

Union Maid

Words & Music:
Woody Guthrie & Traditional Canadian

Per Oscar Brand, this tune dates from ca. 1878 and became the square dance tune called "Redwing". By 1941, when Oscar Brand taught it to Woody Guthrie, it was a humorous version of "Redwing". Woody took the tune and wrote the "Union Maid" lyrics to it. But, supposedly, the now vile Ladies' Auxiliary verse was penned by Lee Hays. The revision to that line dates from the 1980s.

1. Woody Guthrie version:

Now, there once was a union maid, she never was afraid
Of the goons and the ginks and the company finks
And the deputy sheriffs who made the raid.
And she went to the union hall where a meeting, it was called.
And when the boys would come up to her, Lord, this is what she'd say:
[alt: And when the Legion boys come 'round, she always stood her ground.]

CHORUS:

"Oh, you can't scare me, I'm stickin' to the union.
I'm stickin' to the union, I'm stickin' to the union.
Oh, you can't scare me, I'm stickin' to the union.
I'm stickin' to the union, 'til the day I die."

Now this union maid was wise to the tricks of the company spies.
She'd take the dare, she didn't care,
She'd always organize the guys.
And she always got her way when she asked for better pay.
She showed her card to the National Guard.
Honey, this is what they'd say:

CHORUS:

Now, you girls who wanna be free, just take a little tip from me:
Oh, get you a man who's a union man
And you can join the Ladies' Auxiliary.
[alt: And fight together for Liberty.]
Because married life ain't hard when you got a union card.
And the union life is a happy life, if you've got a union wife.

CHORUS: [2x]

2. Dick Greenhouse version, ca. 1950

Union Maid (Never Get Me In A Union)

This "anti-union" version was supposedly written about the Local 802, American Federation of Musicians that once picketed the New York May Day parade for using non-union musicians. You gotta admit, it was bad form to use non-union workers on a day dedicated to workers & unions.

There once was a union maid, who never was afraid
To join in song with a noisy throng
Who'd pick their banjos all night long
They'd try with all their might to steer the workers right
They'd organize, ad nauseum, whoever came in sight.
They'd sing...

CHORUS:

You'll never get me in a union. We just love unions,
There's nothin' like a union.
But you will never get me in a union, 'cause
To join a union, you have to work.

This dedicated gang could always get a bang
From following the Party line
And calling bosses, "Fascist swine!"
They'll holler all night long,
"Let's keep the union strong!"
As long as Daddy's dough holds out, you'll always hear them shout:

CHORUS:

Now, gals who want to be free, just take a tip from me
Get you a banjo, learn two chords
Then go insult the bourgeoisie
Praise unions to the skies
Sneer at all bosses' lies
And then at parties, dances too, you scab on 802.

CHORUS: