

Songs of Steel & Struggle

The Story of the Steelworkers

Sung by Joe Glazer
with the Charlie Byrd Trio



To All USWA Members:

The United Steelworkers of America is proud to present Joe Glazer's unique record of *Songs of Steel and Struggle* for the enjoyment of our members, their families and friends. These songs will bring back memories to old-timers who suffered from the blacklist and other indignities because they wanted a union. Younger members will learn how far we have come from the old days, which were never "the good old days"

because steelworkers had no union to speak up for them.

Every one of us will be inspired by the song, *When a Fellow Is Out of a Job*, to fight harder than ever for full employment. That great marching song, *Solidarity Forever*, reminds us that in our unity is our strength.

Sing these songs at home, in the union hall and, when necessary, on the picket line. they will help us build a better union.

Lloyd McBride

Lloyd McBride
International President

Lynn R. Williams

Lynn R. Williams
International Secretary

Frank S. McKee

Frank S. McKee
International Treasurer

Joseph Odorcich

Joseph Odorcich
International Vice President
(Administration)

Leon Lynch

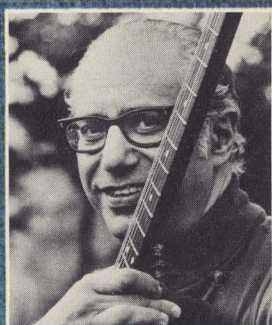
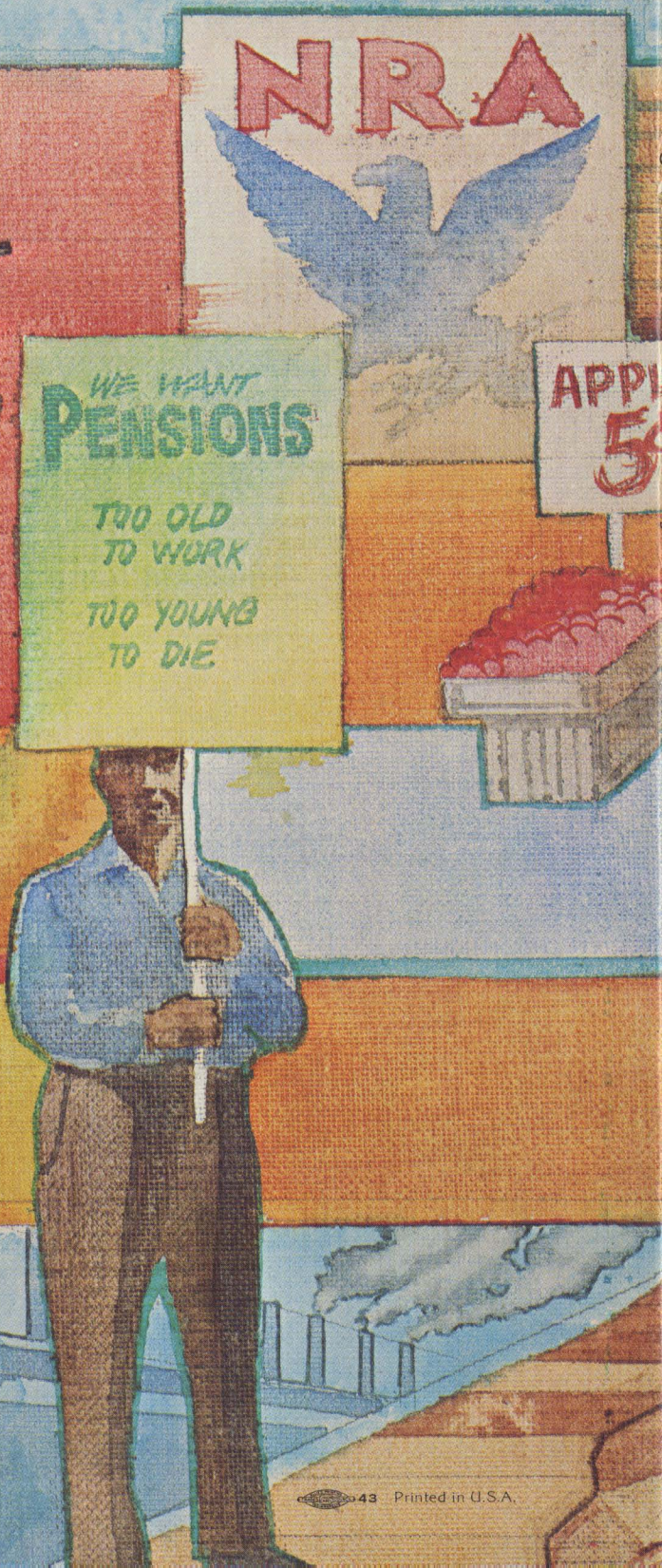
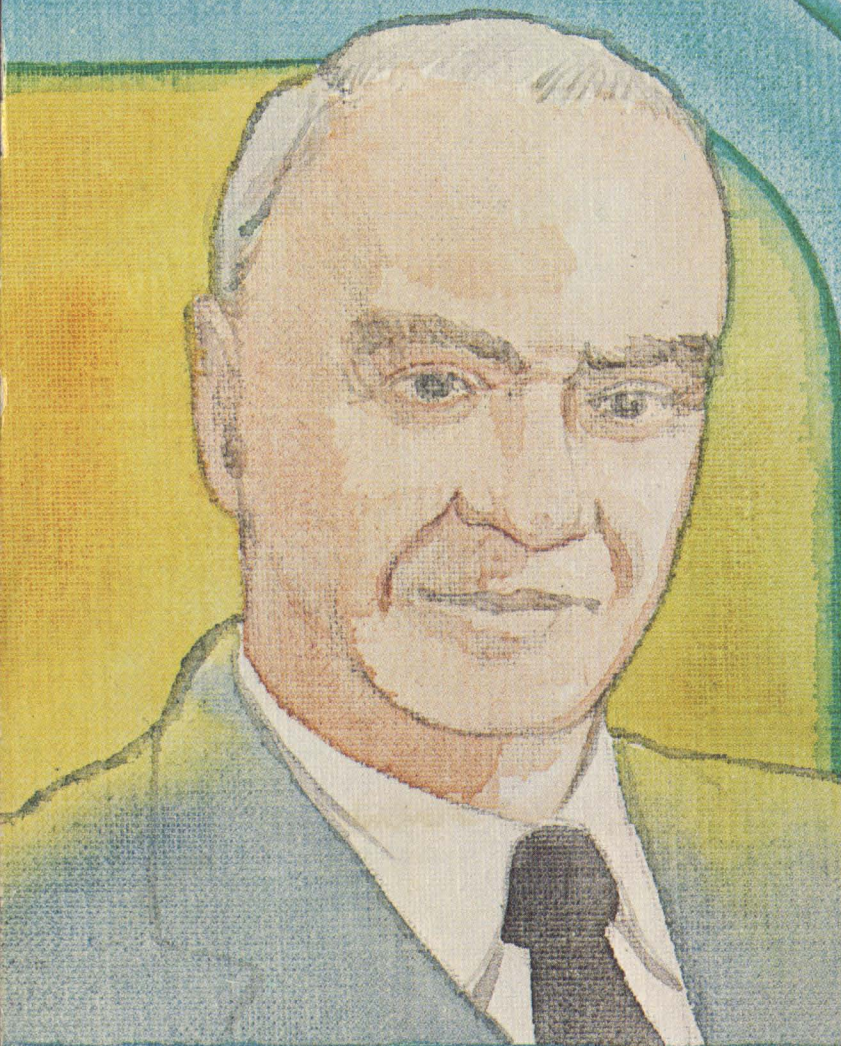
Leon Lynch
International Vice President
(Human Affairs)

Side One

1. Pittsburgh
2. Red Iron Ore
3. The Ballad of John Catchins
4. United Steelworkers Are We
5. Amalgamate As One
6. The Homestead Strike
7. Memorial Day Massacre
8. The Spirit of Phil Murray

Side Two

1. Too Old to Work
2. Corrido Del Minero
3. Steel Mill Blues
4. 1913 Massacre
5. I Lie in the American Land
6. When a Fellow Is Out of a Job
7. Solidarity Forever

