TALKING BLUES

sung by John Greenway

accompanying himself on the guitar

Original Talking Blues
Talking Butcher
New Talking Blues
Talking Dust Bowl
Dry Voters — Wet Drinkers

FOLKWAYS RECORDS / NY

FH 5232

edited by KENNETH S. GOLDSTEIN
Although there are few if any Negro records of talking blues, there is no doubt that the form was originally Negro. A great deal can be inferred by analyzing the internal evidence of the earliest examples of the talking blues. The complete text of the version recorded by White (the first selection on this record) as garnered from the 1936 record of Chris Bouchillio and collated from other sources reveals a cultural milieu of extreme meagerness, such as only the Negro of the lowest economic stratum suffered in. The singer never satirizes, for example, to higher comestibles than "lasses, chitlins, and corn bread," and aside from his only interest is women. These themes accord with Lomax's 1917 analysis of the Negro's interests as expressed in his folksong: "...what he eats and his women." The fact that this selection and its companion piece, the "New Talking Blues," emanate from a Southern White provenance corroborates rather than disproves the ultimate Negro origin.

The stanzas beginning "There ain't no use of me workin' so hard..." and those dealing with the effect of a bucket of lard or grease on the Negro are ubiquitous in turn-of-the-century Poor White satires on the Negro, though not so generally familiar as the libels dealing with chicken stealing. The "home brew" stanzas are later additions from the Prohibition era and serve to date these particular versions.

The satirical element that pervades the early talking blues offers a possible explanation for the scarcity of absence of Negro examples in this genre. There seems to be some evidence (unfortunately not documented) that the talking blues were first performed by Negroes for Negroes as an in-group vehicle of anti-white satire, like the songs collected by Lawrence Gellert (Negro Songs of Protest, Me and My Captain.)

It may be significant that genuine Negro folksinging tends to eliminate melody from the singing, though the accompanying instrument may carry elaborate melodies (examples are numerous, from Louis Armstrong to Leadbelly), and to substitute for the sung melody an augmented interest in strong rhythm, one of the characteristics of the talking blues.
If we wished to pursue speculation still further afield, we might cross to Africa and examine the tendency toward the strong-rhythm weak-melody in Negro song from the Tigres of Britten to the Baumbala of the Belgian Congo (whose litigation songs, which alternate between chant and singing, are thought to be the origins of the West Indies calypso). But pure speculation is essentially profitless, and there is much in the talking blues that is not fundamentally Negro. The basic pattern of the talking blues stanza, a quatrain of four-accent lines, usually rhyming abab (though some few use the alternate rhyme pattern, abba) and strongly iambic, is British. However, the exaggerated 3/4 rhythm is Negro, as are the laconic, incoherent, commentary phrases that end each stanza -- compare Leadbelly's repertoire, in which nearly every song has as much interlinear rubrics as text, or the third line of the ordinary blues form which (like the talking blues' extrametrical passages) serves as a commentary on the first part of each stanza.

It is much easier to trace the development of the talking blues from the late 1920's to the present. The widespread dissemination of the talking blues after Bouchillon's very popular record gave rise to a multiplicity of talking blues on a great variety of subjects, a cross section of which we have tried to represent on this record, from the aftermath of marital infidelity ("Talking Butcher") to the pangs of unrequited prohibition ("Dry Voters-Wet Drinkers"); but a cascade of talking blues poured out of folk and sophisticated composers just before and after World War II, mostly on socio-economic inequalities. At the present time the talking blues seems to be at the height of its popularity; at last the form has achieved an assured place in American folk expression.

Interestingly enough, Dr. Greenway learned this song from an English recording ("Ernest Tubbs' Talking Blues", English Capitol CL 1343) as sung by Red Murrell.

Now, if you want to get in trouble, let me tell you how to do it:
You get you a guitar, and then you're into it;
You play all day and you play all night;
And your folks say you'll never learn to play
the thing right.
They're always fussin' at you. Gripin'.
Won't let you practice.
Tryin' to run you out to the henhouse.

Well, I bought a guitar about a year ago
And the man said I could learn it in a week or so,
And he gave me a little book and a pick or two,
And he said, "There, John, it's up to you!"

That dirty dog. Cost me 4.95. Every cent of money I had.

Cotton pickin' money, too. Good guitar though.
Called it a "Flinchett."

Nevertheless, I spent my dough
And I couldn't let it go to waste, you know,
So I took the book, guitar, and all,
And I went back home where the trees are tall,
Way down in Missouri. Good place to be if
You got a guitar.

Awful if you ain't.

Well, for weeks and weeks I labored hard
To try and learn those few main chords;
The book says they're easy as A B C,
But, oh, my fingers was a-killin' me.
They got sore on the ends. Couldn't mash the
strings down.
Wanted to quit. Felt disgusted.

Well, I kept on playing with all my might,
And I could see Ma's hair was turnin' white;
Her face was lined with discontent,
She said her patience was pretty near spent.
She was nervous. Bars ringin'. Wanted to scream.
 Couldn't get no relief.

Oh, sister, she took it the worst of all
'Cause she got married that Fallin' Fall,
She said for love--but I got my doubts;
I think that guitar just chased her out.
She's a game gal though. Just couldn't take it.
Limit to everything.

Now, my pa he took it a different way;
He said, "You may turn your ma's hair gray
And drive your sister away from home,
But you or I, boy, is gonna start to roam.
And I ain't leavin'. Never intend to.
You figure it out."
I did. Fast like.

