



I'm too Old to Rat
A Poem by Henry Lawson
I don't care if the cause be wrong
Or if the cause be right -
I've had my day and sung my song
And fought in the bitter fight.
In truth at times I can't tell what
The men are driving at -
But I've been union thirty years
And I'm too old to rat.
I'm too old to rat
I'm too old for that
I've been union thirty years and
I'm too old to rat
Maybe, at times, in those old days
Remembered now by few,
We did bite off in various ways
Much more than we could chew -
We paid in sodden strikers' camps.
Upon the backsal flat.
We paid in long and hungry tramps -
And I'm too old to rat.
The Queensland strike in eighty-nine
And ninety's gloomy days -
The day the opera comp'ny sang
For us the "Marseillaise".
The sea of faces stern and set,
The waiting "bitter cup",
The hopeless hearts, unbeaten yet,
The storm cloud rushing up.
The fighting, dying "Boomerang"
Against the daily press,
The infant "Worker" holding out,
The families in distress;
The sudden tears of beaten men -
Oh! You remember that! -
Are memories that make my pen
Not worth its while to rat.
I've wept with them in strikers' camps,
Where shivered man and beast;
I've worn since then the badge of men,
Of Hell! And London East!
White faces by the flaring torch!
Wraith wives! - the slaves of Fat!
And ragged children in the rain -
Yes! - I'm too old to rat.