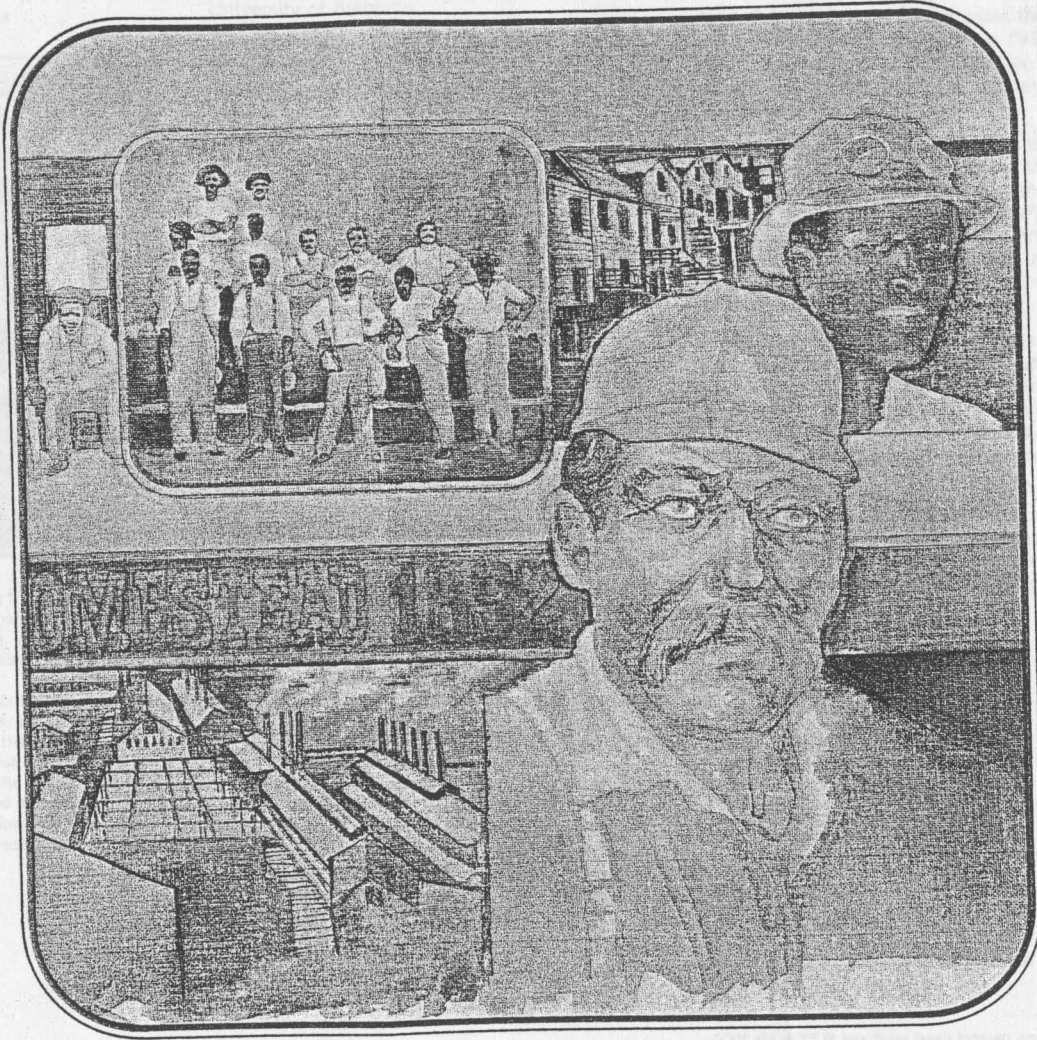


Vocals by Joe Glazer
"Labor's Troubadour"
with the Charlie Byrd Trio

Songs of Steel
& Struggle

Songs of Steel & Struggle

"We Sing Songs and They
Come From Our Heart"



I joined the CIO because
this is how I got into it. I was
around for another 100 years
of the union. When I joined
they were all over, but I got
different.
When we had to go to the
factory that I got there about
and they came from all over
to work... We found the
and steelworkers' union in
most steel in this country. The
pocket full. When you stop
and steel workers like the
group.
JOSEPH J. MURPHY, 1930
IAA's first president in
Louisiana, New York

**The Story
of the
Steelworkers**

Sung by Joe Glazer
with the
Charlie Byrd Trio

Songs of Steel & Struggle

"We Sang Songs and They Came From Our Heart"



"I joined the CIO because I wanted to feel like a man for once. I was tired of being shoved around by pushers and foremen. It was a matter of the spirit. When I joined, nothing happened right away, but I felt different.

"When we had to go on strike, we did something that I don't see done anymore. We sang songs and they came from our heart, that 'we shall not be moved...' We faced the richest and most ruthless and most arrogant industry in the world. And we beat them to their knees. We did it singing on the picket line. When you stop singing, the revolution has ended and so has the progress of the union."

JOSEPH P. MOLONY, 1965
(At a union meeting in
Lackawanna, New York)

NOTE:

The songs listed on this page appear in the same order as on the record. However, background notes and the lyrics of each song printed in this brochure (beginning with *Amalgamate As One*) appear chronologically, according to the times they were composed, to give the reader a sense of the history of the steelworkers and their struggle to build a union.

SIDE ONE

1. **Pittsburgh** is a song which makes us feel the power of the city—"solid steel from McKeesport down." It was written by America's famous folk composer, Woody Guthrie, in 1941.

2. **Red Iron Ore** was one of the most popular songs among Great Lakes sailors who carried the ore from ports in northern Michigan and Minnesota to Cleveland, Buffalo and other cities more than 100 years ago. It probably dates from the early 1870's.

3. **The Ballad of John Catchins** tells the story of an unsung steelworkers' hero who was framed and thrown in jail during a strike in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1934. It was composed by Joe Gelders, a professor at the University of Alabama.

4. **United Steelworkers Are We** was composed in the 1950's by M. T. (Monty) Montgomery, education representative of the union in Canada at that time. It is dedicated to the 200,000 members of the United Steelworkers of America who live and work in Canada. The USWA has been for years the largest union in Canada.

5. **Amalgamate As One** was composed by Billy Jenkins in 1894. Jenkins worked in the steel mills around Pittsburgh for forty years and made up many songs and ballads about work in the steel mills. The title refers to the major steel union of those days, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers.

6. **The Homestead Strike** tells the story of the bloody episode in Homestead, Pennsylvania, in 1892 when the Carnegie Steel Corporation, forerunner of U.S. Steel, smashed the union with the aid of hundreds of Pinkerton detectives.

7. **Memorial Day Massacre** describes one of the blackest days in American labor history, Memorial Day, 1937, in Chicago. On that dark day, police shot and killed ten union men marching peacefully in a parade in support of the strike at the Republic plant. It was written by Earl Robinson, the man who wrote **Joe Hill**.

8. **The Spirit of Phil Murray** was made up by a group of black steelworkers in Bessemer, Alabama, when Steelworkers' President Philip Murray died in 1952. These steelworkers sang together as the Sterling Jubilee Singers and they recorded this moving song in gospel style to honor Murray. Their original recording is used on this record. It is the only song on this LP not sung by Joe Glazer.

SIDE TWO

1. **Too Old to Work** was written by Joe Glazer in 1950 to help promote the industrial unions' battle for company-paid pensions to supplement the meager social security benefits (\$37.50 average) workers were receiving at that time.

2. **Corrido Del Minero** is a Spanish ballad of a metal miner in the Southwest: "I go, my love, to work in the Old Mine. Only God knows if I'll ever return."

3. **Steel Mill Blues** was adapted by Joe Glazer to fit the great organizing period of 1936-1942 when the Steel Workers Organizing Committee—SWOC—was active. The United Steelworkers was formally organized in 1942.

4. **1913 Massacre** commemorates the tragedy that occurred on Christmas Day, 1913, in Calumet, Michigan, when 72 children of striking copper miners lost their lives. Woody Guthrie was the composer.

5. **I Lie in the American Land** tells the story of a Slovak immigrant who dies in the mill while his wife and children are on their way from the old country to join him in McKeesport, Pennsylvania. It was made up by Andrew Kovaly who saw his friend die and later had to meet the dead man's wife at the railroad station where he broke the news to her.