So the next day after my clothes was packed
I swung that guitar across my back
And I caught myself a long freight train
To search the world for my share of fame.
I ain't found any. Just hardships. Heartaches.
And handouts.

NOTES BY KENNETH S. GOLSTEIN

SIDE 1, Band 1: TALKING GUITAR BLUES

This song is the work of Ernie Tubb, popular country and western singer, whose numerous recordings are well known to hillbilly and country fans throughout the world. One of the most prolific of the country song writers, Tubb should perhaps be recognized as also being one of its most proficient writers.

Unlike most of the talking blues which have been written since World War II, this song contains little in the way of a protest message (unless it is to poke fun at the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have recently become addicted to the "play-it-yourself" fever). That the talking blues form is still popular with many people not interested in the numerous social-conscious take-offs, is attested to by the excellent sales of Tubb's own recording of the song, as well as to the several covering records issued in this country and abroad as sung by other country and western singers.

SIDE 1, Band 2: ORIGINAL TALKING BLUES

We have no way of knowing, of course, if this was the first of all talking blues, but documentation and reporting of collected versions would seem to indicate that this is certainly one of the earliest of the songs employing the "talking blues" form. An inspection of the text, and a comparison of its lines with stanzas appearing in various pieces reported in several collections of Negro folk songs, quite clearly indicate its Negro origin. The song is an amalgamation of stanzas which have no static existence, freely crossing over from one song to another. Southern whites, who probably heard Negro field hands, laborers, and servants singing these stanzas, adapted the song as their own, adding stanzas in the same free, syncretized talking form, and spread it through the rural south.
The version sung here was learned mainly from a 1926 recording made by Chris Bouchillon (Columbia 131490). Bouchillon was a South Carolina poor white. Stanzas from various printed sources have been added to the Bouchillon version.

Essentially the same version, or other songs containing various stanzas found in this version, may be found in the following books:


Richardson, Ethel P., AMERICAN MOUNTAIN SONGS, Greenberg Publ., 1927, (p. 102).

Spathe, Sigmund, READ 'EM AND WEAR, Doubleday, 1926, (p. 124).

If you want to get to heaven, let me tell you how to do it:
Greas your feet with a little mutton suet,
Slide right out of the devil's hand
And come right over in the promised land.
Go easy. Make it easy. Go greasy.

Standin' in the corner by the mantelpiece,
Up in the corner by a bucket of grease;
I greased my feet with a little axle grease,
Went slippin' up and down that mantelpiece.

Huntin' matches. Cigarette stubs. Chewin' tobacco.
Left overs.

Make up the bed, gal, make 'em up nice,
Clean out the house, and chase out the mice,
Set up the table, and set it up right,
'Cause old preacher Johnson's gonna be here tonight.
He's a chicken eater. Loves cake. Loves the sisters, too.

Standin' on the corner, standin' like a man,
Standin' on the corner with a bucket in my hand,
Standin' on the corner with a bucket in my hand
Waitin' for soap from the white folks' hand.

'Lesses. Sweeten' potatoes. Old biscuits.

Down in the wildwood, settin' on a log,
My finger on the trigger and my eye on a hog,
I pulled that trigger and the gun said "blip,
Jumped on that hog with all my grip.
Eatin' hog eye. Love chittlins.

Behind the henhouse the other night
It was awful dark and I had no light.

The farmer's dog run out by chance
And he hit a big hole in the seat of my pants,
I jumped gullies. Rode bushes. Flowed ground.
Felt funny.

Behind the henhouse on my knees
I thought I heard a chicken sneeze;
Only a rooster sayin' his prayers
And givin' out hymns to the hens upstairs.
Just preachin'. Goin' a-singin'. Little young chickens just a-hoppin'.

They put me in the jailhouse on my knees
All they gave me was a pan of peas,
The peas was red and the meat was fat,
And I got stuck on the jailhouse just for that.
Got nasty. Depressed. Wanted to fight.

Now I been here and I been there,
I rushed round 'bout everywhere.
Purrin' little gal I ever did see
A-walkin' up and down by the side of me.
Mouth wide open. Catchin' flies. Knows I'm crazy.

There ain't no use of me workin' so hard--
I got a woman in the white folks' yard.
When she kill a chicken she saves me the head,
She thinks I'm workin' but I'm lyin' in the bed.
Sleepin'. Havin' a good time. Dreamin' about her.

There ain't no use of me workin' so hard--
I got a woman in the white folks' yard.
When she kill a chicken she saves me the feet,
She thinks I'm workin' but I'm loafin' the street.
Havin' a good time. Talkin' about her. To two other women.

SIDE I, TRACK 3: TALKING BUTCHER

This little-known talking blues is probably of white invention. Collectors have not reported it from tradition, and it may well have been a vaudeville or stage song originally. Dr. Greenway learned it from a student at Colorado State University, who informed him it had been recorded around 1930 on the Decca label by a little-known hillbilly singer whose name he had forgotten.

Well, I sneaked in the butcher shop the other night
To pay a little visit to the butcher's wife.
The butcher come in, said "Who that Joe?"
And I made a dive for the old front door.

When I hit that door, I hollied "Gimme space--
I'm a one-woman man, gotta win this race;
If I lose, gonna lose my life.
'Cause he wants to cut me with that butcher knife.
He got fire in his eyes. Boy! He wants to cut.

Now across that river and up the hill
The butcher behind me, gonna fill the hill;
I says, "You don't get me while I'm on this hill
I don't reckon you ever will. 'Cause I'm long gone.
Headin' through cedar groves.
Just a-flyin'. Yes-siree.

