1. Joe Hill Paul Robeson:3:01
(Leo Robinson / Alfred Hayes / Universal-MCA Publishing, ASCAP)
2. Bread and Roses Bobby McFerrin:2:30
(James Oppenheim / Caroline Kohlsaat)
3. Casey Jones (Union Scab) Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers:1:55
(Joe Hill / E.W. Newton)
4. We Shall Not Be Moved/Roll the Union On Joe Glazer:2:23
(John Hammons)
5. Roll the Union On John Hammons:1:07
(John Hammons)
6. Cotton Mill Colic Mike Seeger:2:38
(David McCann)
7. The Mill Was Made of Marble Joe Glazer:3:59
(Joe Glazer)
8. Aragon Mill Peggy Seeger:3:09
(St. Kam / Joe Hill Music, ASCAP)
9. Talking Union Almanac Singers:3:02
(Lempel / Hayes-Seeger / Stamford Music Inc., BMI)
10. 1913 Massacre Woody Guthrie:3:36
(Woody Guthrie / Sanga Music Inc., BMI)
11. The Preacher and the Slave Utah Phillips:2:19
(Joe Hill)
12a. Which Side Are You On? Florence Reece
(Florence Reece / Stamford Music, BMI)
(Florence Reece / Stamford Music, BMI)
13. Hold the Fort Joe Uehlein:3:58
14. Union Maid New Harmony Sisterhood Band:3:06
(Woody Guthrie / TMO / Adox Motion Inc., BMI)
15. Too Old to Work Joe Glazer:2:51
(Joe Glazer)
16. Black Lung Hazel Dickens:3:22
(Hazel Dickens / Happy Valley Music, BMI)
17. Been Rolling So Long Larry Penn:4:00
(Larry Penn / Cookie Man Music, BMI)
18. VDT Tom Juravich:1:56
(Tom Juravich)
19. Automation Joe Glazer:2:34
(Joe Glazer)
20. I’m Union and I’m Proud Eddie Starr:2:57
(Eddie Starr)
21. I’m a Union Card Kenny Winfree:2:27
(Kenny Winfree)
22. Carpal Tunnel John O’Connor:2:37
(John O’Connor)
23. We Just Come to Work Here, We Don’t Come to Die Anne Teaney:2:49
(Harry Stampler)
24. One Day More Elaine Purkey:3:38
(Elaine Purkey)
25. We Do the Work Jan Frorer:2:41
(Jan Frorer)
26. De Colores Baldamar Velásquez and Aguilac Negra:2:59
27. Solidarity Forever Joe Glazer:2:28
(Ralph Chaplin)
A NOTE FROM JOE GLAZER

When we were putting together this collection of labor songs, we could choose from dozens of records, cassettes, and CDs. In fact, we had enough good labor songs for two CDs, and perhaps Smithsonian Folkways will issue a second CD of classic labor songs in the near future.

It was a different story in 1950. When I made my first record of labor songs, you had to search long and hard to find union or labor songs on a record. But there were a few choice items available. Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers put out an outstanding album called Talking Union in the 1940s, and three of the songs on that album (“Talking Union,” “Which Side are You On,” and “Union Maid”) are included on this CD. Two of the songs on my first record (“The Mill Was Made of Marble” and “Too Old to Work”) are also included.

The eccentric, idealistic Moe Asch, who ran Folkways Records specialized in general folk and ethnic records, but he also produced some important labor records by Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, and others. In 1954, when I had the idea of producing a record of songs by the Wobbly labor martyr, Joe Hill, Moe Asch ran with the idea and wasted no time in pressing the record.

In 1970, I established Collector Records, with special emphasis on labor and union songs. My first catalog was a one-page sheet promoting four of my own records. In a few years, I began recording other labor singers, especially those who had never been recorded. Some of these singers—Bobbie Mcgee, Kenny Winfree, Larry Penn, Eddie Starr, John O’Connor—are included on this CD.

Today we have a growing list of labor and union singers who are making CDs of their own. I added them to my catalog, and by the 1990s I had listed more than 100 CDs and cassettes.

In 1978, I was one of the founders of the Labor Heritage Foundation, and I have served as its chair since then. The foundation has nurtured labor artists and promoted the use of labor music and the arts to help build solidarity in the labor movement. It has taken over the distribution of recordings of labor music.

I have heard it said many times: “They don’t sing anymore in the labor movement.” The implication is that in the old, hard days, trade unionists were always marching and singing, but in these modern times, labor music is dead. This is a romantic but inaccurate picture of the role of labor songs in the American labor movement.

