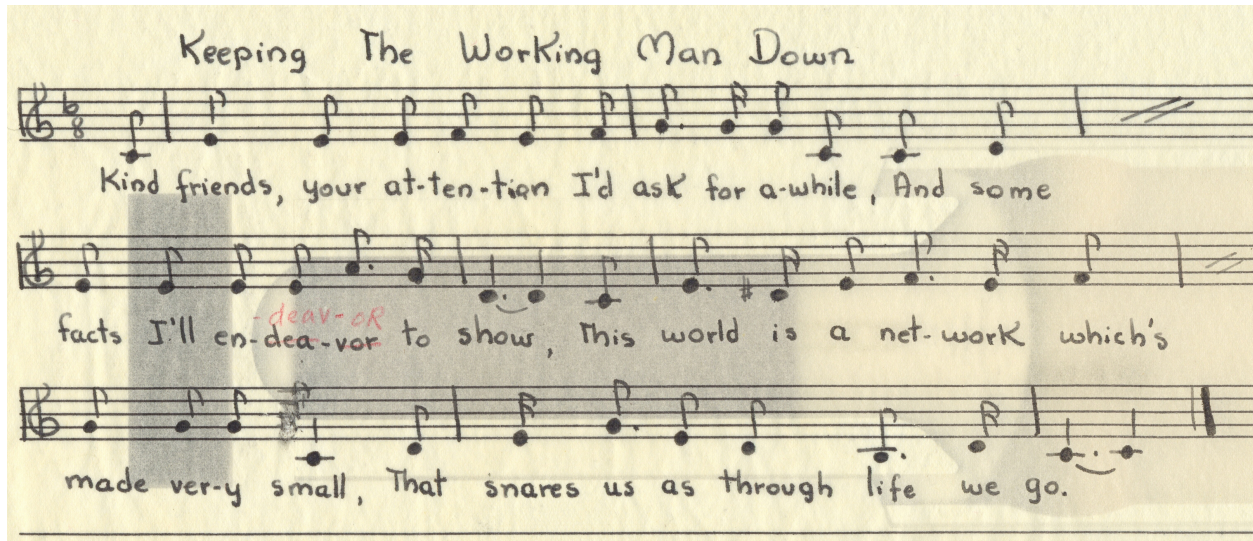


Keeping the Working Man Down

As sung by
Henry Humphrey
07-22-1941 Hancock, WI



Verse 1.

Kind friends, your attention I'd ask for awhile,
And some facts I'll endeavor to show.
This world is a network which's made very
small,
That snares us as through life we go.

Verse 2.

Of trials and troubles we all have our share,
And oftentimes heartless men gain renown,
But the way that they do it I'll now tell to you,
It's by keeping the working man down.

Verse 3.

A man who is working, his wages he'll spend,
To his comrades, so happy and gay,
And scarcely before the week comes to an end,
His wages is all passed away.

Verse 4.

But if he would lay by a dollar or so
And place it in some bank in town,
He could then wink his eye, tell his boss on the
sly,
"They can't keep the working man down."

Verse 5.

Then hold up your head, and this world never
dread;
Don't care for its sneer or its frown.
Stare fate in the face, if your heart's in its place;
They can't keep the working man down.

Verse 6.

Take this house as it stands here tonight,
And compare it, for that is my plan.
The roof is aristocracies; so are the walls.
The foundation is hard working man.

Verse 7.
You take off the roof, and the walls still remain;
Take the walls, the foundation is sound,
But you take the foundation, the working man
made,
The structure then falls to the ground.

Verse 8.
Then hold up your head, and this world never
dread;
Don't care for its sneers or its frown.
Stare fate in the face, if your heart's in its place;
They can't keep the working man down.*

* Last word spoken.

Transcription and lyrics from the Helene Stratman-Thomas Collection.

Critical Commentary

Transcriptions by Peters, p. 84, and HST

HST notes:

In the Professional Papers series:

Sung by Henry Humphrey, age 76, 1941.

Alternate titles/related songs: "You Can't Keep a Shantyboy Down," "The Hard-Working Man."

Sources:

Fowke, Edith. *Lumbering Songs from the Northern Woods*. Transcriptions by Norman Cazden. Published for the American Folklore Society. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970.

"You Can't keep a Shantyboy Down," different tune

Peters, Harry B., ed. *Folk Songs out of Wisconsin: An Illustrated Compendium of Words and Music*. Madison, WI: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1977.

K.G.