Well, he run me down by the old meatin' house,
I crept in there just as quiet as a mouse;
I took a seat in the rear of the ball,
When it came that butcher, that knife and all.
He had fire in his eyes. Boy! He wanted to cut.

Now, the preacher in the pulpit heard a noise in
the back,
He said, "You sisters, you better clear that track--
Grab them babies and run for your life
'Cause he means business with that butcher knife!"

Women screamin'. Babies yellin'. Me a-hidin'!
Yes-siree.

Now, one old sister was a-doin' her best
But she run into a hornets' nest;
The hornets stung her and she hit the ground
And her and them hornets went around and around
Swellin' up. Hurtin'. Couldn't get no relief.

Now, one old sister was as tired as she could be
And she made straight for a sycamore tree;
She made that tree and she made it fast
Said, "I'm tired o' runnin' in this tall grass."
Toenails scrappin'. Dark a-flyin'. Yes, siree.

Listen here, folks, this story I told:
You go out night-scoutin' big and bold,
You see a butcher with a knife in his hand
You better hide, 'cause he's a mean man.
He got fire in his eyes. Boy! He wants to cut.

SIDE 1, Band 4: NEW TALKING BLUES

The success of Chris Bouchillon's earlier recording of a talking blues was undoubtedly responsible for his waxing of the "New Talking Blues", recorded early in 1928 (Columbia 15029). A large part of this piece may have been Bouchillon's own creation, but several of its stanzas were from oral tradition, including several maverick poor-white, anti-Negro stanzas.

I went down in Georgia to the country fair--
The birds and the lions and the monkeys were there;
The lion broke loose and started through the crowd,
And I couldn't help but holler out loud.
I felt runnish. Tore my britches. On a barbed wire fence.

I went down to Florida to get rich quick;
I bought me a lot and a load of brick.
But I got scared of the snakes and the alligators,
So I decided to come back later.
I don't like snakes. Rather die poor. Live a long time.

I took me a wife about five years ago,
We got one kid, he's just about four.
He gets up at the table and be slaps his May,
Rub's 'lasses in my hair and says, "Ain't you my Paw?"
Sticks potatoes in my ears. Rubs mustard in my eyes.
Runs string beans up my nose.

Mama's in the pantry fixin' up the yeast,
Sister's in the kitchen preparin' for the feast;
Papa's in the cellar a-makin' up the hogs Brother's at the window a-watchin' for the cops.
Drinkin' home brew. It makes you drunk. If'n you don't bust.

Now, I'm just a city dude livin' out of town,
Everybody knows me as Moonshiner Brown.
I make the beer and I drink the slops,
Got ten little orphans that call me Pop.
I'm patriotic. Raisin' soldiers. Red Cross nurses.

Up in the mountains at a liquor still,
Back in the mountains in the Blue Ridge hills.
I like the still and I like the juice,
But I don't like the cops who cut at the loose.
I jumped valleys. Run over speed cops. Dodged cannonballs.

Standin' in the corner by the white folks' yard
Up in the corner by a bucket of lard.
I grease my feet with a little hog-eye lard,
Went a-lookin' up and down that white folks' yard.
Huntin' the cook. She gives me 'lasses. Clapper and corn bread.

There ain't no use of me workin' so much,
I got a gal that brings me the mush.
She works for the white folks down in Cal'line,
She brings me everything from 'lasses to wine.

I went possum huntin' the other night,
It was awful dark and I lost my light.
The dogs tired somethin' way down in the flat,
We thought it was a possum, but it must have been a cat.
I lost my job. Wife run me off. Had to bury my clothes.

There ain't no use of me workin' so hard,
I got a gal in the white folks' yard.
When she kill a turkey she saves me the wing,
She thinks I'm workin' but I ain't doin' a thing.
Loatin' the streets. Savin' a good time.
Lookin' at the flappers.

SIDE 1, Band 5: TALKING DUST BOWL

Woody Guthrie, whom Alan Lomax once called "our greatest contemporary folk poet," was the author of more than 30 songs relating to the great Dust Bowl disaster of the 1930s. Woody, himself, had lived through the years of drought and improvident farming methods which lead to the great dust storms which lifted up millions of acres of sun-burnt topsoil and swirled it into an endless mass of flying sand and debris. And when the cloud of dust settled, the barren subsoil wasn't fit to plant a crop in, or even live on, and hundreds of thousands of impoverished farmers packed up their few belongings, their family, and their will to live, and traveled west to find a better land. The chronicler of that great exodus was Woody Guthrie.

Woody originally recorded this song for Victor Records as one of 11 "Dust Bowl Ballads" issued in a two volume set by that company. Eight of these songs, including "Talking Dust Bowl" were later reissued by Folkways Records (FF 11). In the present recording, Mr. Greenway has done an amazing job of capturing the flavor and mood of Guthrie's performance.

YEARS OF DUST

RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION
Rescues Victims
Restores Land to Proper Use

Well, back in nineteen twenty-seven
I had a little farm and I called it heaven.
Prices up and the rains came down
And I took my crops all into town.
Got the money. I bought the groceries,
And clothes for the children.
Raised a big family.

Then the rains stopped and the wind grew high,
And that black old dust storm filled the sky.
I traded my farm for a Ford machine, And I filled it full of this here gas-i-line And we started. Rockin' and rollin'. 'Cross the deserts and mountains, out of the Dust Bowl, out to the Peach Bowl. Out to California.

