

[Letter from Woody Guthrie to Columbia, ca. June 17, 1942]

WAR SONGS ARE WORK SONGS By Woody Guthrie

D-32

The Columbia Recording Co., New York City, N.Y.

Dear Sirs:

You are rationed, I suppose, a lot like the migratory workers that are trying to get from crop to crop in broke down rattletraps that have been rationed now, both inside the gas tank, on the tires, and under the hood, and in the stomach for a good number of years. Anyway, I am of the opinion that if you've just got to cut down on recordings because of priorities, and so forth, the cocktail songs and the empty, sissy, and scared ones had ought to be cut first, and an increase on the work songs of the working people.

I am enclosing a large number of songs, mostly old time folk songs brought up to date, as this bringing them up to date is what keeps a folk song a folk song, it says whatever needs to be said, or as much as the law allows, at the time when it needs to be said. I am not a musician and cannot read notes, but I am trying to get an audition to play and sing you some of these songs in view of an album or two, called, 'War Songs are Work Songs'. As a general thing, they will be a whole lot like the two albums of Dust Bowl Ballads that I made for the Victor Company. A blues harmonica played sort of a sandy, waterlogged western style, a guitar, and sung.

You might be interested to know that I'm writing a novel at this time to be released soon called The Boomchasers, and based on my traveling and singing for the working folks in

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45 states. The publisher is E.P. Dutton & Co., New York. This should lead to an increase in the sale of any records that we could release at this time.

This is a war of work and work is about the only thing you can sing about these days, the big jobs we've done, and the big one we've got to do before we can clear the fascists out of the way, and do some big jobs we've been wanting to do for a long time.

I would like for you to audition these songs as soon as possible. I also have quite a large number of others of different kinds.

Thanking you in advance,

Woody Guthrie