

Songs of Struggle & Protest: 1930-1950

Sung by Pete Seeger Folkways Records FH 5233



LAND OF PLENTY, BY LUCIENNE BLOCH

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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FOLKWAYS FH 5233

Step by Step
Aimee McPherson
I Don't Want Your Millions Mister
Joe Hill
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Los Quatros Generales

Bourgeois Blues
Pittsburgh
Talking Union
The D-Day Dodgers
Hymn to Nations
What a Friend We Have in Congress

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

FOLKWAYS RECORDS Album No. FH 5233

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LAND OF PLenty, BY LUCIENNE BLOCH

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This is one of the all-time great depression classics. Jim Garland was a Kentucky miner and wrote many great songs about the conditions of the miners and life in the coal country. He came from a song-writing family. The fabled Aunt Molly Jackson was his sister, and another sister, Sarah Ogan, also wrote many good songs in the same style. It became a known throughout the world song after The Almanac Singers (with Pete Seeger) recorded it in their famous album, "Talking Union."

Introduction

The subject matter for song should be limited only by the song-writer's experiences and thought patterns, but all too often, the makers of our music have acceded to the implicit and explicit censorship that the money mills impose on our cultural expression. The acceptable patterns for Broadway, Hollywood and Tin Pan Alley fit into a narrow range of human experience. Love and passion and loneliness and all the derivatives thereof are the heart of popular song's subject matter, but even within these confines the music merchandisers more often than not distort or ignore reality. When the music manufactories can treat sex with the healthy, soulful frankness of the blues, then a new era will have dawned in popular music.

But there is a wide range of human experience that rarely if ever becomes the subject for "popular" song. And this, in essence, is the basic difference between the artificially (however artfully) contrived music that dominates our air-waves and juke-boxes and the genuinely healthy, multi-variegated music that includes the blues, traditional folk song, jazz, calypso, and all the other forms that have been nurtured over the years by ordinary people and their musicians.

This is a record album of those other songs -- songs that deal with matters of life and death and how men live and how men work and how men die. It is the rare genius of Pete Seeger that he has made a great art out of such music, finding in these songs those subtle and strong common basic demoniators that evoke a direct response in us all.

-- Irwin Silber

WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN CONGRESS

Words: Ernie Marrs

Music: "What A Friend We Have in Jesus"

From the middle 1950's, when it took a lot of guts to say these things.

I DON'T WANT YOUR MILLIONS MISTER

Words: Jim Garland

Music: "Greenback Dollar"

(c) Stormking Music, Inc.

PITTSBURGH

Words: Woody Guthrie and the Almanac Singers

Music: Adapted from "Crawdad"

(c) Stormking Music, Inc.

According to Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie wrote the basic part of this song while on tour with The Almanac Singers in 1941. Actually, it seems that most of it was written rather quickly in an airplane from whose windows the soot-grimed skies of Pittsburgh could be clearly seen. The "Jones and Loughlin" verse, I believe, is a classic example of the fine art of topical protest and folk tradition -- as most citizens of Pittsburgh would probably attest.

TALKING UNION

Words: Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers

Music: Traditional Talking Blues

(c) Stormking Music, Inc.

The classic American Union song. It has brought more laughs and more fire into more union halls in America than any ten other songs put together.

Los Cuatros Generales

(c) Veterans of The Abraham Lincoln Brigade

The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was one of the crucial political and military testing grounds of the 20th Century. The Spanish Loyalists represented one of the first "popular front" governments in the world, and after instituting a series of sweeping land reforms and other social steps, was attacked by an alliance of Spanish counter-revolutionaries (supported by the Catholic Church) and German and Italian Fascist forces. The struggle between the two sides became a world-wide symbol of commitment, with international brigades of many descriptions flocking to the cause of the Loyalist Government. But the nations of the world (aside from Italy and Germany) maintained a cautious "neutrality" in the conflict that contributed to the eventual victory of the Fascists and the establishment of the Franco Government. On the Loyalist side of the trenches, a vast song literature grew out of the war. In the years since, this music has become known and loved throughout the world as a moving reminder of and testament to a tragic moment in history and the men and women whose blood drenched the Spanish soil. The song of "Los Cuatros Generales" is one of the most famous from that period.

