

Talking Union

Words by Millard Lampell, Lee Hays
and Pete Seeger (1941)

Music: traditional ("Talking Blues")
1947 (renewed) by Stormking Music Inc.

If you want higher wages, let me tell you what to do;
You got to talk to the workers in the shop with you;
You got to build you a union, got to make it strong,
But if you all stick together, now, twont he long.
Youll get shorter hours,
Better working conditions.
Vacations with pay,
Take your kids to the seashore.

It aint quite this simple, so I better explain
Just why you got to ride on the union train;
Cause if you wait for the boss to raise your pay,
Well all be waiting till Judgment Day;
Well all he buried gone to Heaven -
Saint Peterll be the straw boss then.

Now, you know youre underpaid, hut the boss says you aint;
He speeds up the work till youre bout to faint,
You may he down and out, but you aint beaten,
Pass out a leaflet and call a meetin
Talk it over speak your mind -
Decide to do something about it.

Course, the boss may persuade some poor damn fool
To go to your meeting and act like a stool;
But you can always tell a stool, though thats a fact;
Hes got a yellow streak running down his back;
He doesnt have to stool hell always make a good living
On what he takes out of blind mens cups.

You got a union now; youre sitting pretty;
Put some of the boys on the steering committee.
The boss wont listen when one man squawks.
But hes got to listen when the union talks.
He better -
Hell be mighty lonely one of these days.

Suppose theyre working you so hard its just outrageous,
Theyre paying you all starvation wages;
You go to the boss, and the boss would yell,
Before Id raise your pay Id see you all in Hell.
Well, hes puffing a big see-gar and feeling mighty slick,
He thinks hes got your union licked.
He looks out the window, and what does he see
But a thousand pickets, and they all agree
Hes a bastard unfair slave driver -
Bet he beats his own wife.

Now, boy, youve come to the hardest time;
The boss will try to bust your picket line.
Hell call out the police, the National Guard;
Theyll tell you its a crime to have a union card.
Theyll raid your meeting, hit you on the head.
Call every one of you a goddamn Red -
Unpatriotic Moscow agents -
Bomb throwers, even the kids.

But out in Detroit heres what they found,
And out in Frisco heres what they found,
And out in Pittsburgh heres what they found,
And down in Bethlehem heres what they found,

That if you dont let Red-baiting break you up,
If you dont let stool pigeons break you up,
If you dont let vigilantes break you up,
And if you dont let race hatred break you up -
Youll win. What I mean,
Take it easy but take it!