Well, way up yonder on a mountain road With a hot motor and a heavy load, Rollin' right along, wasn't even stoppin', Hoppin' up and down like popcorn poppin', And then it happened. Had a breakdown. King of a nervous bust-down-- Mechanic feller there--he charged me eighteen dollars--he said it was, uh, 'engine trouble.'

Well, way up yonder on that mountain road And way up yonder in the piney wood, I give that rollin' Ford a shove, I'm gonna coast just as far as I could. Commenced a-coastin'. Mexican overdrive. Pickin' up speed-- Come a hairpin turn, and I didn't--quite--make it.

Well, man alive! I'm tellin' you, Them fiddles and the guitars really flew; That Ford took off like a flyin' squirrel, Flew half-way around this world, Scattered wives and children. All over that mountain.

Well, I got to California so dad-gum broke, So dad-gum hungry I thought I'd croak; I humped up a spad or two And my wife she cooked a 'tater stew. An' we poured the kids full of it. Looked like a tribe of thy-somers runnin' around.

Lord! Man! I swear to you That was some mighty thin stew; So damned thin, what I mean, You could read a map-i-xine Right through it. Look at the pictures, too. See naked women. An' pretty whiskey bottles.

Always thought, though, always figured, That damned stew had been a little bit thinner, Some of these here politicians-- I mean the honest ones-- Could have seen through it.

SIDE I, Band 6: DRY VOTERS -- WET DRINKERS

As its title and content imply, this song was written back in prohibition days. Bob Miller, music publisher whose catalogue of sheet music contains many items of folk and pseudo folk style, is credited as author of this number, but it may well be that the song was written by some anonymous composer of the period who turned the song over to Miller for a few dollars.

Of the 15 talking blues in this album, this song is unique in that it contains a sung chorus rather than a talking commentary at the end of each stanza. Actually, the sung chorus was not infrequently used in early talking blues (as indicated from the few published texts collected from traditional informants), but for purposes of recording on 78 RPM records, with its limited time allowance, the chorus was usually dropped. Its use in this number is for the purpose of breaking up the monotonous pace of the talking blues form.

Dr. Greenway learned this song from a tape recording sent to him by John Edwards, of Sydney, Australia.

I'm sittin' in the jailhouse, shackles on my feet, Drinkin' black coffee and eatin' fat meat; Lots of things goin' through my mind-- Justice must be blind. If we must have this Pro-hi-bition It should also be for the lawmakers; If we can't drink, why should they drink? Well sir, they're fakers.

CHORUS:

Those dry voters, wet drinkers, They think the Lord has selected them; One hand on the Bible, one hand on the bottle, Ouch! Ain't they pious men?

Now, Mr. John Hancock on Independence Day Signed a Declaration, but it don't say That there would be clauses, white collar bosses-- How do they get that way? What's good for the goose is good for the gander, Many a wolf hides in a sheepskin; We need less keepers, troublesome peepers-- Always a-buttin' in.

(CHORUS)

I didn't do nothin' but drink some gin To keep my back from cavin' in. They say we're equal--equal in what? Somethin' somebody forgot. If these dry votin' wet drinkers Would clean the trash from their own back door, They'd find plenty rubbish and much garbage At their own back door.

SIDE I, Band 7: TALKING COLUMBIA BLUES

This is one of 26 songs Woody Guthrie wrote for the Bonneville Power Administration and which were used to sell bonds to raise money necessary to build one of the greatest hydroelectric generating plants in the world. The power thus created resulted in the development of new industries, supplying work for hundreds of thousands of migratory workers.

Of his composition of "Talking Columbia Blues", Guthrie writes: "Talking Columbia Blues I made up one day while I was standing up along the Columbia River in sight of the Grand Coulee Dam, and all I done was just take out my pencil and scribble down this song. We can be sure that the description of the seeming ease and speed with which this song
was composed is no mere exaggeration on Guthrie's part. Long familiar with the talking blues form, and a natural poet of unusual proportions, it was probably no great task for Guthrie to "dash" off this parody of the talking blues form, a task which he has accomplished many times, as his more than 15 songs in this style (3 of which are included in this album) surely attest.

Guthrie's original recording of this song is now filed away by the Oregon Department of the Interior. He later recorded it for the Disc Company of America in an album entitled "Ballads from the Dust Bowl." (Disc 610, record number 850), from which this present recording was learned. "Talking Columbia Blues" has been re-issued on Folkways Records.

Well, down along the river just a-sittin' on a rock
I'm a-lookin' at the boats in the Bonneville lock.
Gate swings open, the boat sails in,
Toot that whistle, she's gone again.
Gasoline goin' up, wheat comin' down.

Well, I filled up my hat brim, drunk a little taste,
Thought about a river just a-goin' to waste;
Thought about the dust, an' thought about the sand,
Thought about the people, an' thought about the land.

Polt's runnin' round all over creation, lookin' for some kind of little place.

Well, I pulled out my pencil, scribbled this song,
Figured all them salmon just couldn't be wrong;
Then salmon fish is mighty shrewd,
They got senators and politicians, too.

Just about like the president. They run every four years.

You just watch this river, though, pretty soon Everybody's gonna be changin' their tune;
The big Grand Coulee and the Bonneville dams
Run a thousand factories for Uncle Sam
And everybody else in the world. Turnin' out everything from fertilizers to saving machines, and atomic bedrooms and plastic—everything's gonna be plastic.

