



John Henry tol' his Cap'n
That a man was a nat'chal man,
An' befo' he'd let that steam-drill
beat him down
He'd fall dead wid his hammer in his
han',
He'd fall dead wid his hammer in his
han'.

Cap'n says to John Henry,
"Goin' to bring me a steam-drill
'roun',
Take that steam-drill out up on the
job,
Goin' to whip that steam-drill down,
Goin' to whip that old steam-drill
down.

HOW many of the passengers, in the sleek aluminium and steel giants that speed across the United States, could join today in this railroadmen's song about their work? When they look,

for instance (aboard the Rock Island Railroad's Jet Rocket) into the television screen in the lounge that reels off the rail ahead, do they look for nothing but the end of the line? Or does their concern with time include the past of the railroad and the men who built it; include the unknown singers in the mines, in the forest and on the prairie, whose work and sense of community built the world as they know it?

"Times have changed, and civilisation has solved a lot of the basic problems that were the concern of folk songs. So up to a point we can only partially identify ourselves with people in the past. But birth and death are always real, and so is hunger, too, for many people, and the sense of identification with people of the past and their songs when they deal in these basic things will always exist strongly, especially

where people are underprivileged and oppressed."

So said Henry Walter to *The Listener* when we called to talk about his new series of folk songs, *All Day Singing*.

"Any attempt, however, to create a folk music culture is false, artificial. The world has changed, and it is natural that folk songs haven't the same meaning for us as they had to the old-timers. But they can still be valuable—I don't think there is any better way of studying history. When people sang, they sang because they were happy or unhappy, or because they wanted a restatement of some familiar story; this was their form of entertainment—a communal form of entertainment in the isolation caused by geography or occupation."

And each song told a very real story to the people of the past, though events and situations might sometimes sound artificial to us today. Listening to these stories, said Mr. Walter, can tell us something of the people.

The new series of recordings he will introduce will include songs of courting and complaint, social songs, Negro folk songs, white spirituals, songs of "heroes and hard cases," of Europe in America, and "men at work." A lot of time will be given to songs of this last category, said Mr. Walter, for occupation songs form a very large part of the American folk song tradition.

"Railroadmen and miners, and all the others who laid the basis of heavy in-

dustry, took naturally to folk singing. At first the songs were work songs in the sense that the rhythm of the song corresponded to the rhythm of a particular job. Later on they were adapted into songs of protest and political organisation. Such adapted songs often had tremendous influence when used by labour organisations in protest against bad conditions.

"Rhythmical work, of course, doesn't exist to the same degree now, because of mechanisation. Work songs of this kind are only sung in isolated pockets of the U.S.A., and less and less as the years pass and the old timers pass with them."

A minor change in the new series of *All Day Singing* will be the separation of Negro folk songs from those songs that have a European tradition. Mr. Walter explained that a couple of separate programmes might help to give a better introduction to the Negro songs, and to the singers, some of whom were hard to understand. In this context he mentioned the late Huddie Ledbetter, better known as Leadbelly, one of the greatest of Negro folk singers. A friend of Leadbelly's has written that the singer never needed a microphone to reach a crowded hall, that everything he sang rang loud and clear—clear, that is, if you understand Louisiana.

The new series of *All Day Singing* starts on Saturday, April 13, from YAs and 4YZ, at 8.30 p.m.

RIGHT: Huddie Ledbetter ("Leadbelly") King of the Twelve-String Guitar. AT TOP OF PAGE: Dan Walsh, a 60-year-old coalminer, sings one of seven folk-songs which he recorded for the U.S. Library of Congress.



ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Urban Sprawl: Questions and Answers - - -	4-5
Natural History in the Backyard - - -	6
Heroes and Pioneers - - -	7
New Concert Hall at Lower Hutt - - -	7
It Came Out of Egypt - - -	8-9
Shepherd's Calendar - - -	9
Editorial - - -	10
Letters from Listeners - - -	11

Books - - -	12-13-14
Films - - -	15
New Recordings - - -	17
Open Microphone - - -	18
NZBS Secretary Retires - - -	19
Radio Review - - -	20-21
Ask Aunt Daisy - - -	22-23
Programme Guide - - -	24-25

BROADCAST PROGRAMMES

Monday to Sunday, April 8-14 27-47