

# Woody Guthrie, The Dying Doctor

Doctor Leo Hayes was our company doctor  
From the big coal companies he got his pay  
For thirty-nine years he tried to cure us  
And now today on his deathbed lay.  
He called his five boys and his three daughters  
And at his bed we stood around  
We heard him tell the history of the coal miners  
And he said, "Don't let these people down."

You are all connected with the practice of medicine  
You promise you'll keep true I know  
You will do your best to help these people  
I close my eyes for I must go.  
His youngest girl was Doctor Betty  
With her face so pretty and her smile so sweet  
She walked the coal towns of Force and Byrndale  
She saw the sewage waters flowing down the street.

She saw the children drink the cankered water  
She saw the chickens fly up on the roof  
She saw the waters overflow the sewers  
And flood their gardens of victory.  
She went to the big shots of the Shawmut Company  
She did not beg and she did not plead  
She stood flatfooted and pounded the table  
Sewer pipes and bathrooms are what we need.

My dady told me to fight to cure sickness  
But I can't cure sickness with sewage all around  
These germs kill people quicker than I can cure them  
We need a foundation under every house.  
We need a bathroom for every family  
Yes, you can set there and blink your eyes  
Three hundred miners are out behind me  
We will clean this town or know the reason why.

I quit my job as the family doctor  
I nailed up my shingle and went on my own  
I carried my pillbag and waded those waters  
I set by a deathbed in many a home.  
I saw you catch rainwater in rusty washtubs  
I saw you come home dirty up out of your pits  
Watched you ride with your coffin up to your graveyard  
With not a nickel to pay your burying debt.

On July the fifteenth from the hills around  
Three hundred miners walked down through town  
The state inspector was testing the water  
While he was working you stood around.  
One miner asked him to have a drink free  
The inspector looked out toward our pits  
He set his hat back on his head and says,  
"I wouldn't drink a drop of that on a bet."

I think of my daddy and brothers and sisters  
When we stood around his dying bed  
When I walk the streets of the company towns  
I can hear every word my daddy said.  
The Shawmut Company is caught in its own paws  
The people not worth the money they cost  
A hundred have died, three hundred not working  
Thirty thousand tons of coal is lost.