6. **When a Fellow Is Out of a Job** is a powerful song from the Great Depression but it has special meaning for those steelworkers whose plants have been shut down in Youngstown, Lackawanna and other cities. It reminds those of us who are working what it means to be out of a job.

7. **Solidarity Forever** is the most popular union song on the North American continent. It has become the unofficial anthem of the labor movement in both the United States and Canada.

The Performers

All vocals are by Joe Glazer except for *The Spirit of Phil Murray* which is sung by the Sterling Jubilee Singers. Musical accompaniment for seven of the selections is by the ace guitarist Charlie Byrd and his trio—Joe Byrd, bass; Wayne Phillips, drums. Paula Hatcher is the distinguished guest artist on the flute. Alan Bennett plays guitar on half a dozen numbers; Greg Karukas, piano, on several numbers; Rich Mathews, harmonica, on *Steel Mill Blues*. Special thanks for production assistance to Alan Bennett, Harold Closter, Daniel Glazer, Archie Green and USWA Education Director George Butsika and his staff. Bill McElroy was the engineer.

JOE GLAZER has long been known as "Labor's Troubadour." His voice and guitar have been heard on scores of picket lines and in a hundred union halls. He has sung many times for steelworkers. He has made about 20 labor albums and is the star of a documentary film, *Songs and Stories of Labor*. He has performed in almost every state, in most provinces of Canada and in 60 countries around the world.

Songs of Steel & Struggle

The Story of the Steelworkers
by Professor Archie Green

The word *steel* is as old as the English language, but in its current meaning it dates from 1856 in Great Britain, when the Bessemer process was invented to decarbonize pig iron and make steel. Consequently, most traditions of steelworkers have come into being in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but others are directly connected to work in metal during prehistoric eras.

Metal workers in iron, copper, tin and bronze hold traditions older than formal history itself. Long before Caesar's Legions marched in Britain, Romans had deified a blacksmith, Vulcan, whose forge was hidden deep in a mountainous volcano. Long before the Vikings crossed the North Atlantic in their boats to touch foot in the New World, they, too, worshipped an armorer, Loki, a sorcerer whose magic converted raw ore into weapons of mysterious power. Metal workers, awed by the knowledge that they altered the earth's crust, turned to ritual and worship, which surely included music, to celebrate their achievement.

No one knows how long it took for craft skills to develop, nor precisely where, in Africa or Asia, but we know that early smiths first hammered precious meteorites—gifts from heaven—into forms like tools of bone and stone. Next they tamed fire and learned to smelt copper. Just as nature's storm gods could strike and fuse rocks with lightning, smiths learned to hammer metal on anvils and to send showers of sparks into the air when they fashioned implements.

It is not possible for us to document the earliest folklore associated with iron work. We know only that Vulcan and Loki now are relegated to colorful books of mythology or children's story books. When it comes to occupational folklore and folk song, we seem to favor that of Western cowboys, Yankee whalers or heroic railroad engineers. As a people we are hardly conscious that steelworkers in the United States and Canada also have fashioned a rich and complex body of folklore including folk songs and ballads.

American iron workers in Pittsburgh during the 1850's, conscious of their link to the past, named their pioneer trade union the Sons of Vulcan. In time, diverse puddlers, rollers, heaters and boilers formed the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (1876). In the mid-thirties, coal miners John L. Lewis and Philip Murray helped Amalgamated members form the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, and finally in 1942, the United Steelworkers of America was established.

The Steelworkers Union today asserts a broad jurisdiction from the digging and transport of ore, through furnace and mill work, and into countless fabricating shops. USWA members spin and stamp, punch and press, twist and turn metal into tens of thousands of needed objects from delicate surgeon's tools to massive structural beams from which skyscrapers are erected. Today, USWA also includes white collar workers, chemical and stone workers and many others.

It is the USWA which has produced Joe Glazer's LP, Songs of Steel and Struggle, which brings together traditional labor lore from job, union hall and picket line, to tell through ballad and folk song, the story of the Steelworkers. This LP includes action and ideas, sweat and struggle, joy and sorrow, death on bloody ground, companionship in solidarity. It continues a long tradition which began after the Civil War when iron and steel labor newspapers carried songs, poetry, jest and anecdotes reflective of the flame of furnace and forge.

In notes to his individual selections, Joe Glazer offers historical material on each choice and something of his learning of particular songs from book, broadside, sound recording or by word-of-mouth. Unfortunately, no scholar turned to work in iron and steel until 1947, when Jacob A. Evanson, supervisor of vocal music for the Pittsburgh school system, first began to collect steel songs. A handful of field recordings of steel songs were also collected for the archives of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. A fine example is The Ballad of John Catchins, collected by Alan Lomax in November, 1937, and first re-recorded here by Glazer.

Evanson, a musicologist and teacher, and Glazer, an educator and union troubadour, are collectors and interpreters "outside" the steel industry. To find songs and related oral material within the industry, one must turn directly to journals and pamphlets written and published by union members themselves. The earliest known book of poetry by a steelworker is Michael McGovern's ("The Puddler Poet") Labor Lyrics and Other Poems, published at Youngstown, Ohio, 1899.

After the formation of the CIO in 1935, many fresh techniques were first utilized by labor organizers, including recordings played during strikes on roving sound trucks. One of labor's classic motion pictures employing song, Salt of the Earth (1954), was based on a metal miners' strike in New Mexico by the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (which merged with the USWA in 1967). The most recent song production in steel is a dramatic LP, Come Hell or High Water, recorded by members of USWA Local 5457, Buchans, Newfoundland.

To listen to a single LP with 15 songs is but to lift the lid of a treasure chest of folklore. Steel ballads and folklore go back more than a century in North America. Behind the heritage left to today's unionists by the proud craftsmen in the Sons of Vulcan is a timeless span of magic and power inherent in the shaping of iron out of the earth itself. Can we hear Vulcan and Loki roar when we now open our eyes and ears to the creative traditions of steelworkers and listen to Songs of Steel and Struggle?

Professor Archie Green, a forty-year member of the Carpenter's Union and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania, is North America's leading expert in industrial folklore and industrial songs and ballads.

The Homestead Strike

The strike at Homestead, Pennsylvania, in 1892 was one of the classic confrontations of U. S. labor history.

Throughout that spring, contract talks were under way between the Carnegie Steel Corporation, the nation's largest steel producer, and the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers. Despite substantial wage cuts imposed three years earlier and notwithstanding increased production, the corporation delivered an ultimatum to the union: Agree to the additional wage cuts by June 24 or the company would run non-union.

The Amalgamated rejected the ultimatum. On July 2, the 3,800 Carnegie workers were paid off and served with notices of discharge. Said the firm: "Hereafter the Homestead steel works will be operated as a non-union mill... Such a thing as a union will not be recognized."

Mill owner Andrew Carnegie went off to his native Scotland and assigned Henry C. Frick, chairman of the company, the job of breaking the union. Frick had the plant surrounded with a high fence topped off with barbed wire, garrisoned the plant with armed Pinkerton guards and brought in non-union workers under cover of Pinkerton rifles.

On July 6, under the protection of darkness and fog, two barges with 300 armed Pinkerton guards were brought up the Monongahela River from Pittsburgh to Homestead. The barges arrived at the company wharf about 4:00 a.m. but the community was wide awake. Workers and their families gathered on the river bank to watch the "invaders," shouting for the barges to turn back. The "Siege of Homestead" was under way. The battle between the guards and the workers raged for 10 hours. And when the bloody day ended, three Pinkertons and ten steelworkers had been killed. A memorial near the mill keeps alive the memory of those who died in the struggle. Homestead remained unorganized for the next 45 years.

The Homestead strike inspired much verse and song. One of the most popular sheet music songs of the year was "Father Was Killed by the Pinkerton Men," a sentimental ditty typical of the melodramatic nineties. However, the real folk song of the bloody episode was *The Homestead Strike*. In 1947, collector Jacob Evanson obtained the tune from John Schmitt who said he learned the ballad during the strike when he was 16. Folklorist George Korson had previously collected the song in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, in 1940.

