

Canadian Railroad Trilogy

Gordon Lightfoot

There was a time in this fair land when the railroad did not run
when the wild majestic mountains stood alone against the sun
Long before the white man and long before the wheel
when the green dark forest was too silent to be real
But time has no beginnings and hist'ry has no bounds
as to this verdant country they came from all around
They sailed upon her waterways and they walked the forests tall
built the mines, mills and the factories for the good of us all

And when the young man's fancy was turnin' to the spring
the railroad men grew restless for to hear the hammers ring
Their minds were overflowing with the visions of their day
and many a fortune won and lost and many a debt to pay

For they looked in the future and what did they see
They saw an iron road runnin' from the sea to the sea
Bringin' the goods to a young growin' land
all up through the seaports and into their hands

Look away said they across this mighty land
from the eastern shore to the western strand
Bring in the workers and bring up the rails
we gotta lay down the tracks and tear up the trails
Open 'er heart let the life blood flow
gotta get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow

Bring in the workers and bring up the rails
we're gonna lay down the tracks and tear up the trails
Open 'er heart let the life blood flow
gotta get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow
get on our way 'cause we're movin' too slow

Behind the blue Rockies the sun is declinin'
The stars, they come stealin' at the close of the day
Across the wide prairie our loved ones lie sleeping
beyond the dark oceans in a place far away

We are the navvies who work upon the railway
swingin' our hammers in the bright blazin' sun
Livin' on stew and drinkin' bad whiskey
bendin' our backs 'til the long days are done

We are the navvies who work upon the railway
swingin' our hammers in the bright blazin' sun
Layin' down track and buildin' the bridges
bendin' our backs 'til the railroad is done

So over the mountains and over the plains
into the muskeg and into the rain
up the St. Lawrence all the way to Gaspé
swingin' our hammers and drawin' our pay
Layin' 'em in and tyin' 'em down
away to the bunkhouse and into the town
a dollar a day and a place for my head
a drink to the livin' a toast to the dead

Oh the song of the future has been sung

all the battles have been won
On the mountain tops we stand
all the world at our command
We have opened up the soil
with our teardrops and our toil

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And many are the dead men too silent... to be real