

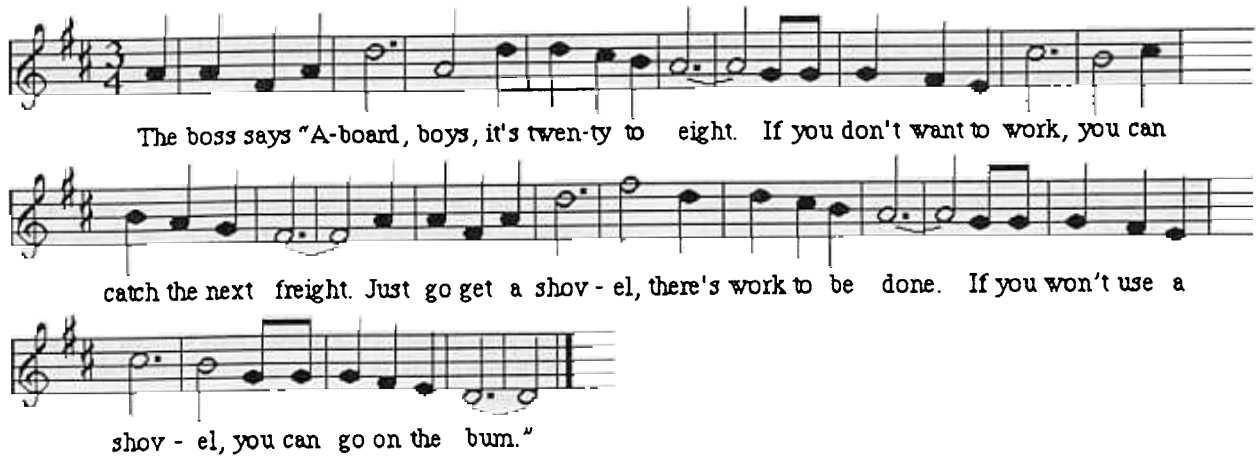
The Trans-Canada Highway

Collected by Edith Fowke
from the singing of Tom Brandon, Peterborough, Ontario.

Tom Brandon was a great singer from working class Ontario. "The Trans Canada Highway" can be found on the Society's cassette reissue of the Folk Legacy LP Brandon recorded during the 1960s, *The Rambling Irishman*, available from the CSTM Mail Order Service (Stock Number TG003C).

"Bennett" in verse two refers to Richard B. Bennett, Conservative Prime Minister of Canada from 1930-35, immortalized in the "Bennett buggy," an automobile for which one could no longer afford gas and/or repairs and hitched up to a horse as an awkward, slow, but presumably comfy carriage.

It is comforting to realize that in this case at least, the advice to workers in the final five verses is given tongue-in-cheek.



The boss says "A-board, boys, it's twenty to eight. If you don't want to work, you can
catch the next freight. Just go get a shov - el, there's work to be done. If you won't use a
shov - el, you can go on the bum."

The Boss said "Aboard, boys, it's twenty to eight.
If you don't want to work, you can catch the next freight.
So pick up your shovels, there's work to be done.
If you won't use a shovel, you can go on the bum."

It's hailing, it's raining, but during the day
The Lord works with Bennett to keep clouds away.
Now if I had Bennett where Bennett's got me,
The very first morning, he'd be weak at the knee.

A year has gone by, boys, since I came on this road,
And the weight of my savings is a terrible load.
I'd go on a trip, lads, and all would be fine,
But the CP Excursion costs more than a dime.

I remember way back, boys, about three or four years,
When there was no Depression, and we drank lots of beer.
But those years have gone by, boys, and the wages are low.
If I don't get gum rubbers, I'll be freezing my toes.

But I can't get gum rubbers, the way things are now,
For rubbers cost money, and I have none, I vow.
Ten dollars a month, boys, I could spend that on beer,
But I gave it to Crowley, and I'll lose it, I fear.

In years that's to come, boys, you'll hear some folks say,
The Depression was awful, we worked for no pay.
But when will that be, boys, if you should ask me—
My beard will be growing right down to my knees.

Now all you young fellows, with hearts brave and true,
Who work on this highway 'cause it's all you can do,
If you'd make your fortune while working this way,
Just listen to me, lads, and hear what I say.

Don't smoke no tobacco, for it takes the dimes,
And dimes are like dollars in these rough times.
And if you don't eat, lads, that's four bits a day
To go to the bank with, there'll be no board to pay.

We all love the girls, boys, they're the prides of our heart.
If you want to save money, with them you must part.
If you buy a soft drink, it'll cost you five cents,
And one for the girlfriend makes double expense.

Now we get to the clothes, they're things we don't need,
For Adam had none, boys, and neither did Eve,
So why should we wear them, they're a useless expense.
If you even leave socks off, you'll save 50 cents.

Just go in the bush, boys, with stones from the grade,
And each kill a bear if you're not too afraid.
Dress up in his skin, and soon you will find,
No matter how cold, boys, I'm sure you'll not mind.

Now, that's my advice, lads, you can take it or not,
And if you don't take it, you'll be here 'til you rot.
I'll finish my song, boys, and so make it rhyme:
I say twenty-one years is a mighty long time.