"I can say with the greatest emphasis that under no circumstances will we have any further dealings with the Amalgamated Association."

HENRY C. FRICK, 1892
(After the strike was lost)

The Homestead Strike

We are asking one another as we pass the
time of day,

Why working men resort to arms to get
their proper pay,

And why our labor unions they must not
be recognized,

Whilst the actions of a syndicate must
not be criticized.

Now the troubles down at Homestead were
brought about this way,

When a grasping corporation had the
audacity to say:

"You must all renounce your union and
forswear your liberty

And we will give you a chance to live and
die in slavery."

CHORUS: Now the man that fights for honor,
none can blame him,
May luck attend wherever he
may roam,
And no son of his will ever live
to shame him,
Whilst liberty and honor rule
our home.

Now this sturdy band of workers started at
the break of day,

Determination on their face which plainly
meant to say:

"No one can come and take our homes for
which we've toiled so long,

No one can take our places—no here's
where we belong!"

A woman with a rifle saw her husband in
the crowd,

She handed him the weapon and they
cheered her long and loud.

He kissed her and said, "Mary, you go
home till we're through."

She answered, "No, if you must fight,
my place is here with you!" (CHORUS)

When a lot of bum detectives came without
authority,

Like thieves at night when decent men were
sleeping peacefully—

Can you wonder why all honest hearts with
indignation burn,

And why the worm that treads the earth
when trod upon will turn?

When they locked out men at Homestead
then they were face to face

With a lot of bum detectives and they knew
it was their place

To protect their homes and families, and
this was neatly done,

And the public will reward them for the
victories they won. (CHORUS)

Amalgamate As One

In August of 1876, five small craft unions met at a fraternal hall called Emerald Place, in Pittsburgh, today located in the shadow of the towering headquarters of U. S. Steel.

The five unions were the Roll Hands' Union, the Heaters' Association, the Boilers' Union, the Nailers' Association and the Sons of Vulcan. At that meeting they founded America's first major steel union—the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers of North America. By the early 1890's, it was the largest affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, with 24,000 members, and it was one of the strongest unions in those early days of industrialization.

Amalgamate As One was collected in 1947 by Jacob Evanson from the composer, William Jenkins, at Canonsburg, Pennsylvania. Writes Evanson:

The theme of this ballad—solidarity and unity—is as old as American labor itself.

Billy Jenkins made it in 1894, and it was widely sung, especially during strikes. It was the unofficial song of the 1909 strike. 'We were out of work for months and months,' recollected Jenkins. 'Those were bad days for steelworkers. But we did what we could. We printed thousands of copies of

Amalgamate As One and sold them in the steel towns.' Jenkins did not personally profit from the sale of this song. The proceeds went for strikers' relief.

Jenkins emigrated from Wales in 1831 and was a steelworker around Pittsburgh for forty years. He made up many songs and ballads about work in the steel mills and the life of the workers. *Amalgamate As One* contains much of the sentimentalism of Victorian America and was Jenkins' most popular song.

The reference in the second verse to workers who "have been cast out through fighting for Honor and Right" refers to the employers' blacklists used widely in those days to fight unions.

In the third verse note the extra "s" in "trades" unions, the customary spelling in the 1890's.

Amalgamate As One

Labor unions should all be united
And prove to the world they are one.
They could get decent pay without trouble
Let us show now that it can be done.
We are slaves to a few in this country
That is crushing us down it is true;
But there's one thing I'll ask you to think of
My advice you never will rue.

CHORUS: Always help your brother
Whenever he's in need.
Extend your hand with welcome
Wherever you will meet.
Don't sneer at him in poverty,
Help him if you can,
Remember he's your brother—
An Amalgamated man.

Always treat union men as you find them,
Where'er in this world you may roam,
And if ever you meet a true brother,
Do not turn him away from your home;
Remember he may have been cast out
Through fighting for Honor and Right;
And compelled to leave home in starvation,
With no place of shelter at night. (CHORUS)

If we part, let us hope not forever,
But my plea is the same to the end.
Have courage to help one another
In pledges we took to defend.
Trades unions should all band together,
And I hope that the day will soon come
That we shall not be so divided
Amalgamate now all as one. (CHORUS)

Red Iron Ore

In the early days of iron and steel making, a major source of ore was the iron mines of northern Michigan. The E. C. Roberts and other sailing ships picked up the red iron ore at ports like Escanaba in northern Michigan and sailed across Lakes Michigan, Huron and Erie to drop the ore in Cleveland, Buffalo and other Great Lakes cities. From Cleveland, ore was carried by rail to the many mills around Pittsburgh where large quantities of limestone and coking coal made iron and later steel making a profitable enterprise.

When the rich Mesabi field was discovered in 1887 in northern Michigan. (It was 110 miles long, 1 to 3 miles wide, and filled with high grade ore.) the ore was carried by rail to Duluth on Lake Superior and shipped from there to various Lake ports. Steam ships began replacing sail in the 1870's but the E. C. Roberts was still carrying ore into the middle 1890's.

Today, the iron ore boats are still active on the Great Lakes and the men who help move this ore to the steel mills are members of USWA Local 6000 with headquarters in Buffalo. The nature of the job has changed dramatically since the days when men, smothered in red dust, shoveled the iron ore by hand and braved the seas in their modest sailing ships. Yet the dangers are still there: witness the wreck of the ore carrier Edmund Fitzgerald in November, 1975. The Fitzgerald sank to the bottom of Lake Superior with all 29 hands lost.

Professor Ivan Walton reports that Red Iron Ore was one of the most popular songs among Lakesmen and "was sung aboard ship and in waterfront gathering places the length of the Lakes." The song dates from at least the early 1870's.

Red Iron Ore

Come all you bold sailors that follow the lakes
On an iron ore vessel your living to make.
I shipped in Chicago, bid adieu to the shore
Bound away to Escanaba for that red iron ore.

CHORUS: Derry, down, down, down
derry down.

In the month of September, the seventeenth
day,
Two dollars and a quarter was all they
would pay
And on Monday morning a trip we did take,
On a ship named the Roberts sailing out
in the lake. (CHORUS)

Next morning we hove alongside the Exile
We soon made her fast to that iron ore pile,
They lowered the chutes and like thunder
did roar
And they filled up the ship with that
red iron ore. (CHORUS)

Some sailors took shovels and others
took spades
And some took wheelbarrows each man
to his trade,
We looked like red devils, our backs they
got sore,
We cursed Escanaba and that red iron ore.
(CHORUS)

The dust got so thick you could scarce
see your nose,
It got in your eyes and it got in your clothes,
We loaded the Roberts till she couldn't
hold more
Right up to the gunnels with that
red iron ore. (CHORUS)

We sailed her to Cleveland, made fast
stem and stern,
And with our companions we'll spin a big yarn,
Here's a health to the Roberts she's strong
and she's true
Here's a health to the bold boys who make
up her crew. (CHORUS)

I Lie in the American Land

They came from every country in Europe—first from England and Scotland, then from Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia.

Beginning in the 1880's, they poured in from Eastern and Southern Europe—Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, Croats, Serbs, Magyars, Russians, Ukrainians, Italians, Bulgarians, Greeks. They were poor peasants mostly, searching for a better life in the New World. Many of them ended up in the steel mills of Braddock, Homestead, McKeesport, Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Cleveland, Gary, South Chicago—working twelve hours a day, seven days a week.

In the Carnegie plants around Pittsburgh, 80 percent of the 14,000 common laborers were Eastern Europeans. Many an immigrant hoped to save a pile of dollars and return to the old country a rich man, perhaps buy a farm or open a little shop. Others planned to send for wives or sweethearts after two or three years of hard work, saving every extra penny.

They worked hard but the immigrants from Eastern Europe were used to hard work. They lived cheaply in boarding houses and, as long as they could save money, they didn't complain too much about the brutalizing work. An immigrant described his position: "A good job, save money, work all time, go home, sleep, no spend."

According to labor historian David Brody, the hazards of the mill troubled the workers more than anything else:

Dangerous to experienced men, steel making was doubly so to untutored peasants. The accident rate for non-English speaking employees at the South Works from 1906 to 1910 was twice the average of the rest of the labor force. Almost one-quarter of the recent immigrants in the works each year—3,273 in the five years—were injured or killed. In one year 127 Eastern Europeans died in the steel mills of Allegheny County (Pittsburgh area).

