

# Fifty Thousand Lumberjacks

words: anonymous

music: traditional "Portland County Jail"

In the Northwest, the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) played a vital role in the winning of better working conditions, particularly in the lumber camps. Old timers describe rotting, filthy mattresses, roofless bunk houses, no showers or drying rooms, and substandard food as the loggers' lot. Loggers were forced to carry their "bindles" or bedding on their backs into the lumber camps, and thus were tagged "bindle stiffs".

In 1917, the lumber workers struck throughout the Northwest, 50,000 strong. On May Day of 1918 (International Labor Day), the loggers burned their "bindles" in protest. Although this Strike was called off by the Wobblies, the Spruce Commission almost immediately implemented the reforms for which the Wobblies had fought.

The following song, to the tune of "Portland County Jail", appeared in the 1917 edition of the Little Red Song Book of the IWW. Thanks to Jerry Lombardini of WWU for background information on the IWW.

The musical score is written on four staves in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is written on the upper line of each staff, with lyrics underneath. Chord symbols E, B7, and A are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: "Fif-ty thousand lumber jacks, fifty thou-sand packs, Fif-ty thousand dirty rolls of blan-kets on their backs, Fif-ty thousand minds made up to strike and strike like men, For fifty years they've".



CHORUS

"Such a lot of devils," that's what the papers say -  
"They've gone on strike for shorter hours and some increase in pay.  
They left the camps, the lazy tramps, they all walked out as one;  
They say they'll win the strike or put the bosses on the bum."

Fifty thousand wooden bunks full of things that crawl;  
Fifty thousand restless men have left them once for all.  
One by one they dared not say, "Fat, the hours are long."  
If they did, they'd hike - but now they're fifty thousand strong.

Fatty Rich, we know your game, know your pride is pricked.  
Say - but why not be a man, and own when you are licked?  
They've joined the One Big Union - Gee! For goodness sake, "Get wise!"  
The more you try to buck them now, the more they organize.

Take a tip and start right in - plan some cozy rooms,  
Six or eight spring beds in each, with towels, sheets and brooms;  
Shower baths for men who work keeps them well and fit.  
A laundry, too, and drying room, would help a little bit.

Get some dishes, white and clean; good pure food to eat.  
See that cook has help enough to keep the table neat.  
Tap the bell for eight hours' work; treat the boys like men,  
And fifty thousand lumberjacks may come to work again.

Men who work should be well paid. "A man's a man for a' that."  
Many a man has a home to keep same as yourself, Old Fat.  
Mothers, sisters, sweethearts, wives, children, too, galore,  
Stand behind the men to win this bread and butter war.

The IWW Song Book can be obtained for 75¢ from the IWW, 752 West Webster Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60614. The book also contains one of organized labor's best known songs, "Solidarity Forever", written for the Wobblies by Ralph Chaplin, a long-time Tacoma resident, in 1915. It also contains such classics as "Rebel Girl", "Hallelujah, I'm a Bum", and "Preacher and the Slave".