had a little trouble up in Boston Town. There was a brave Negro, Crispus Attucks was the man, Was the first one to fall when the fighting began.

(Repeat first verse)

5. Colin Kelly was the pilot, a-flying down low, Levin pushed the button that let the bomb go. They sunk the Haruna to the bottom of the sea; It was foreigners like these kept America free.

6. Now Bilbo, you're taking one helluva chance. Your good friends, the Du-ponts, came over from France. Another thing, I'm sure, will be news to you: The first Mr. Bilbo was a foreigner, too.

7. You don't like Negroes, you don't like Jews. If there's anyone you do like, it sure is news. You don't like Poles, Italians, Catholics, too. Is it any wonder, Bilbo, that we don't like you?
D.D.T.

I dreamed I went to Washington. I took along my little spray gun. I filled it up with the D.D.T. It's powerful stuff, that D.D.T. It kills the cockroach and it kills the flea with the D.D.T. in it.

It's wonderful stuff, that D.D.T. Well, I took my little spray gun with the D.D.T. in it sprayed the House of Representatives, and then I sprayed the Senate.

"Well, it didn't hurt Mr. Marcantonio, nor Hugh Delacy, nor Adam Powell, but Lord God! you should have seen Bilbo! And I am sorry to report that Mr. Rankin is no longer among us. He has joined his forefathers (poor forefathers)."

When Lee Hays sings this, he usually adds a few lines directed right at the people he's singing for. If it's an A.L.P. rally, for example, he'll add "we've got to have more of the A.L.P.; we've got to have more rallies like this, " and so on, finishing with the last line last of the song:

"And that will do...what I dreamed I did...in Washington...with the D.D.T."

Keep That Line A-Moving

Words by Charlotte Anthony and Janice Tremble
Tune: The Gospel Train (Get On Board, Little Children)

When Charlotte Anthony went down to sing on the soundtrack at the Western Union picket line, she was struck by a phrase the picket captain kept shouting through the loudspeaker, and she turned it into a song.

1. The union train is coming, I hear it close at hand, I hear the car wheels moving, and the fare is cheap and all can go, no color line is there, No second class aboard this train, no vaccination through the land. (CHORUS.) KEEP THAT LINE A-MOVING. KEEP THAT LINE A-MOVING.

2. The union is behind us To fight for better pay we'll stay right here on the picket line Till the boss's hair is gray. And though he'll try to break us, and try to make it tough, if we just keep a solid line, we'll surely call his bluff.

3. (repeat chorus) *Change to suit yourself
Words by Larry Stewart
Tune: "It's Been A Long, Long Time"

We'll picket once, and picket twice,
And picket once again.
It's been a long, long time.
 Haven't had a raise, my friends,
Since I can't remember when.
It's been a long, long time.
All through the war we did our best,
We kept on giving.
Now we're entitled to
A decent living. So-
Picket once, and picket twice.
Until we win the fight.
It's been a long, long time.
(Repeat first six lines)
They say we're holding up production
On their toasters. But
If we can't buy bread
What good are toasters? So-
Picket once, and picket twice,
Till G. E. sees the light
It's been a long, long time.

Words by Paul Secon
Tune: "Dance With A Dolly"

I've got a date on a picketline.
On a picketline, on a picket line.
I've got a date on a picketline.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.
Join the picket line.

Who Are You With, Your Honor?

Who are you with, Your Honor?*
I hear the people shout, 'You cops are helping rate and scabs, now what's it all about?'

Words by Shaemas O'Sheal
Tune: Where Do We Go From Here

Poor Old C. E. Wilson.

Poor old C. E. Wilson, he can't afford to pay.
He hardly gets along on his thousand bucks a day.

The forces of reaction
In halls of Congress ride,
And desperately they're seeking
To stem the union tide.
But clear across the nation
Twelve million workers say,
In spite of their injunctions
The union's here to stay.
In spite of their injunctions
The union's here to stay.

Words by Dick Levins
Tune: American folk melody

The union's here to stay.

Words: Anthony-Trembleke
Tune:"Alexander's Ragtime Band"

Come on along, come on along,
Join the picket line today.
Come on along, come on along,
Join the strike for higher pay.
And if the scabs try to break us
Here's what we'll say,
"Shame on you, scab.
Did you work hard today?
We'll win a raise the union way,
In spite of you."
Come on along, come on along,
Join the picket line today.
Come on along, come on along,
Join the strike for higher pay.
And when the boss is sure
He's got us licked,
We'll still be singing,
Come on along, come on along,
Join the picket line today!
The three songs on this page deserve special mention, because they were composed on order by well-known songwriters for the CIO-steelworkers. In two weeks time they were composed and recorded, and played on soundtracks on picketlines in Pittsburgh and elsewhere. It shows what can be done when a specific assignment is laid down, and money with it to carry the project through.

19. **I Went Down to the Steel Mill**

Words: Tom Glazer  
Tune: St. James Infirmary

I went down to the steel mill  
And I saw my pay check there.  
It was stretched out on the boss's table  
So small, so thin, so bare.