There are probably more labor songs being sung and recorded than ever before. Union singers, folksingers, and others are writing and recording all kinds of songs about working conditions, safety on the job, discrimination, unemployment, and other issues. Because of the relative ease and low cost of CD production, we are sure to get many union songs to help tell labor’s story and to lift the spirits of working men and women. In the year 2006, the labor movement can truly use such a musical uplift.

Joe Glazer, January 2006
INTRODUCTION

In 2002, Smithsonian Folkways released a collection called Classic Bluegrass from Smithsonian Folkways (SFW 40092). It was well received, and the label decided to go back into its vaults to craft other “Classic” releases, intended to be doors into a larger world. If you hear singers or musicians you particularly like, explore them further. This recording investigates some of the best of the American labor songs in the Smithsonian Folkways collection. This recording is intended as an introduction to many of these recordings on the label and others, and a chance for listeners to experience them perhaps again, or for the first time.

This release, Classic Labor Songs from Smithsonian Folkways, celebrates the addition of Joe Glazer’s Collector Records label to the Smithsonian Folkways family of labels. The Glazer family donated the label’s recordings to the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in 2006.

Joe Glazer (1918—), “Labor’s Troubadour,” has spent a lifetime as one of America’s noted historians of labor song. He and his guitar have performed for millions of workers, strikers, and students. He is the author of several significant labor songs, notably “The Mill Was Made of Marble.” Over his career, in addition to his performing, he was employed by the United Rubber Workers, the Textile Workers Union of America, and the United States Information Agency. He founded Collector Records in 1970 to distribute his own recordings of labor songs and those of other younger and newer performers that he had met through his work. Many of these artists he met through the Labor Heritage Foundation, which he founded in 1978, and its yearly Great Labor Arts Exchange. He had been frustrated that his early recordings were for labels that had either gone out business or dropped the titles. Having his own label gave him control: “I was more interested in keeping the music alive than making money” (Glazer 2001:279).

Joe Glazer has been involved in writing songs to accompany election campaigns. He worked for the 1964 Hubert Humphrey and John F. Kennedy campaigns, and subsequently recorded many of these songs.

This collection draws from the recordings on Collector Records, which includes Glazer’s own recordings and those of other artists whom Joe has helped champion. The collection also draws from older historical recordings in the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections at the Smithsonian and its Folkways Records, Paredon Records, and Smithsonian Folklife Festival collections.

Over the years, Folkways Records (now Smithsonian Folkways), has produced and distributed high-quality recordings of American folk music. Folkways founder Moses Asch made a commitment to artists that their Folkways recordings would never go out of print. The Smithsonian keeps that tradition alive.

I will not go into great detail about the history of the American labor movement, various strikes, and/or these particular labor songs. I suggest you consult Joe Glazer’s important work on the subject, listed in the bibliography. Joe Glazer, on his own and with Edith Fowke, goes into detail about most of these songs, reflecting deep research into the backgrounds of the events and people involved. These liner notes are in debt to these sources.

In 1987, Ralph Rinzler (1934–1994), folk musician, record producer, and talent scout for the Newport Folk Festival, then Assistant Secretary for Public Service at the Smithsonian Institution, negotiated the donation of the Folkways label to the museum. The following year, the Smithsonian Folkways record label was founded. Rinzler had been involved in earlier Folkways albums and knew the value of the collection. From its beginnings, Smithsonian Folkways has set out to reissue material from its archives with expanded
limer notes and updated sound. The Smithsonian has since acquired other smaller like-minded record companies: Cook, Paredon, Dyer-Bennet, Fast Folk Musical Magazine, Monitor, Collector, and MORE. These labels comprise what is called the Smithsonian Folkways Collection, and they include folk recordings in their catalogs. More than 3000 titles are available through the Smithsonian on on-demand compact disc. To understand the breadth of the collection, please explore the Smithsonian Folkways website, where short audio examples exist for all 40,000 tracks. In addition, visit the Smithsonian Global Sound website, where all these tracks are available for download. In addition, all the original liner notes can be viewed free. If you like a track, we suggest you learn more about the rest of the recording that it came from.

Jeff Place, January 2006

The following notes include bibliographic citations, listed in the bibliography at the end. Consult the bibliography for complete titles. By consulting these sources, you can find lyrics and additional information. Lyrics for this recording can be found on the Smithsonian Folkways website.

