



JOE HILL

Songs of Labor and the Soup Line

EXTREMES AND MODERATIONS:
EARLY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA POETRY

A TEXT-TECH PAPERS PROJECT

Extremes and Moderations

Early Southern California Poetry

Extremes and Moderations is a Text-Tech Papers project devoted to recovering poetry written, published, and circulated in Los Angeles and Southern California. Each volume brings neglected books and poems back into view through carefully prepared texts, archival images, biographical context, and a clear record of the surviving sources.

Edited by Brian Kim Stefans

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A CRITICAL READING EDITION

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THE TEXT-TECH PAPERS

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CONTENTS

Poems, songs, and editorial matter

Introduction

Archival Images

Context from the Source Volumes

The IWW Preamble

The French Syndicalist and American Strikes

San Diego

Joe Hill Defense-Fund Appeal

I. W. W. Locals and Branches

Editorial Note and Sources

Early IWW Songbook

Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-Dee-Ay

The Old Toiler's Message

The Tramp

Coffee and

What We Want

The Preacher and the Bare Facts

The White Slave

The Internationale

Nearer My Job to Thee

John Golden and the Lawrence Strike

Stung Right

Casey Jones, the Union Scab

There Is Power in a Union

We Will Sing One Song

Should I Ever Be a Soldier

Later Songs and Prison Verse

Remember

Workers of the World, Awaken!

Scissor Bill

Mr. Block

Farewell, Joe!

Don't Take My Papa Away from Me

The Rebel Girl

Everybody's Joining It!

Where the Fraser River Flows

The Soup Line Pamphlet

It's a Long, Long Way Down to the Soupline

Private Verse and Last Will

To "Bronco Buster" Flynn

Joe Hill's Last Will

Bibliography

INTRODUCTION

Songs made to move

Joe Hill wrote for mouths and memory. A familiar hymn or stage tune gave him the frame; a hard joke, a clear enemy, and a chorus did the rest. The songs could pass from a cheap red booklet to a strike meeting, from one labor camp to another, without requiring a piano or even a printed copy. Their apparent simplicity is exacting craft: each parody has to be recognizable before its new argument overturns the old one.

Southern California was where that craft became public. By 1910 Hill was in San Pedro, working on the waterfront, serving as secretary of the local Industrial Workers of the World, and writing songs that attacked strikebreaking, employment agencies, hunger, military discipline, and promises of reward after death. He moved through the Baja California campaign, San Diego's free-speech fight, and the 1913 San Pedro dock strike. The local songbook preserved in this archive catches the songs close to that working life, before later editions standardized some titles and phrases.

This edition now resets the complete poetic contents of the Los Angeles songbook rather than extracting Hill alone. It restores his overlooked "The Old Toiler's Message," includes Eugène Pottier and Charles H. Kerr's "The Internationale," and preserves the short notices printed among the songs. The complete 1915 soup-line pamphlet follows in both image and reset text, while the 1919 *Songs of the Workers* supplies later Hill songs, Harrison George's prison lyric "Remember," Richard Brazier's memorial "Farewell, Joe!," and the IWW preamble that framed their politics. Borrowed tunes are treated as epigraphs, refrains as visible formal units, intentional indents are retained, and narrow-page wraps become hanging continuations rather than false verse lines. The ugly racial vocabulary in "Coffee and" and "Scissor Bill" remains because it belongs to the historical text; the notes identify it rather than allowing it to pass as neutral language.

Life and Work

Joe Hill was born Joel Emmanuel Hägglund on October 7, 1879, in Gävle, Sweden, the fourth of six children who survived infancy in a musical Lutheran household. His father, Olof, worked as a railroad conductor; both parents sang with the family. Hill played piano, composed comic songs about relatives, attended concerts at the local workers' association, and briefly played in a café. Tuberculosis and the deaths of his parents helped break up the household. In 1902 he and his brother Paul sailed for New York, where Joel began using variants of the name Joseph Hillström and, eventually, Joe Hill.

The next decade is recoverable mostly in flashes. Hill worked wherever migrant labor could be found—as a laborer, longshoreman, miner, and lumber worker—and moved by rail across the country. Records and later testimony place him in Cleveland in 1905, in San Francisco during the 1906 earthquake, and in San Pedro by 1910. The combination of precarious employment, long travel, and close contact with immigrant workers gave him the subjects of “The Tramp,” “Coffee and,” “Nearer My Job to Thee,” and “What We Want.” His songs do not observe the casual labor system from outside; they speak in its jokes, insults, shortages, and temporary alliances.

In San Pedro Hill joined the Industrial Workers of the World and served as secretary of its local. The IWW's industrial-union program and its inexpensive songbooks gave him both a politics and a distribution system. “The Preacher and the Bare Facts,” later called “The Preacher and the Slave,” turns the hymn “In the Sweet Bye and Bye” against religious charity; “Casey Jones, the Union Scab” rewrites a popular railroad ballad; “There Is Power in a Union” converts a gospel refrain into an organizing chorus. The tunes were deliberately familiar. A crowd could learn the new words fast enough to use them that night.

Hill's organizing geography extended beyond the port. In 1911 he joined the armed radical expedition into Baja California associated with opponents of Porfirio Díaz. In 1912 he was connected with San Diego's coalition against restrictions on public speaking, and he also appeared among railroad-construction workers in British Columbia, the setting of “Where the Fraser River Flows.” Back in San Pedro during the 1913 strike of Italian dockworkers, he provided songs and organizing support. Police arrested him for vagrancy and held him for thirty days; Hill later wrote that he had been too active to suit the local chief.