HYMN TO NATIONS

Words: Josephine Bacon and Don West

Music: Beethoven (from the 9th Symphony)

STEP BY STEP

Words: From the Preamble to the Constitution of an early Mine Worker's Union, circa 1870

Music: Adapted by Waldemar Hille from a traditional melody

(c) Stormking Music, Inc.

THE D-DAY DODGERS

(c) Hamish Henderson

The foremost contemporary collector of Scottish ballads and folksongs is Hamish Henderson, of the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh. Interestingly enough, he is also a first-rate songwriter. Below is Henderson's re-write of a song widely sung by British troops in Italy during World War II. The tune, of course, is "Lili Marlene," a melody which seemed to fascinate soldiers in both sides of the line. Concerning the background of the song, a recent letter from Hamish Henderson tells us: "Many of the troops who had fought in Egypt and Libya also took part in the Italian campaign. Others, (such as the 51st Highland Division) returned to Britain after the conquest of Sicily, to prepare for the D-Day of the Western front, the invasion of France. Among the troops who remained in Italy, a curious piece of folklore began to circulate. This was that Lady Astor (bug-bear and Aunt Sally of the British swaddies in the Middle East and elsewhere) had said in Parliament that the forces in Italy were 'D-Day Dodgers,' i.e. - that they had funk'd returning home for fear of being carved up in the French invasion. The idea of this, needless to say, infuriated troops who had plenty of D-Days of their own (Sicily, Salerno, Anzio). The song of the 'D-Day Dodgers' consequently enjoyed an enormous vogue -- with Lili Marlene and Lady Astor, it just couldn't fail!" Ewan MacColl sings it on his Riverside album of British soldier songs, Bless 'Em All (Rip 12-642).

JOE HILL

Words: Alfred Hayes

Music: Earl Robinson

(c) Bob Miller, Inc.

Joseph Hillstrom was a Swedish-born singer-organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the period of 1908 up until his death in 1915. Known under his Americanized pseudonym, Joe Hill, he wrote many of the Wobblies' finest songs -- including such audaciously funny numbers as "Pie In The Sky" and "Casey Jones." In 1915, Joe Hill was arrested and tried in Salt Lake City on a charge of murdering a local storekeeper. His conviction and subsequent death sentence drew world-wide protests. The belief of the time that Hill was framed by the

authorities has only grown with the passing of the years as present-day historians continue to uncover more and more evidence showing the inequities of the case. Joe Hill was executed by a firing squad on November 15, 1915. This song was written originally was a poem and appeared in the old New Masses. Earl Robinson wrote the tune for it, and it has become, over the last two decades, a working class theme.

HARRY SIMMS

Words and music by Jim Garland

(c) Stormking Music, Inc.

THE STORY BEHIND THIS AMERICAN BALLAD

By Mary Elizabeth Barnacle
Professor of Folklore at NYU
and the Univ. of Tennessee

The strike in the soft coal camps in Bell County, Kentucky first started in 1931, mostly conducted by the rank and file of the UMWA--the officials giving no leadership; on the contrary, they helped to break the strike by betraying the miners. But the strike continued, taking on a new lease of life in January, 1932, under the guidance of the National Miners' Union.

Harry Simms, a young organizer from Springfield, Mass., nineteen years old, as tender-hearted as he was strong-minded, was at this time organizing in the South. Sometime in the winter of 1931 he came to Pineville and worked energetically and tirelessly among the young people of the NMU. He took an active part in the leadership of the strike. He made powerful speech after powerful speech. "Spell-binder", the miners called him. A good part of the time he stayed with Jim Garland, one of the main spark plugs of the strike, and with Tilmon Cadle, another native leader, and with other miners and their families. Not only did he put new heart into these hard-pressed men who had

"No food, no clothes for our children,
I'm sure this hain't no lie,
If we don't get more for our labor
We'll starve to death and die"

as Aunt Molly Jackson, (Jim Garland's sister) sang in her "Kentucky Miner's Wife's Hungry Ragged Blues", but he was out in front, filling every day with the maximum of perilous activity.

