

Canning Salmon by Linda Chobotuck (1985)

Verse 1:

The guys on the dock laze around, race the fork-lift,
And sass the floor lady till it's time for their tea,
Then they sit at the table by the window that opens
And they get paid a buck more an hour than me.

Chorus:

High is the smell, low is the pay
Long are the hours – why do we stay?
Somewhere outside a whole summer slips away
While we're stuck in here canning salmon.

Verse 2:

The machinery's so loud that we say we've gone 'can-deaf',
Our shift is long over before we can hear
But they keep the noise level just under the limit
So they won't have to buy us the right safety gear.

Verse 3:

First we can springs, so heavy our arms ache,
Then we do sockeye, which we pack with ease
Then we do pinks that are mashed up and rotten
So they're packed up in pound cans and sent overseas.

Verse 4:

Last night we were waiting for a boat on the Fraser
So they kept us on line, just standing around,
But we didn't know that outside on the river
The boat had flipped over, and two men had drowned.

Last chorus:

High is the cost, low is the pay
Long are the hours – why do we stay?
Somewhere outside a whole summer slips away
While we're stuck in here canning salmon.