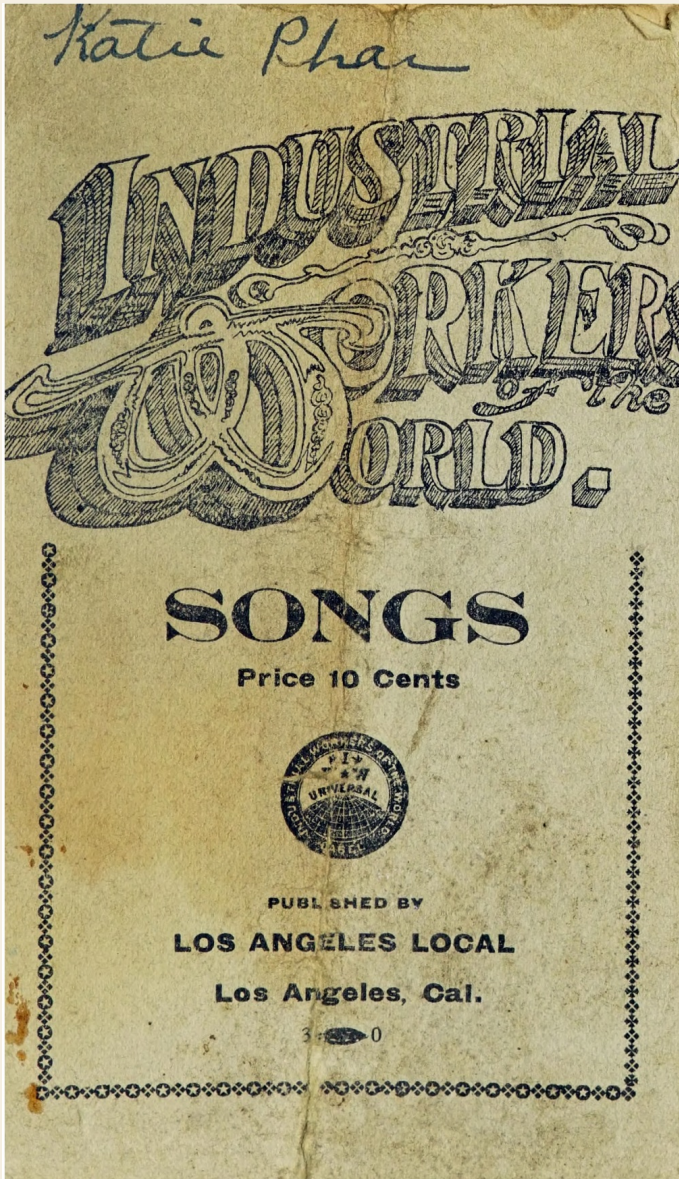
By late 1913 Hill was in Utah. On the night of January 10, 1914, Salt Lake City grocer John Morrison and his son Arling were shot during a robbery; Hill sought medical treatment that night for a gunshot wound. He claimed the wound came from a quarrel over a woman but refused to name her. The prosecution never recovered the murder weapon, witnesses did not conclusively identify him, and the case rested on circumstantial evidence, but a jury convicted him. Hill's defense, the trial court's rulings, and his own refusal to supply a full alibi have remained the center of argument ever since.

The conviction produced an international campaign involving the IWW, Swedish diplomats, labor organizations, and President Woodrow Wilson, who intervened twice. Utah authorities did not grant a new trial. Hill was executed by firing squad at the state prison in Sugar House on November 19, 1915. The day before, he wrote his compact "Last Will," asking that his ashes travel on the wind; his ashes were later distributed to IWW locals and supporters. His reported farewell injunction—usually shortened to "Don't mourn, organize!"—helped make him a labor martyr.

The legend can obscure how much of Hill's achievement lies on the page. He was a deft parodist, a maker of dramatic speakers, and a ruthless editor of an argument into rhyme. The early texts also preserve the movement's contradictions: internationalist solidarity sits beside ethnic caricature, and satire sometimes repeats the language it claims to expose. Later artists—from Alfred Hayes and Earl Robinson to Paul Robeson, Joan Baez, and Utah Phillips—kept Hill's name in circulation, but the songs survived first because workers could remember and change them. Their mobility is the form of their political life.

ARCHIVAL IMAGES

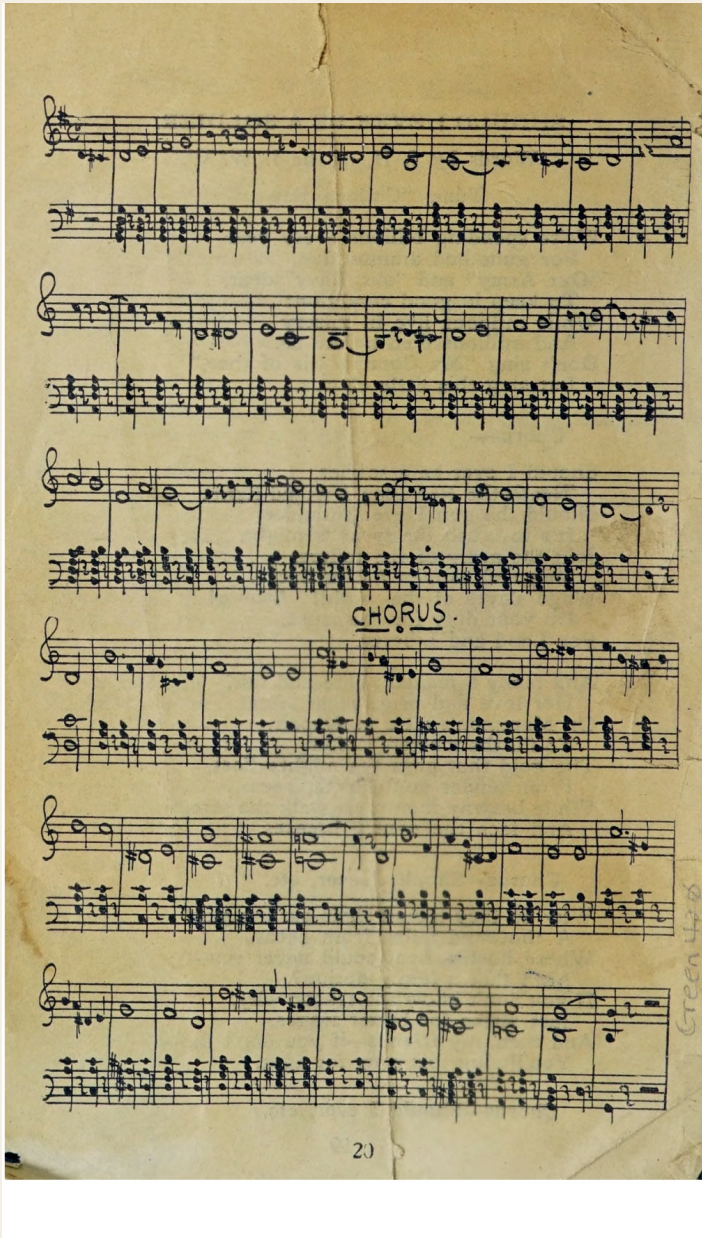
Five witnesses from Hill's print history



Complete cover of the undated Los Angeles IWW songbook, including the surviving ownership inscription.



The songbook's opening "Aerogram" cartoon, rotated to its intended reading direction.