SONGS

1. JOE HILL
Paul Robeson
Paul Robeson, vocal (From Favorite Songs Monitor 580)

This song, about the great labor songwriter, Joe Hill, was composed by Earl Robinson and Alfred Hayes. Joe Hill (1879–1915) was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (the I.W.W., better known as the Wobblies) and was their most important songwriter. The Wobblies, through their publication The Little Red Songbook, used music extensively and were the great singing union. Hill wrote "The Preacher and the Slave," "Casey Jones, the Union Scab," "The Rebel Girl," and other songs during this time. He was born Joel Haggström in Gävle, Sweden. At age 23, he moved to the United States, where he joined the Wobblies. He was accused, tried, and convicted of murder in Salt Lake City in 1915, and was subsequently executed by firing squad. There has been disagreement over the years whether he was really guilty. Many modern music fans know "Joe Hill" through the performance of this song in the movie and on the recordings from the Woodstock Music and Arts Fair in 1969. It is a good guess that many of these listeners do not know Hill's history, and have never heard of the "Wobblies."

Paul Robeson (1898–1976) was one of the great figures of the 20th-century. He was an accomplished singer, actor, and athlete, and a champion of civil rights. A graduate of Columbia University Law School and the owner of more than a dozen varsity letters in sports (Baggalaar 1976:320), he was not content to be accorded the status of second-class citizen. After spending the 1930s living abroad to escape the social conditions in the United States, he became deeply involved in politics and the fight for progressive causes. During the 1950s, he suffered persecution at the hands of the House Un-American Activities Committee, and the government took his passport away from him. At the end of the decade, he received it back, and he left for England, where he remained until 1963, when
he returned to Harlem. It has only been in recent years that he has started to achieve the historical recognition he has long deserved.


2. BREAD AND ROSES

Bobbie McGee

Bobbie McGee, guitar and vocal (From Bread and Roses: Songs of Working Women Collector 1933, 1981)

This is a song inspired by a textile worker strike in Lawrence, Massachusetts, in 1912. Woonen mills there employed some 20,000 workers. In a parade during the strike, young girls carried a banner with the slogan We Want Bread and Roses Too. Poet James Oppenheim wrote this poem, which was subsequently put to music by Caroline Kohlsaat (Glazer 2001:24).

Bobbie McGee, now known as Barbara Wren, is a labor singer who performed at union meetings and rallies, colleges and universities, folk clubs, and folk festivals. She has also performed at demonstrations for the women's movement, and for the farm workers and other worthy causes (from the notes to CL-1933, 1981). She lives in New Jersey.


3. CASEY JONES (THE UNION SCAB)

Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers

Pete Seeger, banjo and vocal (From The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs Folkways 5285, 1955)

This is another song by the great songwriter Joe Hill, and one from the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) Little Red Songbook. Hill adapted the popular vaudeville song about railroad engineer Casey Jones by Eddie Newton and Lawrence Seibert and published in 1909. When interviewed, Seibert and Newton stated that they got the song from an "old Negro song, started by a roundhouse worker named Wallace Saunders" (Cohen 2000:140). Hill's song is still frequently performed today. "SP" refers to the Southern Pacific Railroad.

Pete Seeger (b. 1919) is the dean of 20th-century folk singers. As of this writing, he has been performing and lending his energies to causes he believes in for more than sixty years. Born to a musical family, he grew up surrounded by music: his father was the eminent musicologist Charles Seeger, and his mother, Constance, was a concert violinist; in addition, his siblings Mike, Peggy, and Penny and various cousins and relatives by marriage had successful recording careers.

Pete began to record for Moses Asch and Folkways Records in 1943. In the next forty years, he recorded more than five dozen albums for Asch. Seeger is a fine interpreter and presenter of traditional folksong and an important composer of topical songs. During the folksong revival, he was one of its major figures and a major influence on many other musicians. Much like Woody Guthrie, he believes in the use of his music for the betterment of mankind. He still performs, well into his eighties.

The Almanac Singers were a musical collective of politically active singers and songwriters who were based in New York City in the 1940s. They lived communally and performed at rallies, picket lines, and labor hootenannies. They once had a chapter of members in Detroit. At various times, membership included Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Bess Lomax Hawes, Butch Hawes, Lee Hays, Millard Lampell, Sis Cunningham, and Arthur Stern. They recorded for Keynote and General Records. Seeger and Hays would later go on to form the Weavers, a popular singing group.


4. WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED / ROLL THE UNION ON (ORGANIZING MEDLEY)

Joe Glazer

Joe Glazer, vocalist and backup from the Saldom Scene, Joe Uthelein, Laurel Blaydes, and Maggie. (From Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs Collector 1918, 1971)

In 1931, striking coal miners in the Kanawha Valley in West Virginia modified the old Christian hymn "I Shall Not Be Moved" into one of the most important labor songs, "We Shall Not Be Moved." The song lends itself perfectly to the insertion of topical references. For example, the West Virginia strikers began to sing in one verse, "Frank Keeney is my captain; we shall not be moved" in honor of their leader (Glazer 2001:32).

For information about Joe Glazer, see the introduction.

Commentary about the song "Roll the Union On" can be found in the next track.