I Lie in the American Land tells the story of one such immigrant who died in the mill. It was made up by Andrew Kovaly who came to McKeesport from Slovakia in 1899. He went to work in the steel mills at 14 years of age and worked his way up to foreman over the years. In 1947 he sang this song for folk song collector Jacob Evanson and told him how he came to write it in the early 1900's:

I was a young foreman in a Bessemer mill here in McKeesport. A very good friend of mine, a member of my crew, had saved enough money to send to Slovakia for his family. While they were on the way to America, he was killed before my eyes under an ingot buggy. I tried to grab him but it was too late. It was terrible. I felt so bad that when I met his wife and little children at the railroad station I hardly knew how to break the sad news to them. Then I made this song. My friend was very proud of America and it was with pride and happiness that he had looked forward to raising his children as Americans. The song made me feel better and also my friend's wife. But she cried very hard. I have never forgotten it.

Joe Glazer sings the first and last verses of the song in the original Slovak and recites the full story in English. Folk singer Vivien Richman recorded this song in Slovak for a Folkways record. In her notes she writes: "This is probably a Slovak dialect from the Saris district, where the Slovaks live near the Poles and the Carpatho-Russians."

Odpocivam V Americkej Pode (I Lie in the American Land)

First verse in Slovak (sung)

Ej, Bozemoj, sotej Ameriki
Idze done j narod preveliki,
Ija pojdzem, sak som mladi esce,
Dami Panbok tam dajake scesce.

(Spoken)

"Ah, my God, what's in America?
Very many people are going over there.
I will also go, for I am still young;
God, the Lord, grant me good luck there.

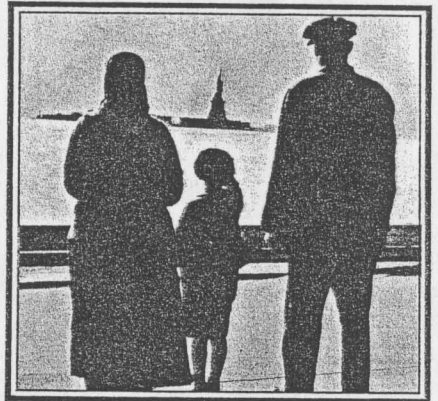
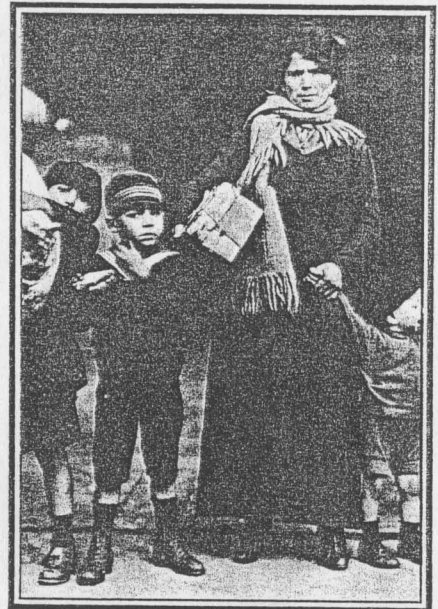
"When you hear from me
Put everything in order.
Mount a raven black horse,
And come to me, dear soul of mine."

But when she came to McKeesport,
She did not find her husband alive;
Only his blood did she find,
And over it she cried bitterly.

"Ah, my husband, what did you do,
Orphaned these children of ours?"
"To these orphans of mine, my wife, say
That I lie in America
Tell them, wife of mine, not to wait for me,
For I lie in the American land."

Last verse in Slovak (sung)

Ej, musumoh co zesi ucinil,
Zesi tote dzeci osirocil.
Povi zeno tej mojej siroce,
Zeja lezim utej Americce
Povic zeno najme necekaju
Boja lezim Americckim kraju.



The 1913 Massacre

The Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, which merged with the United Steelworkers of America in 1967, started out as the Western Federation of Miners (WFM) back in 1893.

The WFM fought some of the nation's toughest battles while organizing metal miners in Montana, Idaho, Arizona, Colorado, Michigan and other western states. One of the hardest fought strikes began on July 22, 1913 in the isolated northern Michigan copper country, where 42 mines employed 15,000 miners and produced 22,000,000 pounds of copper.

One issue in the strike was long hours and short wages. In 1913 an unorganized Michigan copper miner worked underground an average of ten to eleven hours in contrast to a union miner in Butte, Montana, who earned more money for a shift of only eight and one-half hours. Another major issue was the introduction of the one-man drill (so dangerous it was called a "widow-maker" by the miners) to take the place of a drill that two men had previously worked.

The copper companies dominated the mining towns with an all-pervasive, iron paternalism. The companies owned everything and controlled everything, including the elections for public office. There was a system of red and blue ballots—red for Democrats and blue for Republicans. The election judges were company bosses and it was said that 'only God himself could help a miner who faced those judges and asked for a red or Democratic ballot.'

The companies would not yield an inch on any of the important issues and the union was forced to strike. Judge A. H. Murphy, appointed by the governor to mediate the dispute, reported:

I am satisfied that the employers will not recognize the Federation whatever the cost to themselves, their employees and the community. The employers are unreasonable and arbitrary.

To help cheer up the strikers and their families, the Women's Auxiliary of the union arranged for a Christmas party in the town of Calumet. During the festivities, a false cry of "fire" started a panic and in the stampede to escape 72 lives were lost—most of them children crushed and smothered on the stairs leading to the exit. Union leaders suspected that members of the company-controlled Citizens Alliance were responsible for the false alarm.

A two-mile procession on foot, with four men bearing each coffin, led to a common grave, in which all but seven of the victims were buried. The strike was finally called off in April, 1914, eight long months after it had started. The power of the copper companies prevailed and the miners and their families were left with the remnants of a shattered union and the aching memories of the children who died on Christmas Day, 1913.

The 1913 Massacre, which tells the story of the copper country Christmas Day tragedy, was written by America's great folk composer, Woody Guthrie, in 1940. Although Guthrie's song has 73 children dying, the correct figure is 72.

The 1913 Massacre

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

I will take you in a door and up a high stair;
Singing and dancing is heard everywhere.
I will 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 tell you they make less than a
dollar a day
Working the copper claims, risking their lives,
So 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 thugs 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 scabs fooling you."
A man grabbed his daughter and carried
her down,
But the thugs held the door and they could
not get out.

And the 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 were
seventy-three.

The piano played a slow funeral tune;
And the town was lit up like a cold
Christmas moon.
The parents they cried and the miners
they moaned,
Just see what your greed for money has done.

Corrido Del Minero (The Miner's Ballad)

One of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States is that made up of people of Hispanic origin—from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and many other Latin American countries. The largest of these groups are of Mexican heritage, now popularly called Chicanos.

The Steelworkers have thousands of Spanish-speaking members in California, Texas, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Illinois and elsewhere. The metal mines of the Southwest have traditionally employed many Chicanos. The powerful labor movie, *Salt of the Earth*, tells the story of miners in New Mexico trying to build a union. This ballad, *Corrido Del Minero*, comes out of that tradition. It was probably made up in the late 1920's. It appeared on a Folkways record called *Corridos*.

Corrido Del Minero (The Miner's Ballad)

(The following summary translation of the song is spoken.)

At the stroke of six the miner goes
down to work in the chambers of death.
It is a hard struggle and one must be
very careful.

I go, my love, to work in the Old Mine.
Only God knows if I'll ever return.

Tocan las seis y al tiro me presento
Con paso lento y agitadoamente.
Yo me conduco a las salas de la muerte
Donde me dicen que es un puro afanar.

CHORUS: Solo un recuerdo te pido para
mi alma

Y adonde este te mandare me queja.
Me voy querida para la mina vieja
Solo Dios sabe si ya no volvere.