Uncle Sam needs houses and stuff to eat,
Uncle Sam needs wool, and Uncle Sam needs wheat,
Uncle Sam needs water and power dams,
Uncle Sam needs people, and the people need land.
"Course I don't like dictators none myself, but then I think the whole country bad ought to be run by e-lec-tric-ity.

I'm just a miner in a mining town,
I dig like a mole in a hole in the ground
When the sun comes up till the sun goes down,
And I don't see much sun when I'm down in the ground.
Diggin' this soft coal. Hard coal. Lead zinc.
All kinds of hard stuff.

I got up this morning in the same old way,
Drunk my hot coffee to start off my day;
Wife give me breakfast in her stocking feet,
And I kissed the kids in bed and walked up the street.

Just walkin' along, watchin' the sun come up.
Thinking. Wondering. Wondering and a-thinking.

Centralia here is a pretty little town,
You can see Illinois for miles around;
But I can't see too good with my eyes full of sleep—

But I'll quit mining someday and I'm gonna sleep about a week.
Just solid. Hard down, hard up, good old warm sleep. Dream myself up a lot of pretty dreams.

About pretty mine holes. Pretty mine bosses.
Pretty mine owners, all over the whole place.

Most men don't talk what's eatin' their mind
About the different ways of dying down here in the mines,

But every morning we walk along and we joke
About mines caving in and the dust and the smoke—
One little wild spark of fire blowing us skyhigh and crooked.
One little spark blowin' up up crossayed and crazy.

Up to shake hands with the Lord's little angels.
We knock at the gate and we stand and laugh,
The elevator man drops us down his shaft;
We scatter and kneel and crawl different places
With fumes in our lungs and dust on our faces.
Gas on our stomach. Water on our kneecap.
"Ashes and pains. Rheumatism.
All kinds of crazy pictures flying through our heads.

Well, this spark, it hit us in Number Five;
I don't know if anybody got out alive.
I got carried around with a busted head,
A lady said a hundred and eleven was dead.
Well, this ain't my first explosion.
I come through two cave-ins and one more
fire before this one.

Twenty-two down in Ohio. Thirty-six
in Kentucky's green hills.
Then this hundred and eleven here in Centralia.

It seems like the very best men go down
And don't come back in these mining towns.
I keep on wondering how things would be
If a cave-in would come to a senator's seat.
Or if a big explosion of some kind was to go
off in Congress halls.
What words and messages would they write on
the wall?

Wonder if they'd hire anybody to come to the
Senate Chamber and put in any safety
devices?

I think there's just about enough loose gas
around that Capitol dome
To make a mighty big blow if a spark ever
hit it.

SIDE II, Band 1: TALKING UNION

This song was composed by the Almanac Singers
in the Spring of 1941, when they were singing
for meetings and rallies of the C.I.O. In
Detroit, where Ford had just been organized,
"Talking Union" and other union organizing and
rallying songs were played over sound trucks
at mass rallies.

It is very probable that this song, more than
any other talking blues, was responsible for
the very widespread popularity of the form at
the present time. Originally recorded by the
Almanac Singers in an album entitled "Talking
Union" for the Keynote Record Company, the
song became extremely popular as a result of its
many performances at concerts and bootleggers by
Pete Seeger and other union-minded folksingers.
The album was recently reissued by FOLKWAYS
RECORDS (P-85-1).

Now, if you want higher wages, let me tell you
what to do:
You get to talk to the workers in the shop with
you,
You get to build you a union, got to make it
strong,
If you all stick together, boys, it won't take
long.
You'll get shorter hours. Better working
conditions. Vacations with pay.
Take your kids to the seashore.

Well, it ain't quite this simple, so I'd better
explain
Why you got to ride on the union train,
For if you wait for the boss to raise your pay,
You'll all be waiting till Judgment Day.
You'll all be buried. Gone to Heaven. St.
Peter'll be the straw boss then.

Now, you know you're underpaid, but the boss
says you ain't;
And he speeds up the work till you're 'bout
to faint.
You may be down and out, but you ain't beaten.
Just pass out a leaflet and call a meetin'.
Talk it over. Speak your mind. Decide to do
something about it.

'Couse the boss may persuade some poor
damned fool
To go to your meeting and act like a stool;
But you can always tell a stool, though, and
that's a fact:
He's got a yellow streak runnin' down his back.
He don't have to stool. He'll always get
along.
On what he takes out of blind men's cups.

Now you've got you a union and you're sitting
pretty;
Put some of the boys on the steering committee.
The boss won't listen if one guy squawks,
But he's got to listen if the union talks.
My God, he'd better. He'd be mighty lonely
Everybody decided to walk out on him.

Well, suppose they're working you so hard that
it's just outrageous,
And they're paying you all starvation wages;
You go to the boss and the boss will yell,
"Before I raise your pay I'll see you all in hell!"
Well, he's smokin' a big seagull, feeling mighty
click.

'Cause he thinks he's got your union licked,
But he looks out the window, and what does he see
But a thousand pickets and they all agree
He's a bastard! Unfair! Slanderer!
But he beats his wife.

Well, now, boys, you're come to the hardest time;
The boss will try to bust your picket line
He'll call out the police, the National Guard,
They'll tell you it's a crime to have a union card,
They'll raid your meetings, they'll hit you on
the head,
They'll call every one of you a goddamn Red,
Unpatriotic. Communist spies. Sabotaging national
defense.