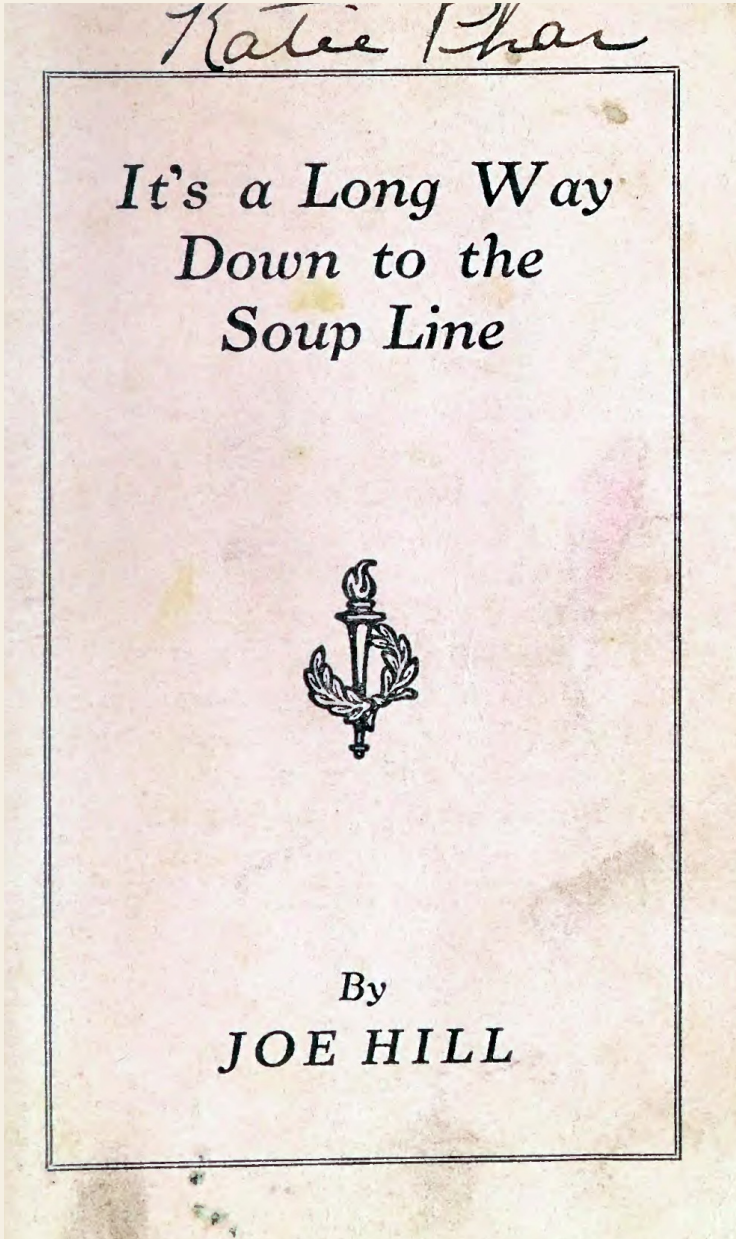


Music for "Everybody's Joining It!" on the concluding leaf of the Los Angeles songbook.



JOE HILL

Joe Hill portrait and caption reproduced in the fifteenth edition of Songs of the Workers (1919).



Complete cover of It's a Long Way Down to the Soup Line (1915).

CONTEXT FROM THE SOURCE VOLUMES

Movement principles, strike notices, and the complete soup-line pamphlet

The IWW Preamble

From the fifteenth edition of Songs of the Workers (1919)

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life.

Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system.

We find that the centering of management of the industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or in all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work," we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, "Abolition of the wage system."

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the every-day struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Source. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), inside front cover.

The French Syndicalist and American Strikes

Unsigned notice printed beneath “The White Slave”

The French Syndicalist said, “Three years that America is the Land of the Lost Strikes.”

It seems to me that we are trying hard to live down that reputation. Note McKees Rocks, Lawrence, Gray’s Harbor lumber mills; B. of T. W. (affiliated with the I. W. W.) in Texas and Louisiana last fall.

What do you (French Syndicalist) think of the American slave now?

Source. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 11.

San Diego

Unsigned notice printed beneath “There Is Power in a Union”

San Diego seem[s] to think that they have [the I. W. W.] beat. Just watch San Diego and you w[ill see the] grass growing on the street.

Source. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 17. Teal brackets supply letters hidden by physical damage to the surviving leaf.

Joe Hill Defense-Fund Appeal

Inside panel of It's a Long Way Down to the Soup Line (1915)

This parody was written in Salt Lake County Jail by Joe Hill, author of “Mr. Block,” “Scissor Bill,” “The White Slave” and other I. W. W. compositions.

Joe Hill has incurred the displeasure of the capitalists of this country and they have therefore framed up a charge of murder and had him sentenced to death.

This parody was presented to the I. W. W. Locals of San Francisco and surroundings to be used in the interest of Industrial Union agitation, but it was concluded to place it on the market at 5c. The proceeds to go to the Joe Hill Defense Fund.

HELP SET HIM FREE.

Source. *It's a Long Way Down to the Soup Line* (San Francisco: Stockwitz Press, 1915), inside panel.

I. W. W. Locals and Branches

Final panel of the soup-line pamphlet

SAN FRANCISCO

Recruiting Local, No. 173—384½ 17th Street.

8th Branch, 1505 Grant Avenue.

Swedish Branch, 1530 Ellis Street.

INDUSTRIAL LOCALS

Transport Workers No. 9—9 Mission Street.

Construction Workers No. 147—9 Mission Street.

Free Lecture and Discussion every Sunday, 8 P. M., 3345—17th Street.

Oakland No. 174—338 5th Street.

Stockwitz Press, 1212 Turk Street.

Source. *It's a Long Way Down to the Soup Line* (San Francisco: Stockwitz Press, 1915), final panel.

EDITORIAL NOTE AND SOURCES

Establishing early song texts

The undated Los Angeles IWW songbook is the copy text for every lyric it prints legibly. Its cover, index, and sequence place it in the years around 1913–15. This revision restores the complete poetic contents: fourteen lyrics signed J. H. or otherwise securely attributed to Hill, together with “The Internationale” by Eugène Pottier in Charles H. Kerr’s translation. The damaged credit on “The Old Toiler’s Message” still reads “J. H. of the I. W. W.” and is supported by later Hill bibliographies.

The scan’s OCR is not used as a transcription authority. Every line has been checked against the page image. Clear page-measure wraps are reset as hanging continuations, while stanza divisions, alternating indents, chorus labels, tunes, and the early title “The Preacher and the Bare Facts” are retained. Unmistakable broken characters and a small number of obvious press errors are corrected silently; meaningful early variants are not modernized. Teal brackets are reserved for letters physically hidden in the San Diego notice.