5. ROLL THE UNION ON

John Handcox

John Handcox, vocals

(From The Smithsonian Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, alnunium disc 30, recorded 9 March 1937 by Charles Seeger and Sidney Robertson Cowell)

John L. Handcox (1904-1992), an organizer for the Southern Tenant Farmer's Union, was a sharecropper from Arkansas during the 1930s. The STFU argued for better conditions for the tenant farmers, who worked the land for the property owner and frequently had to give up half of the members' profits to the owner. During the Great Depression, life became very rough
for these farmers. The STFU was an integrated union, and this fact, coupled with their agitation for better working conditions, created a violent backlash on the part of many other locals (Mark Allan Jackson, notes to John Handcox Songs, Stories and Poems of the Southern Tenant Farmer’s Union, p. 2). Handcox wrote several songs for the union, including the classics “Roll the Union On” and “Raggedy Raggedy.” He was forced out of Arkansas by fear of lynching and organized for the STFU outside the state through the 1930s until the end of the Depression. He then was inactive until the 1980s, when he again began to appear at union gatherings, including the Great Labor Arts Exchange. “Roll the Union On” uses the melody of the gospel song “Roll the Chariot On” (Jackson 2004:16). It has become a classic labor song, and is another song that easily lends itself to improvisation.


6. COTTON MILL COLIC

Mike Seeger
Mike Seeger, vocal, guitar and harmonica (from Tippi, Loom and Rail: Songs of the Industrialization of the South Folkways, 5273, 1956)

David McCann (1905–1964), a textile mill worker in Gastonia, North Carolina, composed this song in 1926 and recorded it for Victor in 1930. He became a textile worker and a proficient guitarist at an early age. He sang the song during textile strikes in the late 1920s, but after the murder of Gastonia union organizer Ella May Wiggins in 1929, he left North Carolina. He found himself in Memphis in 1930, just in time for the Victor recording session where he recorded “Cotton Mill Colic” (Charles Wolfe, www.countryworks.com).

Alan Lomax published this song in Folk Songs of North America. McCann later recorded a follow-up, called “Cotton Mill Colic, No. 2.” After a brief music career, he went back to work in the mills. Mike Seeger interviewed him in 1961, a few years before his death.

Mike Seeger (b. 1933) is a member of the musical Seeger family, half-brother to Pete and son of Charles and his second wife, Ruth Crawford Seeger. As a musician and a member of the New Lost City Ramblers, Mike Seeger was one of the more prolific recording artists on the Folkways label. He was involved in recording and producing recordings by the McGee Brothers, Kilby Snow, the Stoneman Family, Dock Boggs, Elizabeth Cotten, and others.

He has had a long career as a performer as documenter of American musicians, and has become proficient at numerous instruments in the process. He is one of the nation’s authorities on American vernacular music. In recent years, he has again begun to record new collections of his music for Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.


7. THE MILL WAS MADE OF MARBLE

Joe Glazer
Joe Glazer, guitar and vocal; with backup by the Seldom Scene, Maggie, and Laurel Blaydes (from Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs Collector 1918, 1971)

In 1947, while working for the Textile Workers Union of America, Joe Glazer came across an eight-line poem and thought it had the “makings of a good labor song.” He added music and a few more verses (Glazer 2001:48–50). With one modification, he has been singing it ever since. It has become one of the labor movement’s most popular songs. It has been translated into several languages and sung worldwide.

For information on Joe Glazer, see the introduction.


8. ARAGON MILL

Peggy Seeger
Peggy Seeger, vocal and guitar; Calum MacColl, guitar (from From Where I Stand: Topical Songs from America and England Folkways 5653, 1982)

Peggy Seeger (b. 1935) was born in New York to a musical family; her father, Charles, and mother, Ruth Crawford Seeger, were eminent muscologists, and Pete is her half-brother. During her childhood, her parents worked at creating anthologies of folksongs, so she was exposed to countless tunes. Starting with piano, she gradually learned to play a host of folk instruments—guitar, banjo, Appalachian dulcimer, autoharp, and concertina. In 1956, she traveled to England to perform in a television production of Dark of the Moon. While there, she joined the folk group the Ramblers, which included Ewan MacColl. The two started performing as a duo and were married two years later. Central figures in the British folksong revival, they were involved in many
projects, including the beloved British radio series *The Radio Ballads* (with Charles Parker).

Peggy has written and performed many songs and recorded dozens of albums—solo, with Ewan, and with others. Since the early 1980s, she has sung with Irene Scott and has continued to tour and sing. She currently lives in Asheville,

North Carolina.

