

On the other hand, there's another man I used to disapprove of greatly. Did you ever hear of the philosopher Eric Hoffer? He worked as a longshoreman, never went into academia, but he wrote several books. He says "Creativity is nice, but maintenance is the essential art of civilization," and I'm sure every woman will agree with me.

RO: Do you read much philosophy?

PS: I'm afraid the nearest I got to Plato was reading the book by I.F. Stone called The Death Of Socrates. Stone was a friend of mine, a socialist and a journalist, and a fighter for human rights of all sorts. He's dead now, but he had a newsletter called I.F. Stone's Weekly which I read every week; it was wonderful. But he had a heart attack, and the doctor said you better quit it, but he couldn't quit everything and he ended up studying ancient Greek so that he could read Plato in the original. He then came out with a book telling in contemporary English what the trial of Socrates was all about. Socrates was quite the elitist as you know, and he had been lecturing to a group of young men on how the government should be carried on, and one of these young men made himself the dictator of Athens, and it was a horrifying few years. Some people were executed, some people fled for their lives. Socrates stayed living in Athens the whole time

while his former student was mismanaging things. Finally the people of Athens rose up and kicked out the dictator and took over Athens again, but Socrates kept on with his little study circle of young men, and finally a jury of five hundred people — they drew lots — and five hundred were selected to be on the jury, and he was accused of offending the gods. He did his best to antagonize them. The foreman of the jury was a tanner of hides, and he said things like "Shepherds should herd sheep, tanners should tan hides, philosophers should govern." And when they declared him guilty he was entitled by law to suggest what his sentence should be. He said "My sentence should be to live in the temple of Diana, given free food for the rest of my life."

RO: He definitely didn't try to get out of it.

PS: That's right. And when his student's arranged to bribe a guard and arrange for him to escape, he refused to escape. He said "No, I have been sentenced and I will take my sentence."

RO: Do you believe that he said that because of the principle?

PS: Oh, he would rather go down in history as a martyr than as somebody who fled.

RO: Would you agree with the parallel with yourself and the House of Unamerican Activities, where you stuck to your principles...

PS: Of course, I wasn't

theories which I have, I'm a strong believer in independent activity, whether it's small business, or small this or small that, and I call it cultural guerilla tactics. I'd come into a college town and knock on the door of the local radio station, saying "I'm giving a concert at the local college to-

like this," and I'd sing a few lines on the air of some song appropriate to the occasion, and then five minutes later I'd be off the air before the disc jockey would get a telephone call from the American Legion or the John Birch Society [saying] "what do you mean by having that commie traitor on this station?" "Oh I didn't know he was a commie traitor, I'm so sorry, I won't have him on again." But I'd be long gone. So, I call it cultural guerilla tactics.

RO: Were you thinking when you were on trial that you wouldn't have trouble getting onto campuses, and that you were getting free publicity?

PS: Well of course I didn't

know for sure if I'd be in jail or not. As it happened, I had a very good lawyer and he worked for me for nothing. I did have to pay eventually some, I had to raise \$15,000. People all over the world including Canada, Britain and Australia, people raised money and sent in thousands of dollars to pay for the court expenses. You know, you have to pay for the minutes, the record of the trial has to be typed up, and printed, so about \$15,000 in court costs I had to raise. But my lawyer stuck with me, and he arranged for postponements and

postponements, and every year after the Korean War ended things got a little bit more free in the United States of America. Back in the days of Senator McCarthy was the low point, and then Eisenhower, stopping the Korean War, things started lightening up and lightening up until the sixties when I was finally able to sing in big state colleges, whereas in '55 I was only able to sing in Oberam College and McGill and places like that. Actually, I didn't sing at Brooklyn College until '67 because the president said "As long as I'm president, Pete Seeger will not sing on this campus," and I didn't. But he finally retired, and when he retired, then I sang on the campus.

RO: So the '50's actually ended up working to your benefit?

PS: Well, in a crazy kind of way. Of course I was still blacklisted off of network television. I did get a few jobs on a syndicated show, The David Suskind Show. He interviewed me, [and] somebody from the audience said "Mr. Seeger, are you blacklisted?" I replied "I have no proof of anything except I don't get any jobs on network tv," and Suskind looked me in the eye and said "Mr. Seeger, I can tell you, you ARE blacklisted." I got on Playboy's Penthouse Party, it was a big family joke, me being with all those young bosomy women. (laughs) End.

Seeger's CD:

Headlines & Footnotes

This CD contains twenty-three songs selected from Folkways archives of 3,000 unreleased Seeger tracks. Made up of songs on themes such as civil rights, union organizing and the anti-war movement, it features well known Seeger originals as "My Get Up And Go," "English Is Cuh-Ray-Zee" and "Waist Deep In The Big Muddy." It also includes tracks such as "Little Boxes," "Wimoweh," "Hold The Line" and "Wasn't That A Time." As great a Seeger collection as I've ever seen, it's seventy-three minutes of timeless music.

threatened with death. I think if I had been I would have gone off to Canada long before the committee questioned me.

RO: How important was it to stick to your principles there, for the freedom of expression?

PS: Well, I was in a much stronger position than the average person. I did not have a job to be fired from, and all that committee did was give me free publicity, so I got more bookings when I went out singing for colleges! It was humorous, for me the fifties were a vindication of a lot of

night, do you have a disc jockey program I could mention it on?" They'd say "Who are you?" and I said "Well, I was in the Weavers," "Oh yeah, I remember the Weavers, 'Goodnight Irene', come on, we'll talk for a moment." Five minutes later I was on the air and he'd [be] saying "What have you been doing since the Weavers quit?" I'd say "Well, the blacklist meant they didn't get any jobs in nightclubs — I go from college to college." "What do you sing?" "Well, I sing old folks songs, and some modern union songs, and a song