The 1919 fifteenth edition of *Songs of the Workers* supplies seven Hill songs absent from the readable pages of the early book and Hill’s “Last Will.” It also repairs lines hidden by physical damage in “We Will Sing One Song.” “Everybody’s Joining It!” is reset from 1919 because the Los Angeles copy retains only its music. Harrison George’s “Remember,” Richard Brazier’s “Farewell, Joe!,” and the IWW preamble are included to restore the prison, memorial, and organizational setting of those songs.

The four-panel 1915 Stockwitz pamphlet is represented completely: its cover appears in the archival section, while the defense-fund appeal, “It’s a Long, Long Way Down to the Soupline,” and the directory of IWW locals are reset in full. The appeal’s library stamps are not treated as part of its text.

Hill's satire sometimes reproduces racial and ethnic slurs, especially in "Coffee and" and "Scissor Bill." They are preserved as evidence of the original texts and their political contradictions, not endorsed or normalized. No later substitute lyrics have been introduced.

EARLY IWW SONGBOOK

The complete poetic contents of the Los Angeles local songbook

Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-Dee-Ay

Tune: "Ta-Ra-Ra-Boom-Dee-Ay"

I had a job once threshing wheat.

Worked sixteen hours with hands and feet,

And when the moon was shining bright,

They kept me working all the night.

One moonlight night—I hate to tell,

I accidentally slipped and fell:

My pitchfork went right in between

Some cog wheels in the thresh machine.

Chorus

Ta-ra-ra-BOOM-dee-ay,

It made a noise that way,

And wheels and bolts and hay

Went flying every way.

The stingy Rube said, "Well,

A thousand gone to Hell,"

But I did sleep that night—

I needed it all right.

Next day that stingy Rube did say,

"I'll bring my eggs to town today.

You grease my wagon up, you mutt,

But don't forget to screw your nut."

I greased his wagon for him, but

I plumb forgot to screw the nut.

And when he started on that trip,

A wheel slipped off and broke his hip.

Chorus

Ta-ra-ra-BOOM-dee-ay,

It made a noise that way.

That Rube was sure a sight,

And mad enough to fight;

His whiskers and his legs

Were full of scrambled eggs.

I told him, "That's too bad,

I'm feeling very sad."

But then that farmer said, “You Turk,
I’ll bet you are an I Won’t Work.”
He paid me off right there, by gum,
And I went home and told my chum.
Next day when threshing did commence,
My chum was “Johnny on the fence,”
And, on my word, that awkward kid,
He dropped his pitchfork like I did.

Chorus

Ta-ra-ra-BOOM-dee-ay,
It made a noise that way,
And part of that machine
Hit Reuben on the bean.
He cried: “Oh me, Oh my,
I nearly lost my eye.”
My partner said, “You’re right,
It’s bedtime now, good-night.”

But still that Rube was pretty wise,
Those things did open up his eyes.
He said, “There must be something wrong,
I think I work my men too long.”
He cut the hours and raised the pay,
Gave ham and eggs for every day.
He gets his men from Union Hall,
And has no “accidents” at all.

Chorus

Ta-ra-ra-BOOM-dee-ay,
That Rube is feeling gay.
He learned his lesson quick,
Just through a simple trick.
For fixing rotten jobs,
And fixing greedy slobs,
This is the only way—
TA-RA-RA-BOOM-DEE-AY.

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), pp. 3–4.

The Old Toiler's Message

Air: "Silver Threads Among the Gold"

"Darling, I am growing old"—
So the toiler told his wife—
Father Time the days have tolled
Of my usefulness in life.
Just tonight my master told me
He can't use me any more.
Oh, my darling, do not scold me,
When the wolf comes to our door."

Chorus

To the scrap heap we are going
When we're overworked and old—
When our weary heads are showing
Silver threads among the gold.

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 4. The leaf signs the lyric "J. H. of the I. W. W."; the stamp crossing the credit does not alter the attribution.

The Tramp

Tune: "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp, the Boys Go Marching"

If you all will shut your trap,
I will tell you 'bout a chap,
That was broke and up against it, too, for fair;
He was not the kind that shirk,
He was looking hard for work,
But he heard the same old story everywhere.

Chorus

Tramp, tramp, tramp, keep on a-tramping,
Nothing doing here for you;
If I catch you 'round again,
You will wear the ball and chain,
Keep on tramping, that's the best thing you can do.

He walks up and down the street,
'Till the shoes fell off his feet.
In a house he spied a lady cooking stew,
And he said, "How do you do,
May I chop some wood for you?"
What the lady told him made him feel so blue.

Chorus repeated

'Cross the street a sign he read,
"Work for Jesus," so it said,
And he said, "Here is my chance. I'll surely try,"
And he kneeled upon the floor,
'Till his knees got rather sore,
But at eating-time he heard the preacher cry—

Chorus repeated

Down the street he met a cop,
And the copper made him stop,
And he asked him, "When did you blow in to town?
Come with me up to the judge."
But the judge he said, "Oh fudge,
Bums that have no money needn't come around."

Chorus repeated

Finally came that happy day
When his life did pass away.
He was sure he'd go to heaven when he died.
When he reached the pearly gate,
Santa Peter, mean old skate,
Slammed the gate right in his face and loudly cried:

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 7.

Coffee and

Tune: "Count Your Blessings"

An employment shark one day I went to see,
And he said, "Come in and buy a job from me,
Just a couple o' dollars for the office fee,
But the job is steady and the fare is free."

Chorus

Count your pennies, count them, one by one,
And you'll plainly see how easy you are done.
Count your pennies, take them in your hand,
Sneak into a Jap, and get your coffee and.

I shipped out and worked and slept in lousy bunks,
And the grub it stunk as bad as nineteen skunks.
When a week I slaved the boss he said one day,
"You're too tired, you are fired, get your pay."

Chorus repeated

When the clerk commenced to count—Oh, holy gee—
Road and school and poll tax and the hospital fee,
But I fainted and I nearly lost my sense
When the clerk he said, "You owe me fifty cents."

Chorus repeated

But when I got back to town with blistered feet,
Then I heard a fellow speaking on the street.
And he said, "It is the workers' own mistake.
If they stand together they get all they make."

Chorus repeated

"Come today," he said, "and join our union grand.
Who will be a member of this fighting band?"
"Write me out a card," says I, "Right here, by gee.
The Industrial Workers is the dope for me."

Chorus

Count the workers, count them one by one.
Join our union and we'll show you how it's done.
Stand together, workers, hand in hand.
Then we'll never have to live on coffee and.

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 8. The ethnic slur is retained as part of the historical text.