Si Kahn (b. 1944), an important American labor songwriter, has worked as an organizer and composed many songs about Southern workers (Glazer 2001:232). He has written songs like this one about working conditions and mill hands' lives in the textile plants of the South. One worker laid off by a shut-down mill once told him, "It's so quiet, I can't sleep"—which was the inspiration for this song (Glazer 2001:234).


9. TALKING UNION
The Almanac Singers

The Almanac Singers: Pete Seeger, vocal and guitar
(From *The Original Talking Union and Other Union Songs* Folkways 5265, 1955)

Pete Seeger once wrote that when he and the Almanac Singers met Woody Guthrie, they were "mightily impressed with his 'Talking Blues' form: two lines that rhyme, two more that rhyme, then two or three irregular, free form lines following as a comment, before the next stanza' (Talking Union 6 [April 1983]; Guy Logsdon, notes to SFW 40100). The musical style of "the talking blues" as used by Pete Seeger, Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and others lends itself perfectly to humorous social commentary. It is a style dating back to Chris Bouchillion, a country-music novelty artist who recorded in the 1920s. Apparently, he was not much of a singer, and his producer suggested he try talking his way through a song. His performance of "The Talking Blues" ("the Original Talking Blues") was recorded in April 1926 and became very popular. Singer Robert Lunn adapted Bouchillion's style and performed many of Bouchillon's pieces. Woody Guthrie learned the style from Lunn, and subsequently Bob Dylan learned it from Guthrie.

For information about Pete Seeger and the Almanacs, see track 3.


10. 1913 MASSACRE
Woody Guthrie

Woody Guthrie, guitar and vocals
(From *Struggle Folkways 2485, 1970/Smithsonian Folkways 40025, 1990*)

In 1913, the Western Federation of Miners struck against the copper-mine owners in Calumet, Michigan, seeking safer working conditions. On Christmas eve of that year, company strikers arrived at the miners' Christmas party. They barred the doors and yelled "fire!"; in the panic that followed, 73 children were smothered or trampled to death (Logsdon, notes to SFW 40102, 1998).

The classic image of a folk singer with a harmonica rack and a guitar slung over his shoulder is the image of Woody Guthrie. Guthrie (1912–1967) was a prolific songwriter, author, and artist. He composed more than 2,000 songs, including the American classics "This Land Is Your Land" and "So Long, It's Been Good to Know You." He made the vast majority of his recordings for Moses Asch in Asch's cramped little New York studio, but even they constituted only one about one-tenth of the songs he composed. He was a fine interpreter of traditional American folksongs and country songs and a marvelous composer of topical songs, commenting on the political issues of the times.

11. THE PREACHER AND THE SLAVE
Utah Phillips

Utah Phillips, guitar and vocal, with Saul Broyda and other members of the chorus. (Also known as "Pie in the Sky" and "Longhanded Preacher"); from the 1971 festival of American Folklife, archive reel FF-1971-77R-0029; recorded 3 July 1971

This is another song from the Industrial Workers of the World, with lyrics written by Joe Hill. The melody is the evangelical Protestant song "Sweet Bye-and-Bye," copyrighted by S. Fillmore Bennett and J. P. Webster in 1868. The Wobblies were interested in receiving their just rewards for their labors while still on earth, and were not impressed by the pie-in-the-sky preachers they encountered in many of the down-and-out neighborhoods in which they lived (Fowke and Glazer 1960:157).

A number of similar hymns were modified into Wobblly songs, including this one.
A forty-year member of the Industrial Workers of the World, singer, songwriter, and storyteller Utah Phillips (b. 1935) has been using his talents for political causes for many years. Coming out of the great folk revival of the 1960s, he has spent his life writing about the workers and the handicrapples of the West. He "retired" from performing in 1996, but has continued to release collections of his music, sometimes collaborating with Mark Ross, Rosalie Sorrels, or Ani DiFranco. He lives in Nevada City, California. This recording comes from his appearance at the 1971 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, in a program on Working Americans.


12A. WHICH SIDE ARE YOU ON? 
Florence Reece
Florence Reece, vocals (from the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, archive reel, FF-1971-7TR-0087, recorded 3 July 1971) 

Florence Reece (1900–1986) was from Harlan County, Kentucky. In 1931, the coal miners went on strike in Harlan, and armed company deputies roamed the countryside terrorizing the mining communities and looking for union leaders. Reece’s husband, Sam, was one of the leaders. A group of men led by Sheriff J. H. Blair came to her house looking for him while he was out. They ransacked the house and waited to shoot him if he returned. Affected by this experience, Florence Reece wrote the words to “Which Side Are You On?” on a wall-calendar (Fowke and Glazer 1960:55). It has become one of the true standards in labor song.

This recording comes from Reece’s appearance at the 1971 Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife. It is followed by a rendition by the Almanac Singers.


