

SINGABOUT

AUGUST 2016

PARODIES

With the upcoming third John Dengate Commemorative Concert, it seemed a good occasion to air the art of parody that he used to great effect, and find room for some material that didn't fit with the June issue.

The history of Australian Folk music includes many parodies, often modifying a memorable popular song to make a statement about an issue of the time. This is of course not restricted to Folk. Many of the popular radio stations have created humorous parodies and anti-ads to improve the ratings - they seem to strike a chord with the Australian audience. For example, I still have a CD somewhere of some of the less tasteless material Doug Mulray created for his morning show.

In the folk scene there were also some pretty rough parodies, but the ones that seem to survive are those like John's work that make a statement with a clever adaption of the original song.

In his recollections of The Bushwhackers, Chris Kempster wrote:

"Brian introduced us, explaining that some people said there was no Australian Folk Music - only parodies, to imported tunes from Ireland or such. If so, said Brian, then we're all the same, everyone here, we're all from the same sources as the music and we're all parodies, the only Australians are the Aborigines."

This comment is still relevant today with the current debates about immigration.

Dying Fettle

A strapping young fettle lay dying
With a shovel supporting his head
The ganger and crew round him crying
As he let go his pick handle and said

Chorus

Wrap me up in a tent or a fly boys
And bury me deep down below
Where the trolleys and trains won't molest me
To show there's a navvy below

There's tea in the old battered billy-can
Place the dogs spikes out in a row
And we'll spike to the next merry meeting
To show there's a navvy below

Hark, there's the wail of a trolley
Far, far away it seems
It sounds like the inspector is coming
And hopes to see us all here

So back to your shovels my boy-lads
And bend your backs backs with a will
For this inspector has no kind of judgement
To know there's a navvy below

Given the recent loss of railway enthusiast Brian Dunnett, this seemed an appropriate piece to open with as he loved everything with a railway theme.

It was collected at Lappa Junction in north Queensland in 1966 and closely parodies the Dying Stockman, similarly relating the tough life of a railway labourer.

More old songs at <http://folkstream.com>



Terrorist Song

©John Dengate 2003

Tune: Knickerbocker Line

As I was walking down the road, he suddenly appeared:
A bloody turbaned Moslem with a big Bin Laden beard;
I asked, "Are you a terrorist, is that your bloody lurk?"
He said, "No, I'm a carpenter, I'm on my way to work."

Chorus

I watched him, tracked him, rang up A.S.I.O.
I dobbed him into Alan Jones on talk-back radio.
I may not be a beauty and I don't have any sense
But, by God, I know my duty to the national defence!

They're going to bomb the Harbour Bridge then quiet as a mouse,
They'll sneak up with explosives and blow up the Opera House.
They're going to blow up Murphy's pub. I've heard about the plot...
I hope they get the pokies 'cause I'm losing quite a lot.

There's terrorism everywhere; it makes a man afraid...
I'm buying a machine gun and I'll build a barricade.
You'll have to know the password if you come and visit me.
Shoot first, ask questions later mate, that's my philosophy.

My Auntie May's eccentric; "You're paranoid," she said.
She doesn't believe the terrorists are underneath the bed.
She reckons it's "hysteria"... I don't know what she meant...
She said she's far more frightened of the Federal Government.

John Howard will protect us, he is very strong and brave;
He's passing legislation that will make you all behave!
You won't be facing Mecca on that silly bloody mat
You'll all be Church of England, Abdul, cogitate on that!

Final Chorus

Watch them, track them...

Some of the names have changed, but unfortunately the issues are just as relevant today. The song arrived as the Knickerbocker Line, and has also been modified to The Great Northern Line, and even Lachlan Tigers.

Lies like 'illegal'

by Jenny Fitzgibbon <http://www.jennyfitzgibbon.com>

Adapted from the tune of "When the Boat Comes in". Trad - Northumberland

Asylum they come seeking In a boat that's leaking
Gets the pollies freaking When the boat comes in

No peace for Baba, No peace for Maman
No peace for koodak, surely it's a sin

Zero information goes out to the nation
An abomination When the boat comes in

To 'secure' our borders We give Navy orders
Racists would applaud us When the boat comes in

No peace for Baba, No peace for Maman
No peace for koodak, surely it's a sin

Why say a prayer Teach our kids to care
Then refuse to share When the boat comes in

Private corporations Profit from our nation's
Freedom deprivations When the boat comes in

No peace for Baba, No peace for Maman
No peace for koodak, surely it's a sin

Forked tongues a-lashing In a right-wing fashion
Why not show compassion When the boat comes in

Even though there's no 'queue' take the pain you've been thru
To Manus or Nauru When the boat comes in

No peace for Baba, No peace for Maman
No peace for koodak, surely it's a sin

Children in detention Human rights suspension
We must pay attention When the boat comes in

If I'd a son or daughter fleeing famine or slaughter
I'd cross any water When the boat comes in

No peace for Baba, No peace for Maman
No peace for koodak, surely it's a sin

A label like 'illegals' Lies like 'illegal'
Should be illegal When the boat comes in

While the tune has become popular here via a more modern communication path it is well known to many people and is therefore a good tune to parody.

Baba - father, Maman - mother, Koodak - child (Persian)