What We Want

Tune: "Rainbow"

We want all the workers in the world to organize
Into a great big union grand,
And when we all united stand
The world for workers we'll demand.
If the working class could only see and realize
What mighty power labor has,
Then the exploiting master class,
It would soon fade away.

Chorus

Come all ye toilers that work for wages,
Come from every land,
Join the fighting band,
In one union grand,
Then for the workers we'll make upon this earth a paradise
When the slaves get wise and organize.

We want the sailor and the tailor and the lumberjacks,
And all the cooks and laundry girls.
We want the guy that dives for pearls,
The pretty maid that's making curls,
And the baker and staker and the chimneysweep.
We want the man that's slinging hash,
The child that works for little cash,
In one union grand.

Chorus repeated

We want the tinner and the skinner and the chambermaid,
We want the man that spikes on soles,
We want the man that's digging holes,
We want the man that's climbing poles,
And the trucker and the mucker and the hired man,
And all the factory girls and clerks.
Yes, we want every one that works,
In one union grand.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 9.

The Preacher and the Bare Facts

Tune: "Sweet Bye and Bye"

Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked how 'bout something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:

Chorus

You will eat, bye and bye,
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

And the starvation army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they pray,
'Till they get all your coin on the drum,
Then they'll tell you when you're on the bum:

Chorus repeated

Holy Rollers and jumpers come out,
And they holler, they jump and they shout.
"Give your money to Jesus," they say,
"He will cure all diseases today."

Chorus repeated

If you fight hard for children and wife—
Try to get something good in this life—
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell.

Chorus repeated

Workingmen of all countries, unite,
Side by side we for freedom will fight;
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

Last Chorus

You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and to fry;
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 10. Later printings title the song “The Preacher and the Slave.”

The White Slave

Air: "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland"

One little girl, fair as a pearl,
 Worked every day in a laundry;
All that she made for food she paid,
 So she slept in a box near a foundry.
An old procuress spied her there,
She came and whispered in her ear.

Chorus

Come with me now my girly,
Don't sleep out in the cold;
Your face and tresses curly
Will bring you fame and gold,
Automobiles to ride in, diamonds and silk to wear,
You'll be a star bright, down in the red light,
You'll make your fortune there.

Same little girl, no more a pearl,
 Walks all alone 'long the river.
Five years have flown, her health is gone,
 She would look at the water and shiver.
Whene'er she'd step to rest and sleep,
She'd hear a voice call from the deep.

Chorus repeated

Girls in this way fall every day,
 And have been falling for ages.
Who is to blame, you know his name,
 It's the boss that pays starvation wages.
A homeless girl can always hear
Temptations calling everywhere.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 11.

The Internationale

By Eugène Pottier; translated by Charles H. Kerr

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!
Arise, ye wretched of the earth.
For justice thunders condemnation,
A better world's in birth.
No more tradition's chains shall bind us,
Arise, ye slaves! no more in thrall!
The earth shall rise on new foundations,
We have been naught, we shall be all.

Refrain

'Tis the final conflict,
Let each stand in his place.
The Industrial Union
Shall be the human race.

We want no condescending saviors,
To rule us from a judgment hall;
We workers ask not for their favors;
Let us consult for all.
To make the thief disgorge his booty,
To free the spirit from its cell,
We must ourselves decide our duty,
We must decide and do it well.
The law oppresses us and tricks us,
Wage systems drain our blood;
The rich are free from obligations,
The laws the poor delude.
Too long we've languished in subjection,
Equality has other laws;
"No rights," says she, "without their duties,
No claims on equals without cause."

Behold them seated in their glory,
The kings of mine and rail and soil!
What have you read in all their story,
But how they plundered toil?
Fruits of the people's work are buried
In the strong coffers of a few;

In working for their restitution
The men will only ask their due.

Toilers from shops and fields united,
The union we of all who work;
The earth belongs to us, the people,
No room here for the shirk.

How many on our flesh have fattened!
But if the noisome birds of prey
Shall vanish from the sky some morning,
The blessed sunlight still will stay.

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), pp. 12–13.

Nearer My Job to Thee

Air: "Nearer, My God, to Thee"

Nearer my job to thee,
Nearer with glee.
Three plunks for the office fee,
But my fare is free.
My train is running fast,
I've got a job at last.
Nearer my job to thee,
Nearer to thee.

Arrived where my job should be,
Nothing I see,
Nothing but sand, by gee,
Job went up a tree.
No place to eat or sleep,
Snakes in the sagebrush creep,
Nero a saint would be,
Shark, compared with thee.

Nearer to town! each day
(Hiked all the way).
Nearer that agency,
Where I paid my fee,
And when that shark I see
You'll bet your boots that he,
Nearer his god shall be.
Leave that to me.

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 13.

John Golden and the Lawrence Strike

Air: "A Little Talk with Jesus"

In Lawrence when the starving masses struck for more to eat,
And wooden-headed Wood he tried the strikers to defeat,
To Sammy Gompers wrote, and asked him what he thought,
And this is just the answer that the mailman brought:

Chorus

A little talk with Golden makes it right, all right;
He'll settle any strike if there is coin in sight.
Just take him up to dine, and everything is fine,
A little talk with Golden makes it right, all right.

The preachers, cops and money-kings were working hand in hand,
The boys in blue, with stars and stripes, were sent by Uncle Sam;
Still things were looking blue, 'cause every striker knew
That weaving clothes with bayonets is hard to do.

Chorus repeated

John Golden had with Mr. Wood a private interview.
He told him how to bust up the I double double U,
He came out in a while and wore the golden smile,
He said, "I've got all labor-leaders skinned a mile."

Chorus repeated

John Golden pulled a bogus strike with all his "pinks" and "stools,"
He thought the rest would follow like a bunch of crazy fools.
But to his great surprise, the "foreigners" were wise.
In One Big, Solid Union they were organized.

Last Chorus

That's one time Golden did not make it right, all right.
In spite of all his schemes the strikers won the fight,
When all the workers stand united hand in hand,
The world with all its wealth shall be at their command.

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 14.

Stung Right

Air: "Sunlight, Sunlight"

When I was hiking 'round the town to find a job one day,
I saw a sign that thousand men were wanted right away,
To take a trip around the world in Uncle Sammy's fleet,
I signed my name a dozen times upon a great big sheet.

Chorus

Stung right, stung right, S-T-U-N-G,
Stung right, stung right, E. Z. Mark, that's me.
When my term is over, and again I'm free,
There'll be no more trips around the world for me.

The man he said, "The U. S. fleet, that is no place for slaves.
The only thing you have to do is stand and watch the waves."
But in the morning, five o'clock, they woke me from my snooze,
To scrub the deck and polish brass and shine the captain's shoes.