Word, in the course of the strike, came to the miners in Pineville that their friends outside of Kentucky were sending in five truck loads of food and clothing. These people wanted to test the democracy of Kentucky and to show that they could, as friends of the miners, come into this feudal area and distribute relief. They had called for a demonstration of the miners on the day of the arrival of the trucks and Harry Simms had been chosen to lead the miners out of Brush Creek to Pineville to get their share of the relief.

("Ragged and hungry, no slippers on our feet,
We're bumming around from place to place, to place, to get a little bite to eat,"
as Aunt Molly's song wailed their wretchedness.)

Jim Garland, who loved Harry Simms as a brother, warned the latter against going up Brush Creek

because gun-thugs were always running that road. Simms replied, "It's my job to lead the men to Pineville, and gun-thugs or no gun-thugs, I'll go. If they pop me off, don't waste time grieving after me, but keep right on going. We'll win." In the company of Green Lawson he set out. As they were walking up the road going to Brush Creek the jitney bus that runs along the railroad came along with two gun-thugs aboard. As soon as they spotted the two miners they jumped off the bus, their six-shooters smoking. Harry Simms fell. He was taken to the hospital at Barbourville. Four days later he died. On the very same day that he lay dead in Barbourville, the two gun-thugs were acquitted under the protection of 900 state troopers and 175 special police.

Despite all their troops and guns and state of martial law, the police at Barbourville were so terrified of a demonstration of the miners at this flagrant murder that they would not turn the body over to a separate person; only to a committee of three. They allowed no funeral to be held. "They was to be no talkin', no walkin', no marchin' behind that corpse there. The Committee was to put him on a train and get him out of there." The Committee--Tilmon Cadle, Gertrude Hessler, Jeff Franz--put the body of the radiant youth on the train to New York. He lay in state at a Coliseum in Manhattan. Jim Garland told the great crowds of mourners how Harry Simms had labored so unselfishly and so courageously in the bloody coalfields of Bell County, Kentucky. And then Jim wrote this song to his friend.

1. BOURGEOIS BLUES

Let me sing another one of Leadbelly's songs which is not so well known. You know, a lot of folk songs are just not polite enough to get on the hit parade. Not that there's anything really wrong with them, but, you know, when you're not singing a song to try and make a buck you can get away with insulting people. It was that way with this next song. It's one that Huddie Leadbelly wrote in 1938. He was down in Washington, D.C., and he and his wife were kicked out of a rooming house for no other reason than that they were Negroes. Alan Lomax, the Texas folklorist who was with them at the time, he says, "Ah, Huddie, don't bother. Washington's a bourgeois town anyway."

Me and my wife, went all over town,
Everywhere we went, the people turn us down,
Lord, it's a bourgeois town,
Ooo, it's a bourgeois town,
I've got the bourgeois blues,
Goin' to spread the news all around.

Come all of you people, and listen to me,
Don't try to buy no home in Washington, D.C.
Cause it's a bourgeois town,
Ooo, it's a bourgeois town,
I've got the bourgeois blues,
I'm goin' to spread the news all around.

The home of the brave, the land of the free,
I don't want to be mistreated by no bourgeoisie.
Lord, that's a bourgeois town,
Ooo, it's a bourgeois town.
I've got the bourgeois blues.
I'm goin' to spread the news all around.

2. WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN CONGRESS

What a friend we have in Congress

Who will guard our every shore,
Spends three-quarters of our taxes
Getting ready for a war.

Guns must make our coastline bristle
And we have to fill the sky,
Full of planes and guided missiles,
They'll be paid for by and by.

Have you noticed all the progress
In our mighty airborne fleet?
By the time a plane's adopted
It's already obsolete.

There's no factory profit, brother,
And we have to do or die,
One improvement, then another
They'll be paid for by and by.

Modern bombs are sure to carry
Loads of glory, joy and thrills,
What a privilege to bury
All the dead our money kills.