Tocan los pitos del segundo vuela
Para bajar aquel escalereado,
Para bajar, muchisimo cuidado
Donde el minero no lo designara. (CHORUS)

Tomo la voz de su vida y sombría
Donde s'encuentra el hombre que te adora.
Alli s'encuentra el que suspira y llora
Solo un recuerdo a ti te lo enviara. (CHORUS)

When a Fellow Is Out of a Job

The stock market crash of October 29, 1929 marked the beginning of the Great Depression. Overnight, 30 billion dollars of paper profits evaporated. Salaries dropped 40 percent. Wages were cut 60 percent, that is, for those who still had jobs. For the next four years, workers would know the despair of bread lines, foreclosures, bank closings (5,000 of them), shanty towns, soup kitchens, "no help wanted" signs. More than 14 million Americans were out of work.

The historian, Arthur J. Schlesinger, Jr., tells of the hopelessness and bitterness that prevailed as steelworkers, miners and others looked for jobs that didn't exist:

Now came the slowdown—only three days of work a week, then perhaps two, then the layoff. And then the search for a new job—at first vigorous and hopeful; then sober; then desperate... clothes began to wear out and shoes to fall to pieces. Newspapers under the shirt would temper the winter cold, paste-board would provide new inner soles, cotton in the heels of the shoe would absorb the pounding on the pavement, gunny sacks wrapped around the feet would mitigate the long hours in the frozen fields outside the factory gates.

As savings end, borrowing begins. If there is life insurance, borrowing on that, until it lapses; then loans from relatives and from friends; meat vanishes from the table; father goes out less often, is terribly quiet; the children begin to lack shoes, their clothes are ragged, their mothers ashamed to send them to school.

Wedding rings are pawned, furniture is sold, the family moves into even cheaper, damper, dirtier rooms. The shadows deepened in the dark, cold rooms, with the father angry and helpless and ashamed, the distraught children too often hungry or sick, and the mother, so resolute by day, so often, when the room was finally still, lying awake in bed at night, softly crying.

The problem of unemployment is still with us though not of the same magnitude of those depression days. Today, steelworkers are concerned about the increasing impact of imports and the closing of older plants, especially in areas like Youngstown and Lackawanna, where steel is the main industry. Of course, steelworkers today have unemployment insurance, supplemental unemployment benefits and, when necessary, food stamps and welfare payments to cushion the blows of unemployment. And unlike 1932, steelworkers have a strong union to represent them in Washington to fight for a full employment economy—because no unemployment insurance or welfare program can ever be a substitute for a decent job.

When a Fellow Is Out of a Job is a powerful song from the Great Depression which reminds us what is meant to be out of work and hungry for a job. Joe Glazer learned it from the singing of Grant Rogers who got it from a worker named John Barnes during the Great Depression. The song continually refers

to "fellows" and "men" who are without a job, reflecting a period in our history when not much thought was given to women workers. Today, when women make up 40 percent of the work force, the song title perhaps should be changed to When a Person Is Out of a Job.

When a Fellow Is Out of a Job

All nature is sick from her heels to her hair,
When a fellow is out of a job.
She's all out of kilter beyond all repair,
When a fellow is out of a job.

There's no juice in the earth, no salt in the sea,
No ginger in life in this land of the free;
And the universe ain't what it's cracked
up to be,
When a fellow is out of a job.

What's the good of blue skies and blossoming
trees,
When a fellow is out of a job.
And your kids have big patches all over
their knees,
When a fellow is out of a job.

Those patches you see are as big as the sky,
They blot out the landscape, they cover
your eye,
And the sun can't shine through the best
it may try,
When a fellow is out of a job.

Every man that's a man wants to help move
the world,
But he can't when he's out of a job.
He's left out behind on the shelf he is curled,
When a fellow is out of a job.

His life has no laughter, his life has no mirth,
He wonders just why he was placed on this
earth,
And he starts in to cussin' the day of his birth,
When a fellow is out of a job.

The Ballad of John Catchins

There are many unsung heroes in the history of the labor movement. Some have died from the bullets of hired gunmen. Others have been shot and killed by the militia or sheriff's deputies. Many have been blacklisted and forced to move away from home, friends and relatives. Some have been jailed on flimsy evidence or phony charges because they believed in the union movement. Such a victim was John Catchins, a worker at the Thomas Furnace Mill in Birmingham, owned by Republic Steel.

One of the many laws passed by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal government was the National Industry Recovery Act in 1933. Among its important provisions was the right of workers to organize and join unions. John Catchins believed the law meant what it said. He became the leader of the organizing campaign at the Thomas Furnace Mill which at the time had a charter as Local 137 of the Mine, Mill and Smelter

Workers. The labor board election held in the spring of 1934 gave the union 281 votes against 8 for no union. But Republic Steel was run by the notorious union hater, Tom Girdler. Girdler refused to bargain and the workers struck. Catchins was framed on some flimsy charge and was thrown in jail.

The Ballad of John Catchins was made up by Joe Gelders, a professor at the University of Birmingham and a strong supporter of the steelworkers. The ballad was composed some time in 1936 or 1937 using a tune Gelders had heard folk singer and actor Will Geer use for a textile ballad.

In the fourth verse, the "eagle" refers to the blue eagle which was the official symbol of the National Recovery Administration in 1933.

The Ballad of John Catchins

Come gather 'round and I will sing
A song, you'll know it's true,
About a brother workingman,
A man that's union through and through.

John Catchins is a union man,
He joined on charter day,
He did not like a company town,
Where they used clacker 'stead of pay.

The furnace where he made his time,
Is Thomas Mill in Birmingham,
Republic Steel they owned that plant,
And they're the roughest in the land.

In '33 the eagle came
And brought the N.R.A.
John Catchins said "Our time has come,
We'll organize this very day."

Tom Girdler called his Board around,
A frame-up for to plan,
"We're going to drive that union out
And we will use what means we can."

They put John Catchins in the jail,
The lies that they did tell,
"We'll close the road to Heaven,
And send their lousy souls to Hell."

Come gather 'round us brothers all,
Together let us shout,
"If we must take that jailhouse down,
We're going to get John Catchins out."

When Brother John is free again,
He'll have a big surprise,
We'll all be in the CIO.
Republic Steel we'll organize.

Steel Mill Blues

Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt campaigned against Republican Herbert Hoover in 1932. "These unhappy times," he said, "call for plans that build from the bottom up and not from the top down, that put faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid."

When Franklin D. Roosevelt became President, there was a flood of new legislation including the Wagner Act—the National Labor Relations Act—which was signed into law on July 5, 1935. This law established the right of working men and women to organize into unions of their own choosing. Hope filled the hearts of millions of workers in America's great unorganized industries.

But a split developed within the American Federation of Labor as to how the workers in steel, auto, rubber, electrical, aluminum and other huge industries should be organized. John L. Lewis, President of the United Mine Workers, led the group which supported industrial unionism where every worker in the same plant could belong to a single union as against dividing workers into smaller, largely separated units based on craft. This division led to the organization of the CIO—the Committee for Industrial Organization—in November, 1935, which became the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1938.

The CIO was a revolt against industrial dictatorship. "A great business is really too big to be human," said Henry Ford, and the CIO was born because workers in giant factories decided they wanted to be treated like human beings.

The CIO was a people's revolt in Detroit where autos came first and auto workers came last...in Akron, Ohio, where tires came first and tire builders came last...in Pittsburgh and Youngstown and Cleveland and Gary and Chicago and dozens of other cities where steel counted but men who made the steel didn't.

On June 17, 1936, in the City of Pittsburgh, the CIO announced the creation of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) whose aim was nothing less than the complete organization of the main bastion of the open shop, the steel industry. John L. Lewis appointed UMW Vice-President Philip Murray to lead the steel drive. For six years—until the formal establishment of the United Steelworkers of America in 1942—SWOC was the voice of the steelworkers in the United States and Canada.

The opening lines of the Steel Mill Blues was originally made up by folk singer Tom Glazer (no relation to Joe) for the steel strike of 1945. The version sung here was revised by Joe Glazer to fit the SWOC organizing period.

Steel Mill Blues

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

So I took that little old paycheck
Down to the grocery store.
I bought me a little can of baked beans
And I didn't have no paycheck no more.

Paycheck (paycheck) Paycheck (paycheck)
You just fly away.
Paycheck (paycheck) Paycheck (paycheck)
Tomorrow you're gone, though you were
here today.