Chorus repeated

One day a dude in uniform to me commenced to shout,
I simply plugged him in the jaw and knocked him down and out.
They slammed me right in irons then and said, "You are a case."
On bread and water then I lived for twenty-seven days.

Chorus repeated

One day the captain said, "Today I'll show you something nice.
All hands line up, we'll go ashore and have some exercise."
He made us run for seven miles as fast as we could run,
And with a packing on our back that weighed a half a ton.

Chorus repeated

Some time ago when Uncle Sam he had a war with Spain,
And many of the boys in blue were in the battle slain.
Not all were killed by bullets, though, no, not by any means.
The biggest part that died was killed by Armour's Pork and Beans.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 15.

Casey Jones, the Union Scab

Tune: "Casey Jones"

The workers on the S. P. line to strike sent out a call,
But Casey Jones, the engineer, he wouldn't strike at all;
His boiler it was leaking and his drivers on the bum,
And his engine and his bearings they were all out o' plumb.

Chorus

Casey Jones kept his junk pile running,
Casey Jones was working double time,
Casey Jones got a wooden medal
For being good and faithful on the S. P. line.

The workers said to Casey: "Won't you help us win the strike?"
But Casey said: "Let me alone, you'd better take a hike."
Then someone put a bunch of railroad ties across the track,
And Casey hit the river with an awful crack.

Chorus

Casey Jones hit the river bottom,
Casey Jones broke his blooming spine,
Casey Jones was an Angeleno;
He took a trip to heaven on the S. P. line.

When Casey Jones got up in heaven to the pearly gate,
He said, "I'm Casey Jones, the guy that pulled the S. P. freight."
"You're just the man," said Peter, "our musicians went on strike;
So you'll get a job a-scabbing any time you like."

Chorus

Casey Jones got a job in heaven,
Casey Jones was doing mighty fine,
Casey Jones went scabbing on the angels
Just like he did to workers on the S. P. line.

The angels got together and they said it wasn't fair
For Casey Jones to go around a-scabbing everywhere.
The Angels' Union, No. 23, they sure were there,
And they promptly fired Casey down the golden stair.

Chorus

Casey Jones went to Hell a-flying;
“Casey Jones,” the devil said, “Oh, fine!
Casey Jones, get busy shoveling sulphur;
That’s what you get for scabbing on the S. P. line.”

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 16.

There Is Power in a Union

Tune: "There Is Power in the Blood"

Would you have freedom from wage slavery,
Then join in the grand Industrial band;
Would you from mis'ry and hunger be free,
Then come! Do your share, like a man.

Chorus

There is pow'r, there is pow'r
In a band of workingmen,
When they stand hand in hand.
That's a pow'r, that's a pow'r
That must rule in every land—
One Industrial Union Grand.

Would you have mansions of gold in the sky,
And live in a shack, way in the back?
Would you have wings up in heaven to fly,
And starve here with rags on your back?

Chorus repeated

If you've had "nuff" of "the blood of the lamb,"
Then join in the grand Industrial band;
If, for a change, you would have eggs and ham,
Then come, do your share, like a man.

Chorus repeated

If you like sluggers to beat off your head,
Then don't organize, all unions despise;
If you want nothing before you are dead,
Shake hands with your boss and look wise.

Chorus repeated

Come, all ye workers, from every land,
Come join in the grand Industrial band,
Then we our share of this earth shall demand.
Come on! Do your share, like a man.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 17.

We Will Sing One Song

Air: "My Old Kentucky Home"

We will sing one song of the meek and humble slave,
The horn-handed son of the toil.
He's toiling hard from the cradle to the grave,
But his master reaps the profits from his toil.
Then we'll sing one song of the greedy master class,
They're vagrants in broadcloth, indeed.
They live by robbing the ever-toiling mass,
Human blood they spill to satisfy their greed.

Chorus

Organize! Oh, toilers, come organize your might;
Then we'll sing one song of the workers' commonwealth,
Full of beauty, full of love and health.

We will sing one song of the politician sly,
He's talking of changing the laws;
Election day all the drinks and smokes he'll buy,
While he's living from the sweat of your brows.
Then we'll sing one song of the girl below the line,
She's scorned and despised everywhere,
While in their mansions the "keepers" wine and dine
From the profits that immoral traffic bear.

Chorus repeated

We will sing one song of the preacher, fat and sleek,
He tells you of homes in the sky.
He says, "Be generous, be lowly, and be meek,
If you don't you'll sure get roasted when you die."
Then we'll sing one song of the poor and ragged tramp,
He carries his home on his back;
Too old to work, he's not wanted 'round the camp,
So he wanders without aim along the track.

Chorus repeated

We will sing one song of the children in the mills,
They're taken from playgrounds and schools,
In tender years made to go the pace that kills,
In the sweatshops, 'mong the looms and the spools.
Then we'll sing one song of the One Big Union Grand,
The hope of the toiler and slave.
It is coming fast! it is sweeping sea and land,
To the terror of the grafter and the knave.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), pp. 18–19; damaged lines collated against *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (1919).

Should I Ever Be a Soldier

Tune: "Colleen Bawn"

We're spending billions every year
For guns and ammunition,
"Our Army" and "our Navy" dear,
To keep in good condition;
While millions live in misery
And millions died before us,
Don't sing "My Country 'tis of thee,"
But sing this little chorus.

Chorus

Should I ever be a soldier,
Neath the Red Flag I would fight;
Should the gun I ever shoulder,
It's to crush the tyrant's might.
Join the army of the toilers,
Men and women fall in line.
Wage slaves of the world! Arouse!
Do your duty for the cause,
For Land and Liberty.

And many a maiden, pure and fair,
Her love and pride must offer
On Mammon's altar in despair,
To fill the masters' coffer.
The gold that pays the mighty fleet,
From tender youth he squeezes,
While brawny men must walk the street
And face the wintry breezes.

Chorus repeated

Why do they mount their Gatling gun
A thousand miles from ocean,
Where hostile fleet could never run—
Ain't that a funny notion?
If you don't know the reason why,
Just strike for better wages,
And then, my friends—if you don't die—
You'll sing this song for ages.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs* (Los Angeles IWW Local, undated [c. 1913–15]), p. 20.

LATER SONGS AND PRISON VERSE

Hill, prison solidarity, and memorial verse in the 1919 IWW witness

Remember

By Harrison George; Cook County Jail, October 18, 1917

Tune: "Hold the Fort"

We speak to you from jail today,
Two hundred union men,
We're here because the bosses' laws
Bring slavery again.

