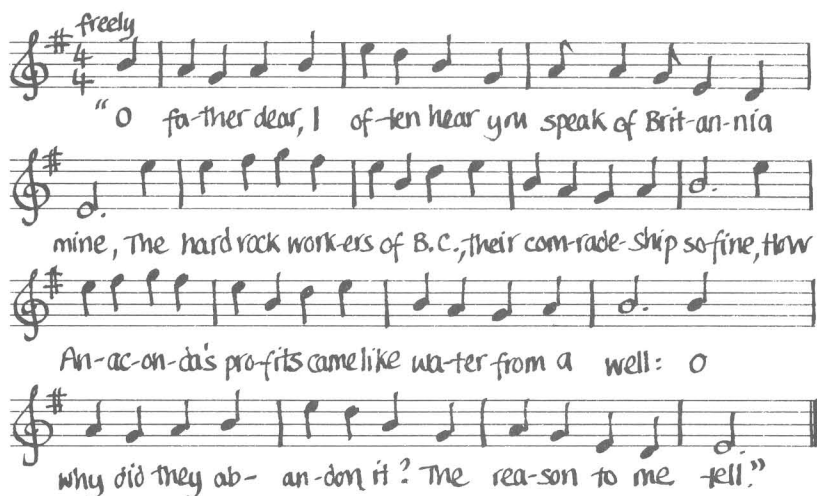


Britannia Mine

freely



O father dear, I often hear you speak of Britannia
mine, The hard rock workers of B.C., their comradeship so fine, How
Anaconda's profits came like water from a well: O
why did they abandon it? The reason to me tell."

"Oh father dear, I often hear you speak of Britannia Mine,
The hard-rock workers of B.C., their comradeship so fine,
How Anaconda's profits came like water from a well:
O why did they abandon it? The reason to me tell."

"My son, I worked the miner's trade with dignity and pride,
Until they forced us out on strike, with Mine-Mill on our side:
They tried to smash our Union, a lesson to us teach,
And that's the cruel reason they closed down Britannia Beach."

"Oh well do I remember it, 'twas on the bargaining day:
We instructed our Committee to ask for higher pay,
But Anaconda's lawyers an agreement would not reach,
And that's another reason they closed down Britannia Beach."


"Oh father dear, the day will come when, in answer to the call
All working folks across this land will rally, one and all:
Our industry will be home-owned, our work conditions fine—
Ananconda will never get a chance to close a B.C. mine!"

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This song dates from a strike and lockout at Anaconda Copper at Britannia Beach in 1965. The men wanted a 10¢ per hour increase, and the company responded with a demand for a 10¢ per hour reduction. The strike which resulted was a bitter one—the miners saw the struggle as an attempt by the company to smash their union, the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers, and to sign a “sweetheart” contract with their union’s chief competitor, the United Steelworkers of America. Since that time, the two unions have amalgamated, but at that time there were strong feelings. To force the miners to come to heel, the company threatened to take out the pumps in the shafts and to flood the mine with sea-water, which would have ensured that the mine could never be used again. The people of B.C., through their M.L.A.’s, brought pressure to bear upon the company and the threat was never carried out. The mine was nevertheless shut down for many months, and reopened briefly, only to shut down for good as a working mine. It is now a ghost-town and a museum of mining. Paddy Graber, who made this song, worked at Britannia, and felt very strongly about the issues involved. He made the song on the pattern of “Skibbereen,” a rebel song from his native Ireland which dealt with the eviction of tenant farmers during the Great Famine of the 1840’s.

Jon Bartlett


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