

new generation of players. Behind this seemingly parochial devotion lies his conviction that music carries the unofficial national memory. A bar of traditional banjo playing can be just three strokes—a melody string, a downward brush, a ringing syncopated drone—but as that pattern resonates it joins Africa to Appalachia, the Middle Passage to the Great Depression.

As something of a left icon, Seeger has always been an easy target. But motivating his half-century of records and performances is a vision of radical transformation through the communal experience of song; of socialism grounded in the rhythms of the workplace, neighborhood and church rather than the insular discourse of the academy. If such optimism is hard to imagine today, all the more reason to contemplate it.

Punishing Iraqis

It is time to lift the U.N. embargo against Iraq. Far from strengthening or emboldening Iraq's people and undermining Saddam Hussein, the sanctions have led to the pauperization, criminalization and further polarization of Iraqi society without weakening Saddam. And the U.N. sanctions have devastated the economy. Iraq, whose economic survival depends overwhelmingly on the export of oil—formerly bringing in \$15 billion annually—cannot sell its oil. The value of the currency has evaporated: The dinar, worth around \$3 in 1990, is trading at 600 against the dollar. Inflation, running at 6,000 percent, has inflicted suffering on the majority of the people. The government has exhausted its foreign cash reserves and, bankrupt, can no longer afford to import basic medical and food supplies. In September Baghdad announced up to 50 percent cuts in basic food rations. According to the World International Food Program in Rome, this reduction "constitutes a risk for the health of 2.25 million children and 230,000 pregnant women." Hospitals are running out of key drugs, antiseptics, anesthetics and needles. UNICEF reports that as a result of the shortages 1,800 young children and elderly people die every month.

Hunger, deprivation and fear are a breeding ground for violence. Since 1990, rape, burglary and prostitution are reported to have increased by almost 50 percent. Saddam responded by decreeing the Islamicization of Iraq. The Islamic legal code, Shariah, has been incorporated into Iraqi criminal law. Thieves will have their right hand cut off for a first offense and a leg for a second offense; burglars will be shot. Islamic symbols permeate official political discourse, schools have Islamic instruction and all public functions start with Koranic prayers—a radical departure from the nationalist and secular platform of the ruling Baath Party.

The Islamicization of Iraqi politics will exacerbate the sectarian Sunni-Shiite divide and provide the dynamite to blow Iraq apart. The salaried middle class that formed the social and political base for the Baath regime has almost been wiped out, mortgaging its future in a desperate attempt to survive. Substantial numbers of middle-class Iraqis have either left the country or are trying to. Those remaining have lost faith in Saddam.

This upheaval does not mean, however, that Saddam's

doom is sealed—at least not in the short term. The U.N. sanctions have sapped the strength and drained the energy of most Iraqis, and their reliance on the government's rations has further restricted their actions. Meanwhile, Saddam firmly controls central Iraq and to a lesser extent the south. His security forces are well housed and well fed. Many family members and cronies of the regime have made fortunes profiteering with business monopolies.

Even if maintaining U.N. sanctions does result in the downfall of Saddam, does the end justify the means? Should the United States and the U.N. continue to ignore the deprivation, suffering and hunger of millions of Iraqis? Can the West escape its responsibility for supporting the Iraqi dictator in the 1980s and for leaving him in power after the Gulf War?

Many Iraqi dissidents, who have the most to lose from a stronger Saddam, say that the price of maintaining the U.N. sanctions outweighs any potential benefit. A leading member of the Iraqi opposition predicts that prolonging sanctions would hasten the collapse of Iraq as a political entity: "Internal forces will be unleashed in bloody conflicts and a total breakdown of law and order that no internal or external forces will be able to control."

The U.N. should replace the sanctions regime with a human rights regime. It should maintain its arms embargo and inundate Iraq with human rights observers along the lines of the U.N. weapons inspections teams. Saddam must be told that violations of human rights will result in further punitive measures against his regime, including the threat of holding a war crimes tribunal.

Lifting the sanctions would empower civil society by giving all citizens more tactical space to organize and challenge the Iraqi dictatorship. The opposition at home and in exile would be able to collaborate and spread deep roots in Iraq. Most of all, lifting the sanctions would allow the Iraqi people to begin their painful national healing and to undertake the reconstruction of a tolerant and pluralistic political environment.