Never mind the widows weeping
Disregard the orphans cry,
When God wakes the dead and sleeping
They'll be paid for by and by.

3. I DON'T WANT YOUR MILLIONS, MISTER

I don't want your greenback dollars,
I don't want your diamond rings,
All I want is your love, darling,
Won't you take me back again.

Typical country and western song. There was a coal miner in Kentucky who put some new words to it. He was blacklisted from the mines, because he was a union man.

I don't want your millions, mister,
I don't want your diamond rings
All I want just the right to live, mister,
Give me back my job again.

You see, the coal operators came in there and they bought up all the land. The people quit being farmers, and farming wasn't so good anyway, they had to farm on the side of a mountain, and became coal miners.

I know you have a land deed, mister,
The money is all in your name
But where's the work that you did, mister?
I'm demanding back my job again.

I don't want your millions, mister,
I don't want your diamond rings
All I want just the right to live, mister,
Give me back my job again.

Now the next time around you all really sing on that, and it's going to sound good.

We worked to build this country, mister,
While you enjoyed a life of ease
You've stolen all that we've built, mister,
Now our children starve and freeze.

I don't want your millions, mister,
I don't want your diamond rings,
All I want just the right to live, mister,
Give me back my job again.

I don't want your Rolls Royce, mister,
I don't want your pleasure yacht.

All I want just food for my babies,
Give to me my old job back.

I don't want your millions, mister,
I don't want your diamond rings.
All I want just the right to live mister,
Give me back my job again.

(Repeat)

PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh town a smoky old town, Pittsburgh,
Pittsburgh town a smoky old town, Pittsburgh,
Pittsburgh town a smoky old town.
Solid iron from McKeesport down, in Pittsburgh,
Lord, God, Pittsburgh.

Oh, all I do is cough and choke in Pittsburgh,
All I do is cough and choke in Pittsburgh,
All I do is cough and choke
From iron filings and sulphur smoke in Pittsburgh,
Lord God Pittsburgh.

Oh, what did Jones and Loughlin steal in Pittsburgh,
What did Jones and Loughlin steal in Pittsburgh,
What did Jones and Loughlin steal
Up and down the river just as far as you could see
In Pittsburgh, Lord God Pittsburgh.

From the Allegheny to the Ohio in Pittsburgh,
From the Allegheny to the Ohio in Pittsburgh,
From the Allegheny to the Ohio
They're joining up in C.I.O. in Pittsburgh,
Lord God Pittsburgh.

5. TALKING UNION

Now you want higher wages, let me tell you what to
do/ You got to talk to the workers in the shop with
you/ You got to build you a union, got to make it
strong,/ But if you all stick together boys it
won't be long/ You get shorter hours, better working
conditions, vacations with pay, take the kids to
the seashore./ 'Course, it ain't quite that simple,
I'd better explain/ Just why you got to ride on
the union train./ 'Cause if you wait for the boss to
raise your pay/ We'll all be waitin' till judgment
day./ We'll all be buried, gone to heaven,/ Saint
Peter will be the straw boss then, boys.

Now you know you're underpaid but the boss says
you ain't,/ He speeds up the work till you're about
to faint,/ You may be down and out, but you ain't
beaten,/ Pass out a leaflet, call a meetin',/ Talk
it over, speak your mind, /Decide to do something
about it./ 'Course the boss may persuade some poor
damn fool/ To go to your meeting and act like a
stool,/ But you can always tell a stool, though,
that's a fact,/ He's got a yellow streak running
down his back./ He doesn't have to stool, you know;/
He can always make a good living on what he takes
out of blind men's cups.

Well you got a union now, you're sitting pretty,/
Put some of your boys on the steering committee.
/The boss won't listen if one guy squawks/ But
he's got to listen if the union talks,/ He'd better.
He'll be mighty lonely one of these days./ Suppose
he's working you so hard it's just outrageous,/ And
paying you all starvation wages,/ Go to the boss,
the boss would yell,/ "Before I'd raise your pay
I'd see you all in hell." /He's puffin' a big seegar,
feelin' mighty slick,/ Thinks he's got your union
licked,/ Looks out the window and what does he see/
But a thousand pickets and they all agree/ He's a
bastard! Unfair! Slave driver,/ Bet he beats his
own wife.

