Song Lyrics From the Pipets

Joie Gelband, Bill Jaeger, David Reiffel, and Marguerite Rigoglioso

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Editor's note: The Pipets are the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers' singing group.



Four of the Pipets perform at an outdoor rally for union recognition in the late 1980s.

"Unions Are a Girl's Best Friend"

(To the tune of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend," original music and lyrics by Jule Styne and Leo Robin; new lyrics by David Reiffel and Marguerite Rigoglioso)

Harvard University–the best college in the nation!
But those inside its ivied walls see naught but exploitation!

A pat on the head can be quite condescending,
Unions are a girl's best friend.
Prestige may be grand, but it won't help you renting
An expensive flat, or help you at the laundromat.
Bok* grows cold when we grow bold,

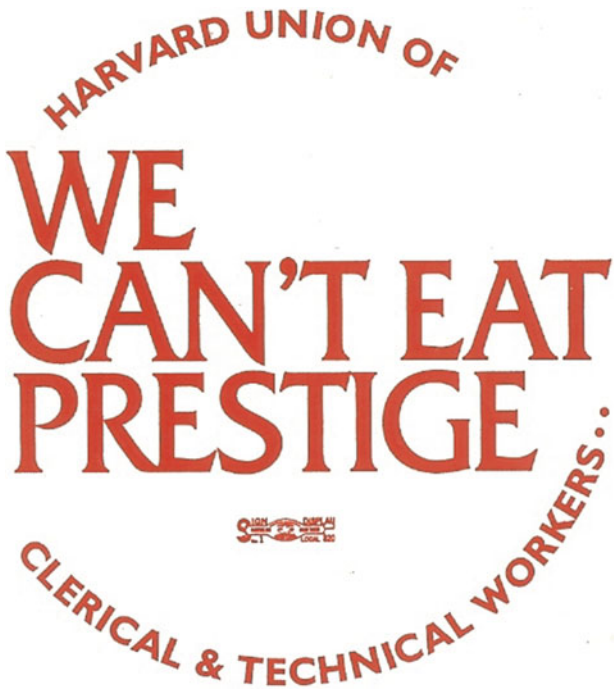
* Derek Bok, labor law professor and coauthor with John Dunlop of *Labor and the American Community* (1970), was president of Harvard University for twenty years, from 1971 to 1991.

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'Cause he knows that we're right in the end.
The things that we're seeking don't need his critiquing–
Unions are a girl's best friend.

There may come a time when a lass needs more money,
Unions are a girl's best friend.
There may come a time when your boss says, "Hey, honey,
Gee, you're awful nice!" But ask for dough, and it's "No dice!"
It's no crime to do comp time,
Skip your lunch, take his trousers to mend.
As long as those louses treat us like their spouses
Unions are a girl's best friend.

Three hundred fifty years of patriarchy,
Unions are a girl's best friend.
Now, we say, "Enough of that sexist malarkey-
Harvard, you ain't poor, so hear us roar, we want some more!"
They can croon the same old tune,
Long as rules are so easy to bend.
But they'll croon a new one when we have our Union!
Unions, Unions, Unions, U-U-U-Unions!
Union's are a woman's best friend!



One of the first union slogans

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"Heartbeat"

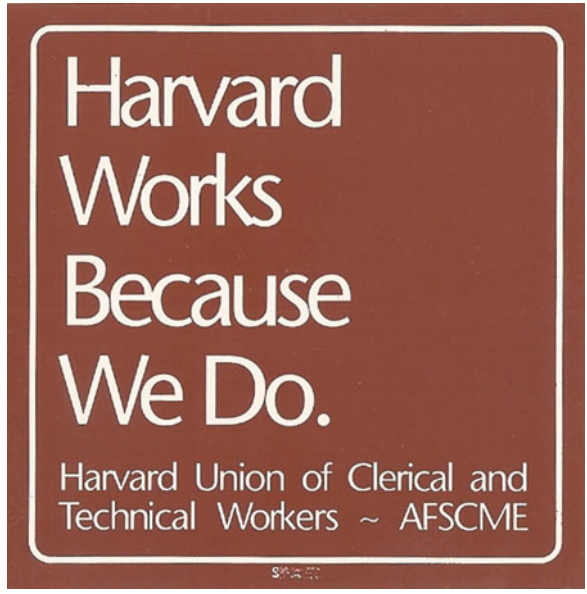
(To the tune of a Chevrolet commercial, "Heartbeat of America," original music and lyrics by Robin Batteau; new lyrics by Joie Gelband and Bill Jaeger)

Listen to the heartbeat
Of the workplace.
They're gonna listen to the heartbeat
Of the workplace.
We're the rhythm on the job,
We're the pulse of the school,
More than a typing pool:

Ooh, the heartbeat of the workplace
H-U-C-T-W!

We'll change the feelin'
Of the workplace.
Gonna change the feelin'
Of the workplace.
We're the soul and the muscle.
We're the bones and the brains.
Running through Harvard's veins

Ooh, the heartbeat of the workplace:
H-U-C-T-W!



A union poster and placemat from the mid-1990s

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"Gonna Build a Union"

(To the tune of "Gonna Build a Mountain," original music and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley; new lyrics by Bill Jaeger)

Gonna build a union,
Gonna start right now.
If we work together
It'll work somehow.
Gonna build a union
Gonna build it strong.
Don't know how long it's gonna take
But I know it won't be too long.

Take a thousand workers
Workin' on their own,
Still got no power
When they stand alone.
But when you got a union
You got a louder voice.
Why stand alone? You ought to stand
Together if you got the choice!

We can make a mountain
From a little hill.
Like drops of water
Can turn a mill.
We can have the strength
If we organize.
Just like an ant moves a pebble
A thousand times its size!

Gonna build a union,
Gonna start right now.
If we work together
It'll work somehow.
Gonna build a union
Gonna build it strong.
Don't know how long it's gonna take
But I know it won't be too long.

Don't know how long it's gonna take
But I know it won't be too long!

"They Can't Take That Away"

(To the tune of "They Can't Take That Away From Me," original music and lyrics composed by George and Ira Gershwin; new lyrics by Joie Gelband and Bill Jaeger)

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No, no–they can't take that away from me.

The way I see my doc
Without payin' a fee.
I go by my own clock–
No, no, they can't take that away from me.

The way I work part-time
And I'm treated equally,
'Cause I'm worth every dime–
No, no, they can't take that away from me.

If the benefits are givin' them fits
And they want to save some dough,
But they don't know where,
So we'll tell them where to go.

The way I plan to retire
With some dignity.
I plan to rock by the fire–
No, no they can't take that away from me.

No, they can't take that away from me



Harvard workers and their allies picketed for three months to win full benefits for part-time employees, many of whom were single mothers.

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