

John Kanaka

Australian hauling shanty. Stan Hugill learned this from Harding, a shantyman of Barbados. Hugill gives a chorus with the words “tulai eh” which he thinks to be Samoan. Kanaka was Hawaiian for “Man” in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, any of the South Pacific islanders employed in Australia on sugar plantations or cattle stations or as servants were known as Kanaka. The islanders were first introduced into Queensland in 1847 for employment on cotton plantations; in succeeding years they formed the cheap-labour base in the sugar industry.

I thought I heard the old man say. <grunt>

John Kanakanaka Too rye ay.

Today, today's a holiday, <grunt>

John Kanakanaka too rye ay.

Chorus

Too rye ay, oh, too rye ay.

John Kanakanaka too rye ay.

We'll work tomorra' but no work today. <grunt>

We'll work tommora' but no work today. <grunt>

We're bound away around Cape Horn. <grunt>

You'll wish to hell you'd never been born. <grunt>

[optional]

A Yankee ship with a Yankee mate, <grunt>

He's the bugger who can change your gait! <grunt>

Oh haul, oh haul, oh haul away. < grunt>

Just one more pull we'll earn our pay. < grunt>