

Labor Songs

You Gotta Go Down And Join The Union

Adaptation by Woody Guthrie

You gotta go down and join the union
You gotta join it for yourself
Aint nobody here can join it for you
You gotta go down and join the union for yourself

Brother's going down to join the union
He's gotta join it for himself
Aint nobody here can join it for him
He's gotta go down and join the union for himself

Sister's going down to join the union
She's gotta join it for herself
Aint nobody here can join it for her
She's gotta go down and join the union for herself

I'm going down to join the union
I'm going to join it for myself
Aint nobody here can join it for me
I'm going down to join the union for myself

We're going down to join the union
We're going to join it for ourselves
Aint nobody here can join it for us
We're going down to join the union for ourselves

Though the roads be rough and rocky
And the hills be steep and high
We will sing as we go marching
And we'll join the One Big Union by and by

You gotta go down and join the union
You gotta join it for yourself
Aint nobody here can join it for you
You gotta go down and join the union for yourself



Which Side Are You On?

A Song by Florence Patton Reese

Come all of you good workers
Good news to you I'll tell
Of how that good old union
Has come in here to dwell

Chorus

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

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

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

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

Notes

Pete Seeger says in an introduction to "Which Side Are You On?":

Maybe the most famous song it was ever my privilege to know was the one written by Mrs. Florence Reece. Her husband Sam was an organizer in that "bloody" strike in Harlan County, Kentucky in 1932.

They got word that the company gun-thugs were out to kill him, and he got out of his house, I think out the back door, just before they arrived. And Mrs. Reece said they stuck their guns into the closets, into the beds, even into the piles of dirty linen.

One of her two little girls started crying and one of the men said "What are you crying for? We're not after you we're after your old man."

After they had gone she felt so outraged she tore a calendar off the wall and on the back of it wrote the words and put them to the tune of an old hard-shelled Baptist hymn tune, although come to think of it the hymn tune used an old English ballad melody.

And her two little girls used to go singing it in the union halls."



Roll The Union On

A Song by John Handcox © 1947 Stormking Music Inc.

Chorus

We're gonna roll, we're gonna roll, we're gonna roll the union on
We're gonna roll, we're gonna roll, we're gonna roll the union on

If the boss gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
Gonna roll it over him, gonna roll it over him

If the boss gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
We're gonna roll the union on

If the scabs get in the way, we're gonna roll it over them
Gonna roll it over them, gonna roll it over them

If the scabs get in the way, we're gonna roll it over them
We're gonna roll the union on

If "name" gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
Gonna roll it over him, gonna roll it over him

If "name" gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
We're gonna roll the union on

If "name" gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
Gonna roll it over him, gonna roll it over him

If "name" gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
We're gonna roll the union on

If "name" gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
Gonna roll it over him, gonna roll it over him

If "name" gets in the way, we're gonna roll it over him
We're gonna roll the union on



Union Maid

A Song by Woody Guthrie © 1961 Ludlow Music Inc.

There once was a union maid, she never was afraid
Of goons and ginks and company finks, and the deputy sheriffs who made the raid
She went to the union hall, when a meeting it was called
And when the 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 couldn't be fooled by a company stools, she'd always organize the guys
She'd always get her way, when she struck for higher pay
She'd show her card to the National Guard, and this is what she'd say

You girls who want to be free, just take a tip from me
Get you a man who's a union man, and join the Ladies Auxiliary
Married life ain't hard, when you've got a union card
And a union man has a happy life, when he's got a union wife

Updated verse from the 1980's

You women who want to be free, just take a little tip from me
Break out of that mold we've all been sold, you got a fighting history
The fight for women's rights, with workers must unite
Like Mother Jones, bestir them bones, to the front of every fight

***Last verse taken from Carry It On! a songbook
by Pete Seeger and Bob Reiser***



Look for the Union Label

***A song by Paula Green, music by Malcolm Dodds ©1975,
UNITE Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees
(formerly International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and
other unions)***

Look for the union label
when you are buying that coat, dress or blouse.

Remember somewhere our union's sewing,
our wages going to feed the kids, and run the house.

We work hard, but who's complaining?
Thanks to the I.L.G. we're paying our way!

So always look for the union label,
it says we're able to make it in the U.S.A.!