But out at Ford, here's what they found,
And out at Valles, here's what they found;
And down at Allis-Chalmers, here's what they
found;
And down at Bethlehem, here's what they found,
That if you don't let redhating break you up,
If you don't let stoopigone 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. What I mean, take it easy. But take it.

SIDE II, Band 2: TALKING SAILOR

This piece is also the work of Woody Guthrie. In
it, Guthrie writes from his own experience, for,
as a member of the Merchant Marines during World
War II, he shipped out frequently on Liberty
ships and other cargo vessels. As in the case of
"Talking Subway", this song ends up as a pitch
for one of the numerous unions to which Guthrie as
belonged during his many years as a "jack-of-all-trades".

"Talking Sailor" was originally recorded by Guthrie for the Asch Record Company in Asch Album #347.

TALKING SAILOR

In bed with a woman, just a-singin' the blues,
I heard the radio tellin' the news:
Said the big Red Army took a hundred towns,
Allies droppin' them two-ton bombs.

Started yellin', Yellin', Jumpin' up and down like a bullfrog.

Doorbell rung and in come a man,
I signed my name, got a telegram.
Said if you want to take a vacation trip,
Got a dishwashing job on a Liberty ship.

Woman a-cryin', Me a-flyin', Out the door
and down the line.

'Bout two minutes I run ten blocks,
I come to my ship, down at the docks;
Walked up the plank, and signed my name,
Blowed that whistle, she's gone again.

Right on out and down the stream. Ships as
fur's my eye can see.

Woman a-waitin'.

I'm a union man from head to toe,
I'm USA and CIO.
Fightin' out here on the waters, to win some
freedom on the land.

SIDE II, Band 3: TALKING SOCIAL WORKER

This song was originally recorded by its composer,
Tom Glazer, as part of an album of "Songs of
Citizen CIO", issued by Asch Records (Asch #949).
Its original title was "Social Workers Talking Blues".

Numerous songs in the same talking blues form
have been written for practically every occupa-
tional group, some eventually being printed in
small songbooks issued by the educational depart-
ment of various unions.

All you social workers, come and listen to me,
I'll tell you a little story about an employee.

I work in New York, Texas, and Idaho,
And I belong to a union called the CIO.

And boy, I love it. It loves me, too. Sort of
love at first sight.

Now, I ain't had very much schoolin'
But you can take it from me, and I ain't frolin';
There's some things you learn that ain't in books,
Like how to get rid of the ugly looks
That slums have. That hungry people have. And
suchlike.

'Course, don't get me wrong; books can be mighty
swell,
Depends on who writes them and what they're
trying to tell;
But my idea is, you social workers
Ought to be more social with us union workers.

'Course, a lot of us don't have no degrees,
But now and then we see things you can't see--
Sort of a worm's eye view.

To make a long story short, I think it'd be
Great
If you and we could cooperate;
We could sit down together on a union fence
And have us a social conference
About cleaning up the slums. Winning the war
And the peace.
And fighting disease and poverty.

I think us working folks the country over
Are getting tired of being run over
By these business cycles--hell of a mess--
Last one broke my Community Chest,
And almost broke my heart.

We've gotta talk things over and try and choose
Some schemes to get rid of these post-war blues.
I don't think it would cause any grief
If social workers ate with union teeth--
They can bite mighty hard. Good for Uncle Sam's
digestion, too.

Well, I guess I've just about had my say;
The point I'm makin' just as plain as day:
United we stand, divided we fall.

We keep open house at the union hall,
So come on over--we'll chew the fat,
And decide what's wrong with this and that,
You tell us about sociology
And we'll put a union label on your master's
degree.

M.A. Ph.D. C-I-O.
SIDE II, Band 4: TALKING SUBWAY

Another of Guthrie's talking blues. This piece was probably inspired by one of his early trips to New York, where for a while he was in great demand for appearances on various national booking programs, including "Pursuit of Happiness," Cavalcade of America and others.

As sung on this recording, "Talking Subway" may well be a combination of two sets of stanzas written at different times. The first four stanzas may be found in a small collection of Guthrie's songs, issued in 1937. The last seven stanzas were obtained by Mr. Greenway from Guthrie at a later date and have never been published or recorded before.

I struck out for old New York,
Thought I'd find me a job of work,
One leg up and the other leg down,
I come through a hole in the ground.
Holland Tunnel. Three mile tube. Skippin' through that Hudson River dew.

I blew into New York town,
And I looked up and I looked down,
Everybody I seen on the streets
Was all a-runnin' through that hole in the ground.
I foller 'em. See where they're a-goin'.
Newsboy say they're trying to smoke a rat out of a hole.

I run down thirty-eight flights of stairs,
Boy, hoity! I do declare!
I rode old elevator twenty-two
And spent my last three nickels, too.
Feller in a little cage got it. Herd me through a shoot-the-shoot.
Run me through three clothes wringers.
So many people in there I couldn't even fall down.

I swung onto my old guitar,
Train come a-rumbling down the track,
I got shoved into the wrong damned car
With three grass widows on my back.
Two of 'em lookin' for home relief.
Other one just investigatin'.

Well, I got me a job in this man's town
On this subway train under the ground;
My pay's so low I went in the hole,
And I can't get out, folks, to save my soul.
Wages on the floor, prices on the ceiling.

I want to work and help win this war,
And that's what I work on the subway for;
My car's so loaded, jammed and packed,
My wheels keep a-jumpin' on the railroad track.
Wheels need greasey. Pay needs raisin'.

