

[guitar hook]

Dm /// C / Dm / Dm /// C / Dm /

Dm

F

ROLL BACK COLUMBIA

C

Bb (add 9)

Driving up the Columbia River Gorge one afternoon in the rain trying hard to recall an Irish

Dm

F

C

tune, which I'd learned from Martin Carthy just the night before. And just maybe I was thinking

[1st and 2nd verse]

Bb (add 9)

about worlds that were no more. Well we

saw the ships and bridges on the river deep and wide.
We saw its tributaries falling down the mountainside.
And when we saw the dam a-humming with its dynamo
I wondered somehow if a woman could take back her flow.

Musical Note: a folk song in D minor and in 4/4. Five verses, a middle-8 (or middle-4 in this case) and three choruses, the last of which ends with a chord substitution. A guitar 'hook' bookends the singing. There is a retarded strathspey-like coda. The Bb9 has no 7th.

[chorus]

Dm

C

Dm

Dm

Roll back, Columbia. Roll back. I think there's been a crime. Roll back, Columbia. Roll back

C

Dm

F

G

E7

Dm

in the fullness of your time. In time your children may conspire to undo what they've done.

Dm

C

Dm [play G on the third (and last) chorus]

Will they conspire to let your waters as before roll on?

We were heading up to Kennewick so Martin he could play
'The Hard Times of Old England' here in Americay.
He played for all the scientists. Then one began to speak about
the making of plutonium this far up the creek.

Notes: On tour with Martin in Y2K, we spent the night in Portland at the home of an elegant Scottish lady with whom we had a few drams. I played 'The Whistling Thief,' a tune I'd learned from Robin. Martin knew the words. Next day we headed up the Columbia, a journey which unfolded as a poem of America's soul. The gig was in a lecture hall of a military laboratory. A scientist pointed to Hanford in the desert where WWII plutonium was seeping into today's groundwater. For this we dispossessed the Nez Percé, I thought next day. I once asked Bob DeWitt, a friend of Woody's, how he (Bob) was: "A-humming and a-farting," he replied. A dynamo! The song was a finalist in the Tumbleweed song contest.

[3rd and 4th verse]

I guess we're up the creek— he said, next day as we drove north,
speaking of plutonium and the sickness it brings forth.
He said —We used to bury it unprotected in this ground
where Joseph and his Nez Perce were once Alberta bound.

Roll back, Columbia. Roll back. I think... etc.

F

C

Bb (add 9)

Roll back, Columbia. Roll back. Is there nothing I can do? Roll back, Columbia. Roll back. And

[middle-4]

G

A7sus / A7sus ///

will you spare the few? Now

Lewis and Clarke rolled down the river to start the whole damn thing.
To finish it Woody Guthrie was hired to write and sing.
And now here's me and Martin slowly heading back upstream
like some crazy kind of salmon in some crazy kind of dream.

[verse 5]

Roll back ... etc. [chord substitution: G over the the last word of the chorus, 'on.']

[guitar hook]

Dm /// C / Dm / Dm /// C / Dm / Dm /// Dm /// Dm ///

[Strathspey-like retarded coda]