Now boys, you come to the hardest time,/ The boss
will try to bust your picket line,/ They'll call
out the police, National Guard,/ Tell you it's
a crime to have a union card./ They'll raid your
meeting, hit you on the head,/ Call every one of
you a goddammed red,/ You're unpatriotic, Moscow
agents, bomb throwers -- even the kids./ Well,
out in Detroit here's what they found,/ Out in
Frisco here's what they found,/ Down in Bethlehem
here's what they found,/ Out in Pittsburgh here's
what they found -- / That if you don't let red-
baiting break you up,/ If you don't let stool
pigeons break you up,/ If you don't let vigilantes
break you up,/ And if you don't let race hatred
break you up,/ You'll win. I mean take it easy,
but take it.

6. LOS CUATROS GENERALES

The four insurgent generals,
The four insurgent generals,
The four insurgent generals, mamita mia,
They tried to betray us,
They tried to betray us.

Next Christmas holy evening,
Next Christmas holy evening,
Next Christmas holy evening, mamita mia,
They'll all be hanging,
They'll all be hanging.

Madrid, you wondrous city,
Madrid, you wondrous city,
Madrid, you wondrous city, mamita mia,
They wanted to take you,
They wanted to take you.

But your courageous children,
But your courageous children,
But your courageous children, mamita mia,
They did not disgrace you,
They did not disgrace you.

The fourinsurgent generals,
The four insurgent generals,
The four insurgent generals, mamita mia,
They tried to betray us,
They tried to betray us.

7. HYMN TO NATIONS ("BROTHER, SING YOUR COUNTRY'S ANTHEM")

Brother, sing your country's anthem
Sing your land's undying fame,
Light the wondrous tale of nations
With your peoples' golden name.

Tell your fathers' noble story
Raise on high your country's sign,
Join then in the final glory
Brother, lift your flag with mine.

Build the road of peace before us
Build it wide and deep and long,
Speed the slow, remind the eager
Help the weak and guide the strong.

None shall push aside another
None shall let another fall
Work together, oh my brothers,
All for one and one for all.

8. STEP BY STEP

The words to the next one were printed in the preamble to the Constitution of the old United Mine Workers.

Step by step the longest march can be won,
can be won,
Many stones can form an arch, singly none,
singly none.
And by union what we will can be accomplished
still,
Drops of water turn a mill, singly none,
singly none.

Step by step the longest march can be won,
can be won,
Many stones can form an arch, singly none,
singly none.
And by union what we will can be accomplished
still,
Drops of water turn a mill, singly none,
singly none.

9. D-DAY DODGERS

We're the D-Day Dodgers way off in Italy,
Always on the vino, always on the spree,
8th Army scoundgers and our tanks
We live in Rome among the Yanks,
We are the D-Day Dodgers in sunny Italy,
We are the D-Day Dodgers in sunny Italy.

We landed at Solerno a holiday with pay,
The Jerries brought the bands out, to greet us
on the way,
Showed us the sights and gave us tea
We all sang songs, the beer was free
To welcome the D-Day Dodgers, to sunny Italy,
To welcome the D-Day Dodgers, to sunny Italy.

On the way to Florence we had a lovely time,
We ran a bus to Rimini right through the
Gothic line,
Anzio and Sangro were just names,
We only went to look for dames,
The artful D-Day Dodgers, in sunny Italy,
The artful D-Day Dodgers in sunny Italy.

Now we hear the Second Army will soon get home
on leave,
After all of three months service it's time for
their reprieve,
But we can carry on out here,
Another two or three more years,
Contented D-Day Dodgers to stay in Italy,
Contented D-Day Dodgers to stay in Italy.

Dear Lady Astor, you think you know a lot
Standing on a platform and talking tommyrot,
You're England's sweetheart and her pride,
We think your mouth's too bleeding wide,
That's from your D-Day Dodgers way off in Italy,
That's from your D-Day Dodgers way off in Italy.