Well, I joined the union to win my rights,
I went to Mr. Delaney and put up a fight;
I told him my job was a part of my soul,
But Delaney don't want my wheels to roll.
Neither does Mr. Hitler. Pestbrook Wiggler -- I mean Jibber--
Pestbrook, Niggler -- so, skip it.

I told Mr. Delaney if my kids don't eat
All of you workers will walk the street.
Mr. Delaney just stretched and yawned.

He must know there's a war goin' on.
People fightin'. Winnin' freedom.
I got to thinkin' bout this war I'm tryin' to win,
So I went to the mayor once again.
I said, "I don't want no Hitler scale,
I want to roll to victory on a union rail!"

So if you want to win this war I'll tell you what to do,
You got to work and fight for the C.W.U.,
You got to toot your whistle, got to ring your bell,
You got to keep all the Fascists in a union hell.
Keep 'em there. Don't let 'em out.

You got to join the union, got to pay your dues,
Got to shake hands and stick it through.
I'm a union man in a union war,
And it's a union world I'm a-fightin' for...
Union or Fascist. Take your choice.

SIDE II, Band 5: TALKING INFLATION BLUES

This song was originally published in a special issue of the People's Songs journal (Vol. 1, supplement to No. 3, April-May, 1946) devoted entirely to the question of continuing the Office of Price Administration (OPA). The OPA had been created during World War II in an attempt to stop inflation and to keep prices on consumer goods, rents, etc. from rising. In the early part of 1946, several bills were up in congress to do away with the OPA. Numerous social, political, and labor organizations campaigned vigorously to continue the OPA. Arrayed against it were various lobbyists, backed by unlimited funds, whose main job was to influence congress to vote the OPA out of existence. "Talking Inflation Blues" was one of the nine songs to appear in the "Fight to Save OPA" issue of People's Songs, and was written by Tom Glazer.

Causes of the depression: by eminent hands.

"I don't know anything about any depression. What depression is this? You know I really can't discuss anything." - J. P. Morgan to ship
reporters on returning from Europe May 6, 1913.

Well, friends and neighbors of the United States,
Come listen to a story that's hard to relate.
Takes place in a town where the hot air blows
Over the lobbies where the filibuster grows.
Hardy Perennial. Evergreen. Spinweat.

Now, down in that town there's a feller working there,
He ain't a barber, but he gets in people's hair;
He gets paid to squeeze, gets paid to twist,
They call this critter a lobbyist.
He's high pressure. All thumbs. Fits any size button-hole.

'Course, he's only doing his job. He's a hard worker.
Gets a bonus
From the National Association of Manufacturers,
From the National Association of Real Estate Boards,
From the National Association of Dry Goods Merchants, Big shots.

Well, this here feller, I'm sorry to say,
He's trying to kill the O.P.A.
He's trying to kill the housing bill,
And other good things he's trying to kill.
He's a killer. But he's only doing his job. He's a hard worker. Gets a bonus
From the National Association of Manufacturers,
From the National Association of Real Estate Boards,
From the National Association of Dry Goods Merchants, Big shots.
Well, friends and neighbors of the U.S.A.,
I'll tell you what'll happen if they kill O.P.A.
Your beat-up boat won't be worth a cent,
Prices'll fly to the firmament.
But the lobbyist, he's only doing his job. He's a hard worker. Gets a bonus.
From the National Association of Manufacturers,
From the National Association of Real Estate Brokers,
From the National Association of Dry Goods Merchants,
Big shots.

Now, if you don't want to spend ten dollars for a pound of steak,
And if you don't want to spend fifty dollars a pound for cake,
And if you don't want to spend twenty dollars a pound for greens,
Two hundred for rent, and Lord knows what for beans,
Write a card to your Congressman now, today,
Tell him to save that O.P.A.,
Tell him to fight just as hard as he's able
For the National Association of American People—
Biggest shots.

SIDE II, Band 6: OLD MAN ATOM

This song was composed by Vern Partlow in 1946, and was originally known as the "Talking Atomic Blues." Partlow, a former West Coast newspaperman, has been a very prominent writer of social-conscious songs for many years, and was himself a singer-guitarist of some reputation, occasionally being called upon by various unions to help out in that capacity during organizing campaigns.

Unlike most songs of a protest nature, this one became widely known as a result of numerous recordings and printings. Indeed, there were at one time more than 15 different recordings of this song on the market, several of which were issued by major record companies. Though more than 12 years old, new renditions of this song are still occasionally issued on records, the most recent being issued as a popular recording in England! In the hands of the many people who have sung it both in live performances and for recordings, it has undergone various changes, none, however, of a major nature. Most recorded versions have excluded various stanzas, either in an attempt to fit the song on the limited space of a popular recording, or because various singers have objected to one or another stanza, while believing in the value of recording the song.

The version sung here was learned by Dr. Greenway from a popular recording of the song made by Sam Hinton several years ago. The introductory verse, aiding in bringing the song up to date, is by an anonymous writer.

Don't you worry, honey child,
Don't you cry no more,
It's just a little old Atom bomb
In a little old limited way;
It's just a bit of war, child,
In a little old tactical shell,
And all it'll do is blow us all
To a limited little old Hell.

I'm gonna preach you all a sermon about Old Man Atom;
And I don't mean the Adam in the Bible datum,
No, I don't mean the Adam that Mother Eve mated,
I mean the thing that science liberated.
The thing that Einstein says he's scared of. And when we
Einstein's scared, oh, brother, I'm scared.

