

Insert#1 Holly Near -- Listen to the Voices....

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It was a great joy for me to attend a very special event in Minnesota last month, over the weekend of February 17 and 18th, 1990, for the massive celebration of the 90th birthday of Meridel LeSueur. Meridel, author and activist, powerful proletarian novels that reach far past the more stereotyped factory settings into the battered yet brave lives of poor women -- in fact, thinking about Harry Bridges, several of her most well-known short stories focus on the 1934 general strike in San Francisco. She also has written many children's books that seek to implant the seeds of nurturing and freedom by telling young people of other people's lives, and also global, earthy, all-embracing poetry, along with a lifelong commitment and activism -- a unique writer whose feminist, anti-capitalist, and communal consciousness sings with rhythms ranging back to Iroquis and Irish grandmothers, dust bowl farmers, Iowa corn, and the flowing Mississippi -- a startling original use of language and deep love of freedom for all informs all her work. Meridel, connected to my by family and early childhood roots, especially through her daughter, my aunt Deborah LeSueur, a wonderful sculptor and artist who lives in Sonoma County. Meridel, whose words of encouragement to me as a boy and over all the years, expressed in letters commenting on poetry and prose I sent her, and I would fold up and save her comments, carrying them around in my wallet for years and years. Meridel, struggling with pain, but still going strong at ninety, evolving what she sees as a new and more organic style, hoping to complete a remaining symphony of four novels. Meridel -- a great encourager, an encourager of creativity, and that's surely one of the finest things a person can be.

The birthday party for Meridel LeSueur in the Twin Cities was a great event, very stirring, uplifting, inspiring. On Saturday night, more than 3000 people ~~squeezed~~ <sup>packed</sup> into the Orpheum Theatre in Minneapolis for a concert with Pete Seeger, Ronnie Gilbert and others, a speech by Meridel, a children's cantata <sup>then</sup> featuring a large chorus made up of many of Meridel's great-grandchildren and friends, and lots more. On Sunday, <sup>over</sup> more thousands of people ~~came~~ to a day long poetry, drama, other performances, and an art exhibit, in St. Paul. Both events gave a sense of how loved Meridel is in Minnesota, how relatively strong the progressive community, with its deep historical roots, is there, and how the beginning of the 90s, even as the major transformations all over the world take place at a mile-a-minute, look to be a time when resurgent, radical, democratic, and life- and planet-affirming struggle and change must take place.

Tonight on Freedom Is a Constant <sup>Seeger</sup> Struggle's salute to Meridel LeSueur, we begin with a recording from a talk at Hoffman College in which she recites a portion of the script-narrative of a film on her work that describes her origins.

with  
words  
by  
the  
writers

Insert # ~~1~~ (meridel talking endcue -- "humanity" (applause) 2

Insert # ~~2~~ (ronnie gilbert--song--there was music in my mother's house. 3

That was Ronnie Gilbert, singing a song she also sang at the 90th birthday party for writer and poet Meridel LeSueur, which took place this past February in Minnesota and you are listening to Freedom is a Constant Struggle. On tonight's program, which lasts until 7:30, in addition to paying homage to Harry Bridges, the world renowned labor leader, we are celebrating Meridel, whose 90th birthday celebration included two great cultural gatherings of thousands of people in Minneapolis and St Paul, and whose work, with the works of all those who interweave their lives and creativity with the constant struggle that is human freedom, is already transforming its songs into choruses of millions.

Also attending Meridel's birthday celebration in February, among many old comrades of Meridel's and the intertwining families of a long radical tradition, was my uncle Wilbur Strong Broms, who died earlier this month. Wilbur's mother, Claire, was a member of the International Workers of the World and founder of the American Communist party, his father Allan Broms, a leading socialist educator imprisoned for draft refusal, later the author of many books popularizing scienc, such as Our Emerging Universe. Wilbur himself an activist and organizer, from trade unions work to radical community reform of the schools in New York City, Wilbur a cultural worker, who sang with the Metropolitan Opera until he was "white-listed" in the 1950s, and a scholar of the great Irish bard Thomas Moore. Many's the time I heard Wilbur sing Joe Hill or the great Irish freedom songs, so tonight in memorium, the minstrel boy -- which ends, as the Irish patriot refers to his harp -- no chains shall sully thee, thy soul of love and bravery, thy songs were made for the pure and free, they can never sound in slavery. From a home concert recording in the early 1950s, Wilbur Broms:

insert Wilbur Broms.... 4

That was Wilbur Broms, with the Irish Freedom song the Minstrel Boy, on Freedom Is A Constant Struggle, where tonight, we are weaving music and poetry in homage to all those who have lent their voices to the struggle, and especially marking the 90th brthday of the great people's writer Meridel LeSueur. At the celebration for Meridel in Minnesota, entitled Songs for Our Times, a singer named Barbara Tilsen sang several very powerful songs. One of them is a poem by a close friend of Meridel's Irene Paull, who lived in San Franciosco for many years....this is from a home recording, done in 1980, at the 80th birthday party of Meridel, and sung by Barbara Tilsen.

insert barb tilsen 5

That was Barbara Tilsen, with a song by Irene Paull, that was also sung at the 90th birthday celebration for Meridel Le Sueur held last month in Minnesota. Here is Meridel herself, at a performance in 1984, with Mathew Cricket Siegel on flute, reading a series of poems which might be entitled, Let the Bird of the Earth Fly or Choruses of Millions.

insert meridel and flute poem all. (6)

Choruses of millions. The global ceremonial....behold...this is our day...choruses of millions singing..the prophetic poetry of Meridel Le Sueur, who recently celebrated her 90th birthday...Meridel whose voice still rings out, sings out strong.....

→ / Record Flute  
insert latin american flutemusic -- LB reads a poem over it....

the poem ends: from the bloodiest year, some survive to outfox the frost...

segue that into

Ronnie Gilbert--"we all sang bread and roses..." etc... (7)

Holly Near -- chant with we who believe in freedom cannot rest... (8)

Outro: You've been listening to FIACS, produced tonight by Emiliano Exheverria and Lincoln Bergman. Special thanks to Deborah LeSueur for the recordings of Meridel Le Sueur. Thanks very much for listening and have a good evening.

Harry Buttz