

The Ballad of Harry Bridges

Words by Lee Hays, Millard Lampell and Pete Seeger (1942)

Music: traditional ("The Great American Folk Melody")

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Let me tell you of a sailor, Harry Bridges is his name,
An honest union leader whom the bosses tried to frame,
He left home in Australia, to sail the seas around,
He sailed across the ocean to land in Frisco town.
There was only a company union, the bosses had their way.
A worker had to stand in line for a lousy dollar a day.
When up spoke Harry Bridges, "Us workers got to get wise.
Our wives and kids will starve to death if we dont get organized."

CHORUS (AFTER MOST OR ALL VERSES):

Oh, the FBI is worried, the bosses they are scared
They cant deport six million men they know.
And were not going to let them send Harry over the seas.
Well fight for Harry Bridges and build the CIO.
They built a big bonfire by the Matson Line that night.
They threw their fink books in it and they said were going to fight.
Youve got to pay a living wage or were going to take a walk.
They told it to the bosses but the bosses wouldnt talk.

They said theres only one way left to get that contract signed.
And all around the waterfront they threw their picket line.
They called it Bloody Thursday, the fifth day of July,
Four hundred men were wounded and two were left to die.
Now that was seven years ago and in the time since then
Harrys organized thousands more and made them union men.

"We must try to bribe him," the shipping bosses said,
"And if he wont accept the bribe, well say that hes a red."
The bosses brought a trial to deport him over the seas,
But the judge said, "Hes a honest man, I got to set him free,"
Then they brought another trial to frame him if they can.
But right by Harry Bridges stands every working man.