Well, if you're scared of the A-bomb, here's what you've
got to do:
You gotta gather all the people in the world with you,
For if we don't get together and do it—well, first thing you know
We're gonna blow this world plumb to
Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Alamagordo, Bikini.

Well, life used to be such a simple joy,
The cyclotron was just a super toy;
And folks got born, they'd work and marry,
And "atom" was just a word in the dictionary.
And then it happened.

And the science boys from every clime
They all pitched in with overtime
And before they knew it, the job was done,
And they'd hitched up the power of the god-durned sun;
Put a barrel on old Sol,
Splittin' atoms. While the diplomats went on a-splittin' hairs.

Business as usual.
Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Alamagordo, Bikini.

Well, the atom's international, in spite of hysteria,
Flourishes in Utah, and in Siberia,
And whether he's black, white, red or brown,
The question is this, when you boil it down:
To be or not to be. That's the question.

And the answer to it ain't military datum
Like who git there fastest with the mostest atom,
No, the people of the world must decide their fate—
They got to stick together—or disintegrate.
We hold this truth to be self-evident:
That all men may be created equal.
Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Londy, up the line;
Alamagordo, Bikini, it's your turn, you.

Yes, it's up to the people, 'cause the atom don't care,
And you can't fence him in, he's just like air,
And he don't give a hoot about any politics
Or who got what into whichever fix—
All he wants to do is just sort of sit around and have
his nucleus
Bombed by neutrons.

So the moral of this, just as plain as day:
Old Man Atom, he's here to stay.
He's gonna stick around, that's clear to see—
But ah, my dearly beloved, are we!
So listen folks, here's my thesis:
Peace in the world, or the world in pieces.
Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Alamagordo, Bikini.

SIDE II, Band 7: I LIKE IKE

This fascinating piece of political sarcasm was written
by Joe Glazer (no relation to Tom Glazer, who wrote
"Talking Social Worker" and "Talking Inflation").
Glazer, of Akron, Ohio, is Educational Director of the
United Rubber Workers, AFL-CIO, and is widely known
throughout the United States and Canada as a singer and
recorder of songs of the labor movement. He recorded
a shorter, watered-down version of this song several
years ago under the title "I Like Republicans", probably
having been pressured into using that title by political
expediency dictated by those who believed that a direct
frontal attack on President Eisenhower's popularity might
prove disastrous at election time. The version sung here
has never previously been recorded or published, but was
sung into Dr. Greenway's tape recorder by Glazer himself.
several years ago. Stearns 13 and 14 (concerning Sherman Adams and Jim Hagerty) were written by Dr. Greenway in an attempt to bring the song up to date.

I like Ike. He's a friendly guy. When things go wrong, he doesn't pine and sigh—No, that great big smile and friendly grin, Helps you forget the mess that we're in.

I like Ike. Love that smile. Makes me feel so good.

Well, a pal of mine lost his job and his car While Ike was out golfing, shooting for par Couldn't find a job for days and days, But for good old Ike he had plenty of praise, he said, "I like Ike. Love that smile. Makes me forget my troubles."

Well, the government's big and Ike's so busy He can't run it himself or he'd soon get dizzy So he's got a lot of fellows just sort of helping him out While he's shooting the quail or catching the trout.

And the number-one helper in the whole shebang Is a fellow named Humphrey, the leader of the gang; I don't mean Robert, Minnesota's pride and joy— I mean "Trickle-Down George," the banker's boy. George says, "We got to balance the budget." And when he says "We," He means you. And me. But not old George.

Trickle-Down George is in charge of the taxes; He's the big boy in the Washington-Vall Street axis. He wouldn't cut the taxes for you and me, He says that's "irresponsibility," But for the big fat cats he swings his ax, Siff, bang, wham, down comes their tax, But don't worry, brother. You'll soak up a couple of drops When she trickles down.

Well, another little helper is Douglas MacKaye— He's the man in charge of the giveaway. He gives away oil and public power And the timberlands for Eisenhower. "Cause Ike's so busy both night and day He hasn't got time to give the stuff away. That Ike, he says with those twinkling eyes, "Why, it all helps private enterprise." But I like Ike. I love that smile. Makes me feel so good.

Well, another little helper that Ike once had Was Oveta Culp Hobby, and her story's very sad. So member of the Cabinet was ever sweeter Or less efficient than dear old Veta. She looked good on the cover of Vogue magazine But she sure made a mess of the milk vaccine.

And the schools? Well, the schools are jammed from the floors to the roof. But Oveta Culp Hobby said, "That's no proof That schools must have some government aid. We've got to have another big study made—grade by grade."

Well, by then the kids will be wearing long pants And it'll be too late to give 'em another chance. That was Ike's secretary of very little health, not much education And inadequate welfare.

Now, there's another member of the Eisenhower crew— That's Charles E. Wilson, with the GM view. He says, "What's good for General Motors is good for me and you." But as Mr. Chrysler knows, it ain't necessarily true. Now Charlie likes dogs but he don't like folks, And when men are out of work he's got lots of jokes. He's got an adding machine where his heart ought to be, But Eisenhower says, "He's the man for me." But don't get me wrong. I like Ike. Love that smile. Makes me feel so good.

Well, Ike's got a few pals in the government Who'd never think of taking a single cent But of course they don't mind trying out their luck At picking up on the side a buck Or two. Or three. Or four. Or maybe more.

Well, it's a big business government from A to Z And there's not much room for you and me. There's room for Wall Street and U.S. Steel, And if you happen to be a GM wheel Well, brother, you'll roll. Automatic Shift. Power steering. Finger tip control.