20. **I'm the Guy**

Words and music by Eleanor Young

1. I'm the guy, yes, I'm the guy,  
   Works in the mill from sun to sun,  
   Making steel for everyone.  
   My steel built the Empire State  
   And the paring knife and the Ford V-Eight.  
   Ain't it a shame I got to say,  
   "A man can't live on my take-home pay."

2. I'm the guy, yes, I'm the guy,  
   Earns a wage you could put in your eye.  
   And every time they raise a price,  
   My paycheck melts like a cube of ice.  
   Yes, when it comes to the old pay roll  
   I'm low on the totem pole,  
   And that's why you'll hear me say,  
   "A man can't live on my take-home pay."

3. I'm a peaceful guy, just an ordinary guy,  
   It ain't fur coats that I want to buy.  
   But I've never seen the fellow yet  
   Could raise four kids on what I got.  
   I don't want to live like a millionaire,  
   All I want's an American share.  
   And that's why you'll hear me say,  
   "A man can't live on my take-home pay."

21. **Money in the Pocket**

Words by Bob Russell  
Music by Carl Sigman

Money in the pocket is food on the table  
Food on the table is cash in the till.  
When the till is loaded  
Merchant is able to fill up the counters he has to refill.  
Money in the pocket can buy what's required,  
Clothes for the kiddies, a dress for the wife,  
Money for the doctor, a show when you're tired,  
Is living a normal American life.  
From the worker to the merchant, the dollar takes a business trip.  
Then off to the farmer, to buy new equipment, and back to the worker in a salary slip.  
Everybody prospers, the butcher, the grocer,  
Great is the country, and fine is the blend.  
Must there be depression?  
The answer is "No, Sir!"

Money in the pocket is money to spend!
Cross Country Correspondence

Following are excerpts from letters received in response to the first Bulletin of People’s Songs.

MASSACHUSETTS..."Anything we can do for you will be an extreme pleasure. Please accept our gratitude for your suggestions and great help to morale."

CALIFORNIA..."Your new organization sounds wonderful. Naturally and logically and with great emphasis, I am for it. I too feel strongly that production should be the important thing, production of new songs and musical ideas, revival of old labor and people’s songs with changes of words, new lyrics, etc..."

CALIFORNIA..."I have been working on the organization of a Youth Theatre, composed of over a hundred teen age young people of Negro, Mexican, Jewish backgrounds. Last summer we put on a musical revue, on the theme of inter-cultural unity, called 'Hello, Neighbor, Hello'. This year we will do another revue, but the content will be a little broader - it will include a variety of problems that these kids are facing - unemployment, discrimination and housing. But we are short of good materials, particularly good songs, simple enough for our kids to sing, but with a point of view... The only reactionary they are really conscious of is Gerald L. K. Smith. Police brutality is one of the biggest issues, since we have a semi-Fascist group of police who are carrying on a campaign to terrify the kids of minority groups."

NEW YORK CITY..."Enclosed is $5 for a membership. Since I have been collecting union and people’s songs for several years, I am very interested in your project. I shall call it to the attention of my union and my ALP club..."

ARKANSAS..."Got up to sing at union meeting Friday week ago and thought the roof would blow off. But we knew only the one song, "We shall not be moved" and we sang the Jesus verses of it along with the union verses and then we sang it over again and sang it on the way home. I would like to know where to get more of those old time union hymns we used to sing. Send me word..."

CALIFORNIA..."The song, 'The Rankin Tree', cute as it is, does not tell much about the man himself except that you don’t like him. It is important for the people to understand, within the swell folk style set up, some of the things he has done and why he should be cut down, and why there should be great rejoicing when he does get cut down, i.e. poll tax, clever use of anti-Semitism, anti-Negro and anti-red statements, etc. Get me?"... (A later letter from the same correspondent also discusses 'The Rankin Tree', as follows...) ..."Just a note to let you know that I sang 'The Rankin Tree' for a meeting of six thousand recently where it was, I must say, quite successful..."

FLORIDA..."Enclosed is $5 for a membership and a little more as a contribution. The work is swell..."

Wordsheets Available

Songs on this list of mimeographed picketline wordsheets are for sale at 50c a copy. Pending publication of full music arrangements, these sheets provide only the words. Order by number.

1. Scab Song...Anonymous
2. Union Maid...Almanacs
3. I've Got a Date on a Picketline...Paul Secon
4. We'll Keep Marching...Oscar Brand
5. I'm A-looking for a Home...Bernie Aabel
6. Hold the Fort...English Transport Workers
7. Put on your old Union Button...Anonymous
8. Casey Jones (Union version)...Joe Hill
9. Roll the Union On...New Era Schools
10. Solidarity Forever...Ralph Chaplin
11. Song of the Pennies...Henry Foner
12. Join the Picketline Today...C. Anthony - J. Trembke
13. Keep that Line A-moving...C. Anthony - J. Trembke
14. Get Thee Behind Me, Satan...Almanacs
15. Listen, Mr. Bilbo...Bob and Adrienne Claiborne
16. D. D. T. Case, Joe Hill and Others
17. They're Marching for You...Bernie Aabel
18. Mississippi Sweetheart...Hays and Lowenfels
19. That's for You...Larry Stewart
20. Picket Once and Picket Twice...Larry Stewart
21. US version of Casey Jones...Hill and others
22. Poor Old C. E. Wilson...Dick Levin