13. HOLD THE FORT 
Joe Uehlein 
Joe Uehlein, vocal and guitar; Laurel Blaydes and Tom Moran, vocals and mandolin; John Gower, banjo (From Two Roads—20 Years by Joe Uehlein; 2002; recorded 18 September 1991) 

"Hold the Fort" began its life as a gospel hymn written in 1870 by Phillip Bliss (1838–1876), who was inspired by a story about the bravery of Union troops defending a fort near Atlanta, Georgia in 1864. In 1873, the evangelical singer Ira David Sankey (1840–1908) took the hymn to England on one of his revival tours, and some years later the British Transport Workers parodied it and used it in their struggles. In the United States, the Knights of Labor also used the song, and it continued to evolve. The Wobblies began to use it in the early 20th-century, and it has also become a labor standard (Fowke and Glazer 1960:33). The Almanac Singers used it as a war song during World War II. In this version, sung at a huge Solidarity Day rally in Washington, D.C., in 1981, Uehlein has substituted the phrase "Union workers be strong" for "Union men be strong" to give recognition to the important roles women are now playing in the labor movement.

Joe Uehlein (b. 1953), a labor activist from Maryland, helped Joe Glazer organize the Labor Arts Foundation. In the 1990s, he formed the labor rock group The Bones of Contention, which performed at rallies and labor conventions (Glazer 2001:277). He currently leads a roots-rock band called the U-Liners, which plays at many union functions.


14. UNION MAID 
The New Harmony Sisterhood Band 
The New Harmony Sisterhood Band: Deborah Silverstein, vocal and guitar; Kendall Hale, vocal and fiddle; Katie Toole, vocal and fiddle; Marcia Dohi, vocal and mandoline; Pat Ouellette, bass (From Ain’t I a Woman Paredon 1038, 1977) 

The New Harmony Sisterhood is made up of five Boston-area women, many of whom met in a feminist-studies course at the Goddard-Cambridge Graduate School for Social Change in 1973–1974. The group was a musical entity and a collective that used music to work toward their shared political goals. Barbara Dane and Irwin Silber recorded the group for their Paredon Record label.

“Union Maid” is one of the best known of Woody Guthrie’s songs. While attending a union
16. BLACK LUNG
Hazel Dickens
Hazel Dickens, vocal (From the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, archive reel FP-1971-7R-H-0028, 3 July 1971)

Hazel Dickens (b. 1935) was born and raised in Mercer County, West Virginia, in coal-mining country. Her father was a minister and banjo player. After moving to Baltimore in the 1950s to find work, she met Alice Gerrard, who had grown up in California. The two shared a love of country and bluegrass music and fell into a group of musicians who performed together locally.

Having grown up in the coal areas of West Virginia, Hazel saw life in the mines firsthand. Not afraid to speak her mind, she has composed a number of important protest songs dealing with the struggles in the mines. Her songs have been featured in the films Harlan County USA and Matewan, and she can be seen singing "Conversation with Death" in the film Songcatcher.

Dickens has continued to release solo recordings through Rounder Records. She currently lives in Washington, D.C.

Dickens, Rounder 4025 (CD).

17. BEEN ROLLING SO LONG
Larry Penn
Larry Penn, guitar and vocal
(Also called "Truck Driving Man": from Still Feel Like Rollin': Songs About Trucks and Trains Collector 1943, 1987)

Larry Penn retired after forty years driving a truck. He has written a number of songs about his former occupation. He was asked to perform at a union training school at University of Wisconsin-Madison and learned a number of labor songs for the event (Glazer 2001:256). He began to turn his songwriting talents to labor songs, especially about poor working conditions. Another of his interests, railroads, has found its way into his songs.

"Been Rolling So Long" is an autobiographical song about his life on the road. Says Larry, "I've heard lots of songs about trucks written by guys in Nashville who obviously haven't spent much time behind the wheel" (from the introduction to this song on Collector 1943). Glazer 2001:256–257.

18. VDT
Tom Juravich
Tom Juravich, vocalist and guitar
(From We Just Came Here To Work Here, We Didn't Come Here To Die Collector 1993)

Tom Juravich, a professor at University of Massachusetts and director of its Labor Relations and Research Center, is an accomplished labor singer and songwriter. He has sung at hundreds of union rallies, strikes, and conventions. He teaches out in the field for trade-union activists and leaders (Glazer 2001:241). He has recorded two albums for Flying Fish Records.

When it comes to poor working conditions and on-the-job injuries, the modern workplace has new maladies to replace those of yesteryear. Juravich addresses one of these in this song—the plight of the worker who spends all day in a cubicle doing data entry in front of a video-display terminal.