Chorus

In Chicago's darkened dungeons
For the O. B. U.,
Remember you're outside for us
While we're in here for you.

We're here from mine and mill and rail,
We're here from off the sea,
From coast to coast we make the boast
Of Solidarity.

We laugh and sing, we have no fear,
Our hearts are always light,
We know that every Wobblie true
Will carry on the fight.

We make a pledge—no tyrant might
Can make us bend a knee;
Come on you worker, organize
And fight for Liberty.

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), p. 5.

Workers of the World, Awaken!

Tune: "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean"

Workers of the world, awaken!
Break your chains, demand your rights.
All the wealth you make is taken
By exploiting parasites.
Shall you kneel in deep submission
From your cradles to your graves?
Is the height of your ambition
To be good and willing slaves?

Chorus

Arise, ye prisoners of starvation!
Fight for your own emancipation;
Arise, ye slaves of every nation,
In One Union grand.
Our little ones for bread are crying,
And millions are from hunger dying;
The end the means is justifying,
'Tis the final stand.

If the workers take a notion,
They can stop all speeding trains;
Every ship upon the ocean
They can tie with mighty chains.
Every wheel in the creation,
Every mine and every mill,
Fleets and armies of the nation,
Will at their command stand still.

Join the union, fellow workers,
Men and women, side by side;
We will crush the greedy shirkers
Like a sweeping, surging tide;
For united we are standing,
But divided we will fall;
Let this be our understanding:
"All for one and one for all."

Workers of the world, awaken!
Rise in all your splendid might;
Take the wealth that you are making,
It belongs to you by right.
No one will for bread be crying,
We'll have freedom, love and health,
When the grand red flag is flying
In the Workers' Commonwealth.

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), pp. 6–7.

Scissor Bill

Tune: "Steamboat Bill"

You may ramble 'round the country anywhere you will,
You'll always run across the same old Scissor Bill.
He's found upon the desert, he is on the hill,
He's found in every mining camp and lumber mill.
He looks just like a human, he can eat and walk,
But you will find he isn't, when he starts to walk.
He'll say, "This is my country," with an honest face,
While all the cops they chase him out of every place.

Chorus

Scissor Bill, he is a little dippy,
Scissor Bill, he has a funny face.
Scissor Bill should drown in Mississippi,
He is the missing link that Darwin tried to trace.

And Scissor Bill, he couldn't live without the booze,
He sits around all day and spits tobacco juice.
He takes a deck of cards and tries to beat the Chink!
Yes, Bill would be a smart guy if he only could think.
And Scissor Bill, he says: "This country must be freed
From Niggers, Japs and Dutchmen and the gol darn Swede."
He says that every cop would be a native son
If it wasn't for the Irishman, the sonna fur gun.

Chorus

Scissor Bill, the "foreigners" is cussin';
Scissor Bill, he says: "I hate a Coon";
Scissor Bill is down on everybody—
The Hottentots, the bushmen and the man in the moon.

Don't try to talk your union dope to Scissor Bill,
He says he never organized and never will.
He always will be satisfied until he's dead,
With coffee and doughnut and a lousy old bed.
And Bill, he says he gets rewarded thousandfold,
When he gets up to Heaven on the streets of gold.
But I don't care who knows it, and right here I'll tell,
If Scissor Bill is goin' to Heaven, I'll go to Hell.

Chorus

Scissor Bill, he wouldn't join the union,
Scissor Bill, he says, "Not me, by Heck!"
Scissor Bill gets his reward in Heaven,
Oh! sure. He'll get it, but he'll get it in the neck.

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), pp. 15–16. The racial and ethnic slurs are retained as part of Hill's satirical characterization of the nativist "Scissor Bill."

Mr. Block

Air: "It Looks to Me Like a Big Time Tonight"

Please give me your attention, I'll introduce to you
A man that is a credit to "Our Red, White and Blue";
His head is made of lumber, and solid as a rock;
He is a common worker and his name is Mr. Block.
And Block he thinks he may
Be President some day.

Chorus

Oh, Mr. Block, you were born by mistake,
You take the cake,
You make me ache.
Tie on a rock to your block and then jump in the lake,
Kindly do that for Liberty's sake.

Yes, Mr. Block is lucky; he found a job, by gee!
The sharks got seven dollars, for job and fare and fee.
They shipped him to a desert and dumped him with his truck,
But when he tried to find his job, he sure was out of luck.
He shouted, "That's too raw,
I'll fix them with the law."

Chorus repeated

Block hiked back to the city, but wasn't doing well.
He said, "I'll join the union—the great A. F. of L."
He got a job next morning, got fired in the night,
He said, "I'll see Sam Gompers and he'll fix that foreman right."
Sam Gompers said, "You see,
You've got our sympathy."

Chorus repeated

Election day he shouted, "A Socialist for Mayor!"
The "comrade" got elected, he happy was for fair,
But after the election he got an awful shock:
A great big socialistic Bull did rap him on the block.
And Comrade Block did sob,
"I helped him to his job."

Chorus repeated

Poor Block, he died one evening, I'm very glad to state;
He climbed the golden ladder up to the pearly gate.
He said, "Oh, Mr. Peter, one word I'd like to tell,
I'd like to meet the Astorbilts and John D. Rockefeller."
Old Pete said, "Is that so?
You'll meet them down below."

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), pp. 25–26.

Farewell, Joe!

By Richard Brazier

Tune: "Farewell to Thee"

Proudly went out Joe unto his death
With smiling lips and fearless eyes;
This message gave with his last breath:
"Don't mourn for me, but ORGANIZE."

Chorus

Farewell to you, thou rebel true,
Whose singing heart has charmed our weary hours;
Those last brave words, before you did depart,
Shall live forever in our hearts.

Though they stilled your rebel heart with lead
And sealed with death your lips, our Joe,
Those words, the last you ever said,
Will bring to the masters ruin and woe.

We have shed no bitter tears for thee,
Nor have we sighed the mournful sigh.
We have fought the fight to make men free
In the cause for which you had to die.

The wind sighs gladly o'er your grave,
A requiem joyfully for thee.
It seems to sing, the life you gave
Will hasten that day of liberty.

Chorus to Last Stanza

Farewell, Joe, you had to go.
The masters had declared that you should die, Joe,
But although you're gone into that great unknown,
Your memory long with us shall live.

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), pp. 26–27.

Don't Take My Papa Away from Me

Words and music by Joe Hill

A little girl with her father stayed, in a cabin across the sea,
Her mother dear in the cold grave lay; with her father she'd always be.
But then one day the great war broke out and the father was told to go;
The little girl pleaded—her father she needed.
She begged, cried and pleaded so:

Chorus

Don't take my papa away from me, don't leave me there all alone.
He has cared for me so tenderly, ever since mother was gone.
Nobody ever like him can be, no one can so with me play.
Don't take my papa away from me; please don't take papa away.