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Talking Union

Early results of the Worker Representation and Participation Survey show a strong employee desire for more power in the workplace, frustration with management opposition to letting them have it and three times the demand for unions than what current union membership reflects. But you might not know this from reading many press accounts of the W.R.P.S. findings—like the *Washington Post* story headlined "Study: Unions Viewed as Obsolete"—which focused only on workers' desire to live in peace with their employer.

Of course workers want “cooperative” dealings with management. If someone had a lot more power than you, wouldn’t you want them to be in a cooperative mood? If you had the sensible view that an enterprise was a joint endeavor, wouldn’t you want to realize gains to be had through cooperation in making it run? But workers also want respect from management, shared benefit from cooperation, and the power to command both through independent organization. The real problem highlighted by the W.R.P.S. is not that federal law bars cooperative workplace practices but that it no longer gives workers in the growing nonunion sector any real ability to influence the terms on which cooperation is offered.

The W.R.P.S., a survey of private-sector workers in companies of twenty-five employees or more, found a massive “representation/participation gap” in America’s workplaces—a shortfall between the influence workers have in decision-making and the influence they want. Workers believe more influence will improve company performance, not just the quality of their own jobs. This finding held across all workplace decisions—from training and technology use to health and safety and wages and benefits—and all kinds of employees. And it was robust even for those operating under the most advanced forms of nonunion human resource policies. By better than 80 percent, for example, even nonunion participants in advanced employee involvement (E.I.) programs want more influence “as a group” in how those programs are run.

But employees don’t think management is prepared to give them the power they want. Given “the way things are set up now” in their companies, a majority of those wanting more influence believe they couldn’t get it on their own, “even if [they] tried.” And super-majorities believe that attempts to form unions will be resisted by management, often by illegal means.

What if management resistance weren’t a barrier? Given the opportunity, 40 percent of employees would join unions tomorrow—about three times the actual level of private-sector unionization. Even those not wanting unions generally favor independent—as against company-dominated—forms of worker

representation. While they favor joint worker-management organizations, they don’t want management selecting their representatives or having the final say in conflicts.

Six decades ago the federal government offered American workers a New Deal on workplace rights: Associational freedoms would be guaranteed inside the company; what workers did with them was their business. Six decades later, many things have changed: The economy is no longer dominated by manufacturing; the work force is more diverse; internationalization and urban divestment, along with technology, have opened new sources of wage competition. One thing that hasn’t changed, however, is that workers don’t enjoy being pushed around. The W.R.P.S. does not stand for the proposition that unions—the only form of independent worker organization available in America—are obsolete. What it describes are the consequences of government not keeping faith with the old deal on workplace rights, and the urgency of workers’ demand that it do so.

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On the Outs



Recently dozens of lobbyists and analysts from arms control groups, a few liberal members of Congress and a bevy of Congressional aides gathered in the House Armed Services Committee room, beneath paintings of battles and under the auspices of Ronald Dellums, chairman of the committee. The intent of the meeting had been to fashion a way to tell President Clinton, Enough already—military spending must be cut, and we’re finally going to challenge your budget. But the election had altered the agenda. Now the topic was, What do we do in a Newt-controlled Congress? The atmosphere wasn’t as gloomy as one might expect, for Democratic legislators and aides expressed satisfaction that they will be better able to decry excessive military spending in the next Congress.

Aides to Dellums explained that the outgoing chairman feels he now can cut loose from the restraints of party loyalty and openly advocate slashing military spending. (Dellums, once the House’s most prominent champion of Pentagon downsizing, has been mute on this front since taking over the committee.) Representative Barney Frank proclaimed, with a touch of glee, that come January he and other Democrats will be literally irresponsible. The President’s budget will be D.O.A., and Hill Democrats will not be saddled with the ugly task of defending it. Confronting Republican budget proposals, progressive Democrats will be positioned to conduct a sharper debate on budget priorities. Earlier this year, Frank led a move to block a modest rise in the military budget backed by Clinton, and garnered only 105 votes—far fewer than similar initiatives had attracted in pre-Clinton years. Frank can count on col-

WHAT WORKERS WANT

Workers	%
Want more say in workplace decisions	63
Believe they can’t get desired say “the way things are set up now”	56
Think more power in decisions would make firm more competitive	76
Think more power would increase their own job satisfaction	87
Nonunion who think increased power would improve E.I. programs	82
Want to join unions	40
Think a majority of their colleagues do too	40
Nonunion who think management would oppose union drive at their company	66
Want to choose their own representatives	84
Want conflicts resolved by outside arbitrator, not management	59