This song comes from the Collector Record's anthology We Just Came Here To Work Here, We Didn't Come Here To Die, a recording of newer songs dealing with workplace conditions, safety on the job, and injuries. Glazer 2001:244.
19. AUTOMATION
Joe Glazer
Joe Glazer, guitar and vocal, Charlie Byrd, guitar
(From Joe Glazer Sings Labor Songs Collector 1918, 1971)

"During the 1950s the word automation fright-ened workers." Workers were afraid of losing their jobs and the threat became a topic of conversation at union meetings (Glazer 2001:64). Joe Glazer recognized this concern and chose to address it humorously in this song. Apparently the last verse was too scandalous to a Cleveland radio program director to play, so Joe commented it's the only labor song that ever received an "R" rating (Glazer 2001:65). This song was written in the 1950s before the role of women in industry had been acknowledged. Joe Glazer says that whenever he sings this song nowadays, he makes sure to include plenty of female names.


20. I'M UNION AND I'M PROUD
Eddie Starr
Eddie Starr, vocal and guitar with additional instrumentation
(From We are the Working Class: Songs by Eddie Starr Collector 1951, 1991)

Eddie Starr (1956–2003) was an Illinois steelworker who used his skills as a songwriter and rock musician to sing for the cause of labor. He declined a life on the road as a rock musician, and decided to stay home and get a job at the factory to support his family. He performed at numerous union events, rallies, and picket lines. He was a frequent attendee at the Great Labor Arts Exchange.

A third-generation steelworker, Starr frequent-ly performed this song.

22. CARPAL TUNNEL
John O'Connor
John O'Connor, guitar and vocal (From We Just Came Here to Work Here, We Didn't Came Here To Die Collector 1953)

Joe Glazer writes, "Repetitive motion on the assembly line, in the office, or wherever one happens to be working can cause carpal tunnel syndrome" (Glazer, notes to CL 1953). It's one of the most frequent of modern workplace afflictions, occurring among those who perform a great deal of computer data entry. It causes extreme pain in the hands and arms. Like the protagonist in "VDI" (track 18), this worker is suffering from a modern workplace ailment. In this case, he works in a meat-packing plant, but spends long hours typing on a computer keyboard which is a common cause of carpal-tunnel syndrome among modern workers.

John O'Connor is from around Waterloo, Iowa, which is meat-packing country. After hearing the complaints of neighbors who worked at the plant, he was inspired to write this song. He has recorded albums for Chroma and Flying Fish Records, one with the group Shay's Rebellion. He is a founder of Local 1000 of the American Federation of Musicians. He currently lives in New York, where he is an organizer for the New York State Nurses Association.
23. WE JUST COME TO WORK HERE

Anne Feeney

Anne Feeney, vocal and guitar; Michael Organ, drums; Garry Talbot, bass; Danny Terrell, guitar; Tony Bowles, saxophones; Billy Brenner, guitar; Jack Irwin, piano; Nanette Brito, harmony vocal (From the Joe Glazer Collection, compact disc sent by Anne Feeney, Union Maid, n.d.)

According to her website (www.annefeeney.com), Feeney is “an activist, organizer, songwriter, folksinger, troublemaker and hell raiser from Pittsburgh, PA.” She has worked as an attorney and president of the Pittsburgh Musician’s Union. She is involved in numerous causes and comments, “If you're on strike, or in an organizing drive, or doing community organizing for women's rights, the environment, human rights, anti-poverty or anti-racist work, I want to be there.” Utah Phillips has called her the best labor singer in America.

This song was composed by Harry Stamper, a Coos Bay, Oregon, longshoreman. He composed it after being ordered to perform a dangerous maneuver to move a large pile of logs in the hold of a freighter and refusing to do it. He was fired, but an arbitrator ruled in his behalf (Glazer 2001:262). He is an accomplished labor songwriter. Ann Feeney has revised and updated some of his lyrics. OSHA is the federal government’s Occupational, Health, and Safety Administration.


24. ONE DAY MORE

Elaine Purkey

Elaine Purkey, guitar and vocal (From the Ralph Rinzler Memorial Festival, New Market, Tennessee, 9 April 1985)

Elaine Purkey began to compose songs while involved in the Pittston Coal Strike in 1989–1990. She began to perform at festivals in the 1990s and impressed those who heard her, including the great labor songwriter Hazel Dickens.

Elaine was asked to write this song to encourage the strikers at Ravenswood, an aluminum plant in West Virginia. The phrase, coined during the Pittston Coal Strike, means "no matter how long the company or the corporations can stick around, we have enough strength, friendship, and comradery about us and enough belief in what we're doing, we can be there one day more, whatever they do, we'll be there the day after" (Purkey, spoken introduction to the song, 9 April 1995).