Now the moral of this story
It's as simple as it could be.
If you want to fatten up that skinny paycheck,
Sign a card with the SWOC.

Memorial Day Massacre

The giant U. S. Steel Corporation signed a historic agreement with the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) on March 2, 1937. The union then moved on to "Little Steel"—Bethlehem, Republic, Inland, National, Youngstown Sheet and Tube—huge companies that were little only in contrast to U. S. Steel.

The companies absolutely refused to bargain and 78,000 workers struck on May 26, 1937. Few pages in the annals of labor surpass the Little Steel strike in viciousness, press distortion, suppression of basic civil rights and police brutality. The findings of the Congressional committees, decisions of the National Labor Relations Board and judgments of the courts clearly testify to industry's reliance on lies, bribes, threats and brute force to crush the union.

On Memorial Day, four days after the strike began, an incident occurred at Republic Steel's South Chicago mill that was later described as the blackest day in modern labor history. Workers from the Republic plant met together on that warm Sunday about a half mile from the mill. The rally was a peaceful, informal, almost festive gathering; many of the union members had brought their wives and children to listen to a few speeches and a progress report on the dispute.

At the conclusion of the meeting, a number of the crowd paraded peacefully across an open prairie near the South Chicago plant. As the union group walked forward, a policeman fired his revolver in the air. This was followed by two more shots. Then, without warning, the police fired at point blank and tossed tear gas into the marchers' ranks. Ten union members were fatally shot; seven in the back, three in the side. Thirty more were wounded by gunshot while more than fifty others were beaten or gassed so badly they required medical attention.

The incident is known as the 1937 "Memorial Day Massacre" and rightfully so. A newsreel film of the event was so shocking it was suppressed, but was later subpoenaed by a Congressional committee. Six SWOC members also lost their lives on union picket lines in Massillon and Youngstown, Ohio, and Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, during the bitter struggle.

It wasn't until August, 1942 that the Little Steel companies were finally organized.

When Joe Glazer first came across the Ballad of the Memorial Day Massacre in the early 1970's, he did not know that the words and music had been written by Earl Robinson, the man who had also composed the music for the famous Ballad of Joe Hill. Glazer had the words but no music and he adapted an old folk tune which he used with the song. Two days before going into the recording studio in Washington, D.C., Glazer learned that Robinson was the author. He called Robinson at his home in California to get the original tune. Glazer then tried his tune out on Robinson who said, "Your tune sounds better, Joe. Use it."

This is the first recording of this song.

Memorial Day Massacre

On dark Republic's bloody ground,
The thirtieth of May.
Oh, brothers, lift your voices high
For them that died that day.
The men who make our country's steel
The toilers in the mill,
They said in Union is our strength
And Justice is our will.

We will not be Tom Girdler's slaves
But free men will we be.
List to the voices from their graves,
"We died to set you free."
In ordered ranks they all marched on
To picket Girdler's mill.
They did not know that Girdler's cops
Had orders: Shoot to kill!

As they marched on so peaceably,
Old Glory waving high,
Girdler's gunmen took their aim
And the bullets began to fly.
That deep, deep red will never fade
From Republic's bloody ground.
The workers, they will not forget,
They'll sing this song around.

They'll not forget Tom Girdler's name
Or Girdler's bloody hands.
He'll be a sign of tyranny
Throughout the world's broad land.
Men and women of the working class
And you little children too,
Remember that Memorial Day
And the dead who died for you.

Pittsburgh Town

Pittsburgh means steel.

The world's number one steel company, U. S. Steel, has its headquarters here. More important for steelworkers, the international union also has its headquarters in the city—a gleaming, 12-story steel building in the heart of the Golden Triangle in downtown Pittsburgh. In this building, union negotiators, lawyers, economists, researchers, contract specialists, organizers, educators, editors, safety and health experts, statisticians, clerks, accountants, administrators and other specialists look out for the interests of the men and women who work in the steel mills and related industries of the United States and Canada.

Folk singer Pete Seeger tells the story about the creation of this song:

The song was made pretty much by Woody Guthrie. That was back in 1941 when he and I and two other fellows, The Almanac Singers, stopped in Pittsburgh on a country-wide junket. The early war boom was on and Pittsburgh was an awesome sight.

Vivien Richman, who has been living in Pittsburgh since 1946, recorded this song on a Folkways record in 1959 and pointed out at that time that "since the wonderful days of smoke control in Pittsburgh, the first line, 'Pittsburgh is a smoky old town' has become a slanderous inaccuracy, and some folks now sing, 'Pittsburgh town is a great old town' instead."

Pittsburgh Town

Pittsburgh town's a smoky old town,
Pittsburgh;

Pittsburgh town's a smoky old town,
Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh town's a smoky old town,
Solid steel from McKeesport down,
Pittsburgh, Lord God, Pittsburgh.

From the Allegheny to the Ohio, Pittsburgh;
From the Allegheny to the Ohio, Pittsburgh.
From the Allegheny to the Ohio,
They're joining up in the CIO,
Pittsburgh, Lord God, Pittsburgh.

What did Jones & Laughlin steal, Pittsburgh;
What did Jones & Laughlin steal, Pittsburgh.
What did Jones & Laughlin steal,
Up and down the river as far as you could see,
Pittsburgh, Lord God, Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh town's a smoky old town,
Pittsburgh;
Pittsburgh town's a smoky old town,
Pittsburgh.

Pittsburgh town's a smoky old town,
Steel on the top, coal in the ground,
Pittsburgh, Lord God, Pittsburgh.

Too Old to Work

In 1949 the average monthly social security payment was \$37.50, low even for those days. The USWA decided to bargain for supplementary pensions paid for by the steel companies to take care of steelworkers when they got "too old to work and too young to die." Since most company executives had excellent company-paid pension programs for themselves, the union believed it was only right for workers to have decent pensions too.

Except for American Can and Kaiser Steel, the steel companies refused to bargain on pensions and social insurance, relatively new ideas in collective bargaining. A strike was called on October 1, 1949. Bethlehem signed on October 31, and finally the giant of the industry, U. S. Steel, also agreed to a company-paid pension plan. The early pensions were modest. Each retiree was to receive \$100 per month less his social security. By 1977 company-paid pensions to workers who retired at or after age 62 at U.S. Steel averaged \$480.70 per worker.

The fight to establish pensions and social insurance as legitimate collective bargaining issues was resolved. In the process USWA carried the issue of the right to bargain on pensions to the U. S. Supreme Court and won a landmark decision confirming that right.

Joe Glazer wrote this song in 1950 for a strike of Chrysler auto workers over company-paid pensions. It applies just as well to the steelworkers' struggle to win dignity in old age.

Too Old to Work

You work in the factory all of your life
Try to provide for your kids and your wife
When you get too old to produce anymore
They hand you your hat and they show you
the door.

CHORUS: 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.

You don't ask for favors when your life is
through
You've got a right to what's coming to you.
Your boss gets a pension when he is too old;
You helped him retire—you're out in the cold.

They put horses to pasture, they feed them
on hay
Even machines get retired some day.
The bosses get pensions when their days
are through;
Big pensions for them brother, nothing for you.

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)

The Spirit of Phil Murray

Philip Murray was born union and he died union. His father was a union coal miner in Scotland where young Phil went to work in the mines at the age of 10. The Murray family had moved to Scotland from Ireland.

In 1902 the sixteen-year-old Murray and his father emigrated to the United States carrying with them their precious union transfer cards. They cleared Ellis Island on Christmas Day and headed straight for the Pennsylvania coal fields near Pittsburgh.

Murray rose rapidly in the union ranks from local union officer to District official and ultimately to first vice-president. He was the strong right arm of UMW President John L. Lewis for many years. In 1936 Lewis picked Murray to head the Steel Workers Organizing Committee and in 1942, when the union was formally established as the United Steelworkers of America, Murray was elected president. He was re-elected regularly until his death in 1952. He was also president of the CIO from 1940 till the day he died.

Phil Murray devoted his entire life, as he put it, to putting "carpets on the floors, pictures on the walls and music in the homes" of working men and women. And when steelworkers heard him thunder against injustice and pour out his love for the union in that wonderful brogue, they felt the message deep in their hearts and their souls.

