

# Folk & Traditional Song Lyrics

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## The Ballad of Bloody Thursday

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As I went walking one day down in Frisco,  
As I went walking in Frisco one day,  
I spied a longshoreman all dressed in white linen,  
Dressed in white linen and cold as the clay.

I see by your outfit that you are a worker,  
These words he did say as I slowly walked by;  
Sit down beside me and bear my sad story,  
For I'm shot in the breast and I know I must die.

It was down on the Front where I worked on the cargoes,  
Worked on the cargoes ten hours a day;  
I lost my right fingers because of the speedup,  
The speedup that killed many a man in my day.

With too much of a sling load on old rusty cable,  
The boss saved ten dollars, ten dollars, I say;  
That old rusty sling broke, and fell on my buddy;  
Ten lousy bucks carried Jimmie away.

Those were the days when the boss owned the union,  
We poor working stiffs -- we had nothing to say;  
Ours was to work and to keep our big traps shut;  
We stood in the shape-up for a dollar a day.

But our children were hungry, their clothing was tattered;  
It's then that we workers began to get wise;  
We tore up our fink books and listened to bridges,  
Saying, look at your kids, brothers, let's organize.

Strong and united we went to the bosses  
For better conditions and a decent day's pay;  
The bosses just laughed and we all had a meeting,  
That's why we're hitting the bricks here today.

Our struggles were many, our struggles were bloody,  
We fought the ship-owners with all that we had;  
With thousand of dollars they tempted our leaders,  
But our guys were honest, they couldn't be had.

It was there on the line that I marched with my brothers,  
It was there on the line as we proudly walked by;

The cops and the soldiers they brought up their rifles,  
I'm shot in the breast and I know I must die.

Four hundred strikers were brutally wounded;  
Four hundred workers and I left to die;  
Remember the day, sir, to all of your children,  
This bloody Thursday the fifth of July.

Don't beat the drums slowly, don't play the pipes lowly,  
Don't play the dead march as they carry me along;  
There's wrongs that need righting, so keep right on fighting  
And lift your proud voices in proud union songs.

Fight on together, you organized workers,  
Fight on together, there's nothing to fear;  
Remember the martyrs of this bloody Thursday,  
Let nothing divide you, and victory is near.

Sung by John Greenway

This modern-day industrial parody commemorates a longshoreman's strike in San Francisco, most probably the violence-ridden strike of 1934, during which a number of workers were killed and many were injured.

Except for the first two stanzas, where an obvious connection can be made to "The Cowboy's Lament", the ballad proceeds to tell its own story of bad working conditions and the bloody strike, only occasionally drawing on a few stock lines from the parent ballad.

The ballad sung here by John Greenway was included in his book "American Folksongs of Protest" (Philadelphia, 1953), the text having been supplied to him by the People's Songs Library.

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