25. WE DO THE WORK

Jon Fromer

Jon Fromer, vocal and guitar; David Fromer, guitar; Reed Fromer, vocal and keyboards; Owen Davis, congas; David Lowell, bass; Michael Spire, percussion; Alex and Harriet Bigwell, Christine Haupert-Wenmer, Francisco Herrera, Brenda Savage, Walter Tumer, background vocals (From the Joe Glazer Collection, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections, Smithsonian, Jon Fromer self-produced tape, We Do the Work)

California Jon Fromer has spent a career working in television and radio. He is an active officer of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and the Communications Workers of America. He has been involved in composing songs and participating in drives, strikes, civil rights rallies, and other protest meetings (Glazer 2001:221). He is a member of the Freedom Song Network, an organization of San Francisco–area musicians dedicated to social change.

"We Do the Work" is the theme song of a television program on labor which can be seen around the United States. Glazer 2001:222.
26. DE COLORES
Baldemar Velasquez

Baldemar Velasquez with Aguilera Negra (From the Ralph Clincher Memorial Festival, New Market, Tennessee, 9 April 1995)

Baldemar Velasquez (b. 1947) is the President of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, based in Toledo, Ohio. He leads the band Aguilera Negra, which perform union songs in Spanish (Glazer 2001:277).

"De Colores" is the theme song of the United Farm Workers, for many years led by Cesar Chavez (1927–1993). The UFW continues to fight for the rights of migrant farm laborers in the United States. While the song is sung, the singers hold hands and sway.


27. SOLIDARITY FOREVER
Joe Glazer

Joe Glazer, guitar and vocal
[From I Will Win. Songs of the Wobblies Collector 1927, 1977]

"Solidarity Forever" is the most popular union song on the North American continent. If a union member knows only one union song, it is almost sure to be this (Fowke and Glazer 1960:13). It is still sung at every union rally, and is a fitting song to close out this collection.

For information about Joe Glazer, see the introduction.


SOURCES AND SUGGESTED READING


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ABOUT SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings is the nonprofit record label of the Smithsonian Institution, the national museum of the United States. Our mission is the legacy of Moses Asch, who founded Folkways Records in 1948 to document music, spoken word, instruction, and sounds from around the world. The Smithsonian acquired Folkways from the Asch estate in 1987, and Smithsonian Folkways Recordings has continued the Folkways tradition by supporting the work of traditional artists and expressing a commitment to cultural diversity, education, and increased understanding.

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Songs of the American labor movement over the 20th century called for just wages, dignity, and a fair shake. They voiced grievances, affirmed the value of the worker to society, and expressed hope for life in a more just world. *Classic Labor Songs from Smithsonian Folkways* is a collage of these voices—champions of the movement, singing songs with a passion and love for their fellow workers that rings just as true today as it did then. Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Joe Glazer, the Almanac Singers, and more chronicle the history of the American labor movement in stirring song. 76 MINUTES, 26-PAGE BOOKLET.

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**CLASSIC LABOR SONGS**
from SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS RECORDINGS

1. Joe Hill  Paul Robeson  3:01
2. Bread and Roses  Bobbie McGee  2:30
3. Casey Jones (Union Scab) Pete Seeger and the Almanac Singers  1:55
4. We Shall Not Be Moved / Roll the Union On Joe Glazer  2:23
5. Roll the Union On John Handcox  1:07
6. Cotton Mill Colic Mike Seeger  2:38
7. The Mill Was Made of Marble Joe Glazer  3:59
8. Aragon Mill Peggy Seeger  3:09
9. Talking Union Almanac Singers  3:02
10. 1913 Massacre Woody Guthrie  3:36
11. The Preacher and the Slave Utah Phillips  2:19
12b. Which Side Are You On? Almanac Singers  2:35
13. Hold the Fort Joe Uehlein  3:58
14. Union Maid New Harmony Sisterhood Band  3:06
15. Too Old to Work Joe Glazer  2:51
16. Black Lung Hazel Dickens  3:22
17. Been Rolling So Long Larry Penn  4:00
18. VDT Tom Juravich  1:56
19. Automation Joe Glazer  2:34
20. I'm Union and I'm Proud Eddie Starr  2:57
21. I'm a Union Card Kenny Wintree  2:27
22. Carpal Tunnel John O'Connor  2:37
23. We Just Come to Work Here, We Don't Come to Die Anne Feeney  2:49
24. One Day More Elaine Purkey  3:38
25. We Do the Work Jon Fromer  2:41
26. De Colores Baldemar Velasquez and Aguilas Negras  2:59
27. Solidarity Forever Joe Glazer  2:28

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