Her tender pleadings were all in vain, and her father went to the war.
He'll never kiss her good night again, for he fell 'mid the cannon's roar.
Greater a soldier was never born, but his brave heart was pierced one day;
And as he was dying, he heard someone crying,
A girl's voice far away:

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), pp. 33–34; the songbook states that it was written shortly before Hill's execution.

The Rebel Girl

Words and music by Joe Hill

There are women of many descriptions
 In this queer world, as everyone knows,
Some are living in beautiful mansions,
 And are wearing the finest of clothes.
There are blue-blooded queens and princesses,
 Who have charms made of diamonds and pearl;
But the only and thoroughbred lady
 Is the Rebel Girl.

Chorus

That's the Rebel Girl, that's the Rebel Girl!
To the working class she's a precious pearl.
She brings courage, pride and joy
To the fighting Rebel Boy.
We've had girls before, but we need some more
In the Industrial Workers of the World.
For it's great to fight for freedom
With a Rebel Girl.

Yes, her hands may be hardened from labor,
 And her dress may not be very fine;
But a heart in her bosom is beating
 That is true to her class and her kind.
And the grafters in terror are trembling
 When her spite and defiance she'll hurl;
For the only and thoroughbred lady
 Is the Rebel Girl.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), p. 42. Obvious typographical damage in the 1919 printing is corrected from sense and parallel editions.

Everybody's Joining It!

Air: "Everybody's Doing It"

Fellow workers, can't you hear,
There is something in the air.
Everywhere you walk, everybody talk
'Bout the I. W. W.
They have got a way to strike
That the master doesn't like—
Everybody stick, that's the only trick,
All are joining it now.

Chorus

Everybody's joining it! Joining what? Joining It!
Everybody's joining it! Joining what? Joining It!
One Big Union: that's the worker's choice,
One Big Union: that's the only noise,
One Big Union: shout with all your voice;
Make a noise, make a noise, make a noise, boys.
Everybody's joining it! Joining what? Joining It!
Everybody's joining it! Joining what? Joining It!
Joining in this union grand,
Boys and girls in every land;
All the workers hand in hand—
Everybody's joining it now.

Th' Boss is feeling mighty blue,
He don't know just what to do.
We have got his goat, got him by the throat,
Soon he'll work or go starving.
Join the I. W. W.,
Don't let bosses trouble you,
Come and join with us—everybody does—
You've got nothing to lose.

Chorus repeated

Will the One Big Union grow?
Mister Bonehead wants to know.
Well! What do you think, of that funny gink
Asking such foolish questions?
Will it grow? Look a here,
Brand new unions everywhere,
Better take a hunch, join the fighting bunch,
Fight for Freedom and Right.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), pp. 47–48. The early Los Angeles songbook preserves the music but not a readable lyric text.

Where the Fraser River Flows

Tune: "Where the River Shannon Flows"

Fellow workers, pay attention to what I'm going to mention,
For it is the fixed intention of the Workers of the World.
And I hope you'll all be ready, true-hearted, brave and steady,
To gather 'round our standard when the Red Flag is unfurled.

Chorus

Where the Fraser River flows, each fellow worker knows,
They have bullied and oppressed us, but still our Union grows.
And we're going to find a way, boys, for shorter hours and better pay, boys;
And we're going to win the day, boys, where the River Fraser flows.

For the gunny-sack contractors have all been dirty actors,
And they're not our benefactors, each fellow worker knows.
So we've got to stick together in fine or dirty weather,
And we will show no white feather, where the Fraser River flows.

Chorus repeated

Now the boss the law is stretching, bulls and pimps he's fetching,
And they are a fine collection, as Jesus only knows.
But why their mothers reared them, and why the devil spared them,
Are questions we can't answer, where the Fraser River flows.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), p. 56.

THE SOUP LINE PAMPHLET

California unemployment in the 1915 defense-fund pamphlet

It's a Long, Long Way Down to the Soupline

Air: "Tipperary"

I

Bill Brown came a thousand miles to work on Frisco Fair,
All the papers said a million men were wanted there;
Bill Brown hung around and asked for work three times a day,
'Til finally he went busted flat, then he did sadly say,

Chorus

It's a long way down to the soupline,
It's a long way to go.
It's a long way down to the soupline,
And the soup is weak I know.
Good-bye, good old pork chops,
Farewell, beefsteak rare.
It's a long, long way down to the soupline,
But my soup is there.

II

Bill Brown saw a big fine house, he knocked upon the door,
But they told him that they only helped the "worthy poor."
"Guess I'll have to live on sunshine in the Golden West,"
Said Billy Brown, and then he joined the chorus with the rest.

Chorus repeated

III

There's a whisper round the town among "the men of means"
That they would be glad to give the Fair to New Orleans.
And when all is over many sharks with faces long
Will line up at the Ferry and then sadly hum this song.

Chorus repeated

Publication. *It's a Long Way Down to the Soup Line* (San Francisco: Stockwitz Press, 1915), p. 3.

PRIVATE VERSE AND LAST WILL

A verse-letter and the final poem

To “Bronco Buster” Flynn

Tune: “Yankee Doodle”

I

I got your picture, Buster dear,
A-riding on a pony;
Your pony is a real one too—
You wouldn’t have a “phoney.”

Chorus

Buster Flynn he sure is game,
His eyes are full of luster;
I think we’d better change his name
And call him “Bronco Buster.”

II

When you grow up to be a man,
Be always “rough and ready,”
But never brag about it though,
Like windy “Bull Moose Teddy.”

III

And by and by you’ll ride out West,
Like cowboys that you’ve read of,
But don’t fall off your pony, dear,
And break your little head off.

From your friend Joe Hill,
With a kind greeting.

Publication. Undated manuscript letter to Buster Flynn; transcription checked against the manuscript image reproduced by Wikisource.

Joe Hill's Last Will

Written in his cell, November 18, 1915

My will is easy to decide,
For there is nothing to divide.
My kin don't need to fuss and moan—
"Moss does not cling to a rolling stone."
My body? Ah, if I could choose,
I would to ashes it reduce,
And let the merry breezes blow
My dust to where some flowers grow.
Perhaps some fading flower then
Would come to life and bloom again.
This is my last and final will.
Good luck to all of you,
Joe Hill

Publication. *Songs of the Workers*, 15th ed. (Chicago: IWW, 1919), p. 60; collated with Hill's handwritten original.

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