Look around the mountains in the mud and rain,
You'll find the scattered crosses, there's some
which have no names,
Heartbreak and toil and pain all gone,
The boys beneath them slumber on
Those are the D-Day Dodgers who'll stay in Italy,
Those are the D-Day Dodgers who'll stay in Italy.

10. JOE HILL

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Live as you and me,
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead,"
"I never died," says he,
"I never died," says he.

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

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

And standing there as big as life
And smiling with his eyes,
Joe says, "What they forgot to kill
Went on to organize."
Went on to organize."

I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night,
Live as you and me,
Says I, "But Joe, you're ten years dead,"
"I never died," says he,
"I never died," says he.

11. AIMEE McPHERSON

Have you heard the story about Aimee McPherson,
Aimee McPherson, that wonderful person,
She weighed a hundred eighty and her hair was
red
She preached a wicked sermon so the papers all
said.
Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

Now Aimee built herself a radio station
To broadcast her preaching to the nation,
She found a man named Armistad who knew enough
To run the radio while Aimee did her stuff.
Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

They had a camp meeting down at Ocean Park
Preached from early morning till after dark,
Said the benediction and they folded up the
tents,
Then nobody knew where Aimee went.
Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

When Aimee McPherson got back from her journey
She told her story to the District Attorney,
She said she'd been kidnapped on a lonely trail
And in spite of a lot of questions she stuck to
her tale.
Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

Well the Grand Jury started an investigation
Uncovered a lot of spicy information,
Found out about a love nest down by Carmel by
the Sea
Where the liquor is expensive but the lovin' is
free.
Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

They found a little cottage with a breakfast
nook

A folding bed with a worn-out look,
The slats was busted and the springs was loose
And the dents in the mattress fitted Aimee's
caboose.

Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

Now they took poor Aimee and threw her in jail
Last I heard she was out on bail,
They'll send her up for a stretch, I guess,
She worked herself to an awful mess.

Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

Now Radio Ray is a goin' hound,
He's going yet and he ain't been found,
They got his description but they got it too
late,

Cause since they got it he's lost a lot of
weight.

Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

I'll end my story in the usual way
About a lady preacher's holiday,
If you don't get the moral than you're the gal
for me,

'Cause there're still a lot of cottages down by
Carmel by the Sea.

Hi-dee, hi-dee, hi-dee, hi! Ho-dee, ho-dee,
ho-dee, ho!

12. HARRY SIMMS

Come and listen to my story,
Come and listen to my song,
I will tell you of a hero
That's now dead and gone,
I will tell you of a young boy whose age
was 19,
He was the bravest union man that I have
ever seen.

Harry Simms was a pal of mine
We labored side by side,
Expecting to be shot on sight
Or taken for a ride,
By them dirty coal operator gun thugs
Who rode from town to town,
Ashooting down the union men
Wheree're they may be found.

Harry Simms was walking down the track
One bright sunshiney day,
He was a youth of courage
His step was light and gay,
He did not know the gun thugs
Was hiding on the way
To kill our brave young comrade
This bright sunshiney day.

Harry Simms was killed on Brush Creek
In 1932,
He organized the miners
Into the NMU;
He gave his life in struggle
That was all that he could do
He died for the union
Also for me and you.

Pete Seeger: An Appreciation

(The following article appeared originally as a concert review in The Parkside Journal, a Griffith Park, California newspaper.)

by Monty Muns

Folk music in the United States is at present in a state of flux. Exponents of what was at one time the music of our national groups — the Irish, the English, the Poles, etc. — now concentrate their efforts in directions which are taking them to literally every country in the world. This international feeling on the part of folk artists has earned their special brand of art world recognition and a place of permanence in the musical literature of free countries.

Last Saturday night in Hollywood High's auditorium, the folksinger Pete Seeger held a crowd of well over 1,000 spellbound, as he offered his songs in the way a "medicine" man passes around free samples of the "cure for all your ailments." Indeed Seeger was the cure for many curious fans who had merely heard his name or had seen his picture on album covers. His presence was so individual, so compellingly unique, that it was difficult to really assess at times the full value of his vocal art. Looking more objectively, however, we knew we had seen a performer who had the grace and form and honesty to convey his songs in the manner that was established by his colorful forbear, Woodie Guthrie.

