

# Charlie on the MTA

by Jacqueline Steiner and Bess Lomax Hawes recorded in 1959 by the Kingston Trio

[These are the original lyrics. The Kingston Trio changed them slightly in their recorded version.]

Let me tell you the story Of a man named Charley On a tragic and fateful day He put ten cents in his pocket, Kissed his wife and family Went to ride on the MTA

Charley handed in his dime At the Kendall Square Station And he changed for Jamaica Plain When he got there the conductor told him, "One more nickel." Charley could not get off that train.

**Chorus:** Did he ever return, No he never returned And his fate is still unlearn'd He may ride forever 'neath the streets of Boston He's the man who never returned.

Now all night long Charley rides through the tunnels Saying, "What will become of me? How can I afford to see My sister in Chelsea Or my cousin in Roxbury?"

Charley's wife goes down To the Scollay Square station Every day at quarter past two And through the open window She hands Charley a sandwich As the train comes rumblin' through.

[Chorus]

As his train rolled on Through Greater Boston Charlie looked around and sighed, "Well, I'm sore and disgusted And I'm absolutely busted; I guess this is my last long ride."

Now you citizens of Boston, Don't you think it's a scandal That the people have to pay and pay Vote for Walter A. O'Brien And fight the fare increase Get poor Charley off the MTA.

**Final Chorus:** Or else he'll never return, No he'll never return And his fate will be unlearned He may ride forever 'neath the streets of Boston He's the man (Who's the man) He's the man (Oh, the man) He's the man who never returned.

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According to <http://ingeb.org/songs/letmetel.html> the song was one of seven songs written in 1949 for Progressive candidate Walter A. O'Brien's mayoral campaign. When the Kingston Trio recorded it in 1959, they changed the candidate's name from Walter to George, in order to avoid being accused of supporting a Progressive candidate<sup>1)</sup>.

<sup>1)</sup>  
the Progressive party is different from the Communist party, but McCarthyists during the Red Scare considered anyone associated with the Progressive party to be a communist

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