Murray dealt with corporation executives and with governors and presidents, but he never lost the common touch. He enjoyed getting away from his offices in Washington and Pittsburgh, going home to his old neighborhood of Brookline, sitting on the front porch and chatting with friends and neighbors, just as he did when he was a rank-and-file miner.

Small wonder that when Phil Murray suddenly died on November 9 in 1952, steelworkers everywhere mourned his loss. Down in Bessemer, Alabama, a group of black steelworkers who sang together as the Sterling Jubilee Singers wrote and recorded a moving gospel song, The Spirit of Phil Murray, in his honor.

The record was made in the studio of radio station WJLD, Bessemer, where Tiger Thompson was a disc jockey. (Thompson was a member and later president of Pullman Standard Plant Local 1466.) The recording was taped and sent to Nashville, Tennessee, where 1,000 records were manufactured. The records were sold at CIO conventions and meetings.

The verses were written by lead singer Roscoe McDonald with help from second tenor George Bester on the chorus. Others in the group are Henry Holston, tenor; Bill Williams, bass; Willie Moore, baritone. All were members of the Steelworkers Union. In 1978 the Sterling Jubilee Singers, with different personnel, were still making gospel music after 47 years of continuous existence.

The Spirit of Phil Murray

CHORUS: Let the spirit of Phil Murray live
on and on
Let his spirit live right on.
Let the spirit of Phil Murray live
on and on
God has called Mr. Murray home.
(Chorus is sung twice.)

Now in nineteen hundred and forty-two
The labor leaders didn't know what to do.
Mr. Murray advised them I'll be your friend
I'll fight for the right of the workingmen.
When I die I wanta be straight
Where I can enter God's pearly gate.
Every workingman in this land
Don't forget the deeds of this wonderful man.
CHORUS (sung twice)

Well in nineteen hundred and fifty-two
God called Mr. Murray, say your work is
through.
Your labor on earth has been so hard
Come up high and get your reward.
You've been loved by everyone most
You fought a good fight, now run your course.
The people everywhere began to worry
To see the message the Lord give Mr. Murray
The Congress of Industrial Organization
assembled
The whole world began to tremble.
Men, women and children cried
When they heard the sad news Mr. Murray
had died.
He was CIO's loss but Heaven's gain
On the day of resurrection we'll see him again.
Good God almighty our best friend is gone
I want you boys to help just to sing this song.
CHORUS (sung twice)



Sterling Jubilee Singers

United Steelworkers Are We

The United Steelworkers of America is called an international union because it has members in both the United States and Canada. In fact, the USWA is the largest union in Canada with 200,000 members organized in three districts with 872 local unions.

The United States and Canada, sharing a vast, unguarded border of 4,000 miles are the only countries in the world with this unique arrangement where workers in both countries may be members of the same international union. Steelworkers in Canada have their autonomy—but, through their affiliation with the international union, workers on both sides of the border benefit from added strength and support.

While Canada had a number of union lodges chartered by the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers which was a forerunner to USWA, it wasn't until the early days of World War II that attempts were launched to organize the steel industry. These early efforts were directed by Silby Barrett and C. H. Millard. The latter became the first USWA National Director of Canada.

At the end of the war, in the summer of 1946, workers in the Steel Company of Canada at Hamilton, Ontario, joined workers in Algoma Steel at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, and workers in the Dominion Steel and Coal mills of Sydney, Nova Scotia, in the first complete strike of Canada's basic steel industry. The strike won the unchallenged right to collective bargaining.

From 1950 until early 1954, mining camps in northern Ontario and Quebec were battlegrounds as the union took on the mining magnates. The climax to the long struggle came in the summer of 1953 when 7,000 gold and base metal miners went on strike and stayed out for periods ranging from six to eight months. The miners won their battle and another heroic chapter of trade union history was written.

Over the years the Canadian section of the union successfully organized steel mills, metal mines, metal fabricating plants, can plants and related industries and won significant benefits for the workers in those industries.

Canadian steelworkers developed a special spirit of militancy and service to the membership and the community which is reflected in this song written in the 1950's by M. T. (Monty) Montgomery, education representative of the union in Canada. The song was written after a weekend labor school on Bell Island, three miles off the coast of Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula. Explained Montgomery:

Our members on Bell Island work in the Wabana Iron Mine. The 'Islanders' are great group singers and we sang for hour after hour each night. Our favorite was The Squidjiggin' Ground which is popular throughout Newfoundland. We must have sung it a hundred different times. When I returned to Toronto, the tune of The Squidjiggin' Ground was still ringing in my ears and I wrote this steelworkers' song to it.

United Steelworkers Are We

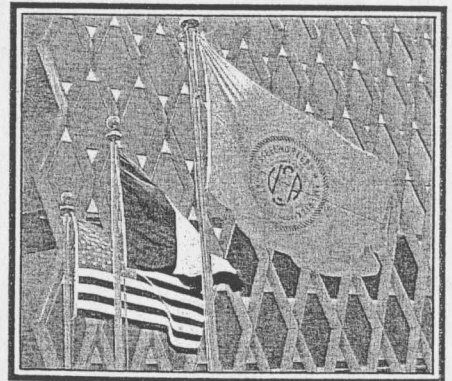
Oh, we are the men of the Steelworkers Union
From blast furnace, open hearth, foundry
and mill;
From ingot mould stripping, from scarfing
and chipping,
From out where the slag pots are dumped
on the fill.

There's men from Cape Breton and men
from Vancouver,
Algoma and Stelco and old Montreal;
There's men from Bell Island, from prairie
and Highland;
United Steelworkers are we, one and all.

Now we dig the ore out and we run the smelter,
We make the aluminum, pig iron and steel,
And we run the rail mills, the wire and nail
mills—
In industry Steelworkers are the "big wheel."

We meet and we battle the toughest
employers,
At threats and injunctions and stooges we
laugh;
Our leaders are strongest, our locals fight
longest;
We have the best members, we have the
best staff.

If you fancy licking the boots of the bosses,
And for any favor their bidding you'll do;
If you're just a piker and never a striker,
The Steelworkers Union is no place for you!



Solidarity Forever

Jay Gould, the robber baron railroad magnate who operated in the late 1800's, once said, "I can hire one-half of the working class to kill the other half." And he did just that many times. But he failed when workers stuck together and showed their solidarity.

Corporations listen when they know the workers will stand together, when there is solidarity in the ranks. They know that no steel or aluminum or ore or containers or chemicals will be produced if the union representatives can't negotiate a just settlement. So the corporation's executives pay attention to the union's arguments.

Solidarity Forever is the most popular union song on the North American continent. It has become the unofficial anthem of the labor movement in both the United States and Canada.

Ralph Chaplin, a poet, artist and writer for the Industrial Workers of the World, wrote Solidarity Forever on January 17, 1915. That day, while lying on the rug in his living room in Chicago, he scribbled stanza after stanza. The idea had come to him earlier while he was in West Virginia helping the coal miners in the great Kanawah Valley strike. Little did he dream that that song would live on after all his other work was forgotten.

Chaplin wrote: "I wanted a song to be full of revolutionary fervor and to have a chorus that was singing and defiant." He achieved exactly this effect by combining his powerful lyrics with the stirring Civil War tune of John Brown's Body.

Solidarity and Mergers

The United Steelworkers of America has pioneered in the important areas of coordinated bargaining and union mergers. In a day of conglomerates and ever-growing giant industries, the union has recognized the wisdom of the old slogan, In Unity There Is Strength.

To become more effective in collective bargaining and to strengthen industrial democracy, USWA has merged with other unions. The past years have seen the emergence of new partnerships through mergers with the Aluminum Workers of America (1944), the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (1967) the United Stone and Allied Products Workers of America (1971), and District 50, Allied and Technical Workers of the United States and Canada (1972).

Solidarity Forever

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!

They have taken untold millions that they
never toiled to earn,
But without our brain and muscle not a
single wheel could turn;
We can break their haughty power gain our
freedom when we learn,
That the union makes us strong.

In our hands is placed a power greater than
their hoarded gold,
Greater than the might of armies magnified
a thousandfold;
We can bring to birth a new world from the
ashes of the old,
For the union makes us strong.

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