What is this artistic presence that Seeger possesses? It is a composition of three elements: knowledge of the value of free interpretation, profound love for the dignity of man, and an exacting technique in voice, guitar and banjo, the latter instrument being more closely associated with Seeger.

Seeger is one of the few people who can move an audience to tears or to joy through the exorcisms of hand movements, and a voice which is so carefully cognizant of mood and texture of the material being presented that it becomes as another instrument altogether. He sang workers' songs, Union Songs (Preamble to the Constitution of the United Mine Workers of America); children's songs and songs whose histories — in one or two cases — went back to the time of the first Elizabeth.

Audience participation at most concerts where vocal artists are on stage, is, of course, unheard of. It would defy the unwritten law of concert-hall propriety to simply come out and follow the late Lanza, for instance, in "il Mio Tesoro," as he faced 1,000 people. With Seeger it is different. Without ostentation he will "move" the audience into a mood of such "reluctance" to remain silent, that it follows that they join in the choruses.

This form of community singing is part of the greatness of this artist; and we felt that because of this greatness he (Seeger) is oftentimes misrepresented by some of us who would forbid our hearts from telling us that all men can — and by their birthright — sing in community the songs of their land; that all men, after all, are just men, as free in spirit, from time to time, as they are in their basic hopes for the liberty of their fellow man.

Very recently, a friend of Pete Seeger's said some words which aptly spoke of Seeger as some of us might see him or come to learn to appreciate his great art: "... and if ever you see a tall thin guy with his Adam's apple sticking out, you can rest assured that it's Pete Seeger, just ambling along to another session of singing to the people of the world..."

Such men as Seeger, whose whole world is people and children and songs and a freedom which is infectiously real, do not come to us every day. Like Whitman and Wolfe, Pete belongs to the age, and without him, the age would be slighted by the absence of an artist who has, truly, reached an autonomy, and has grown sturdily to the ranks of a spokesman in song for his troubled, anxious, somewhat insecure century.

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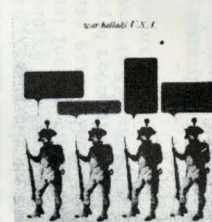
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Sixpence, I Don't Want to Join the Army, Gee But I Want to Go Home, The One-Eyed Riley, Bell Bottom Trousers, The Officers Ride the Whale Boats, Were You With The Marines, The Engineers, The Fighting Q.M.C.

FH5251 AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL BALLADS sung by Pete Seeger with Banjo. Includes songs written and sung as a result of US industrial era during the past 100 years, by coal miners, textile workers, farm workers. "Peg and Awl." "The Blind Fiddler," "The Buffalo Skinners," "Eight Hour Day," "Hard Times in the Mill," "Roll Down The Line," "Hayseed Like Me," "The Farmer is the Man," "Come All You Hardy Miners," "He Lies in the American Land," "Casey Jones," "Let Them Wear Their Watches Fine," "Weave Room Blues," "Seven Cent Cotton," "Mill Mother's Lament," "Fare Ye Well, Old Ely Branch," "Beans, Bacon and Gravy," "The Death of Harry Simms," "Winsboro Cotton Mill Blues," "Ballad of Barney Graham," "My Children Are Seven in Number," "Raggedy," "Pittsburgh Town," "Sixty Per Cent." Introduction l. Silber and song texts.

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FH5258 SING OH! THE CITY OH! Songs of early Pittsburgh written by Robert Schmertz and sung by Mr. Schmertz with Vivien Richman, Eero Davidson, Gretchen Jacob, Jo Davidson, Jack Schmertz. Sing O the City O!, Celoron, The Ohio Company, Forks of the Ohio, La Vierge de la Bele Riviere, Mon Petit Lapin, Braddock's Defeat, General John Forbes, The Lonely Grenadier, Flintlock Finnegun, The Battle of Bushy Run, Prettiest Girl in Pittsburgh Town. With notes and texts.



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