

# Congo River

Oh, Way down on the Con - go Ri - ver Blow boys

blow! Where fe - ver makes the white man sh - iver

Blow me bul - ly boys blow!

1. Way down on the Congo River  
Blow boys blow!  
Where fever makes the white man shiver  
Blow me bullyboys blow!
2. Yankee ship came down the river  
Her masts and yards they shone like silver
3. What do think she had for cargo?  
Why "black sheep" that had run the embargo
4. What do you think that they had for breakfast?  
The starboard side of an old sou'wester.
5. What do you think that they had for dinner?  
Hot water broth but a little bit thinner.
6. What do you think that they had for supper?  
Belaying-pin pie and a roll in the scupper.
7. Yonder comes the Arrow packet  
She fires her guns can't you hear the racket
8. And who do you think was the skipper of her?  
Why, Bully Hayes, the nigger lover
9. Who do you think was first mate of her?  
Why, Shanghai Brown, the sailor robber
10. So, blow me boys and blow forever  
Why blow me down the Congo River

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Also known as simply "Blow, boys, blow", this topsail halyard shanty originated on the West Africa run, during the days of the slave trade. Later it passed into use on the Atlantic packets. The skipper's name is variously as Bully Hayes, Bully Simms and One-Eyed Kelly. The stanza about the packet-ship firing its guns may refer to an anti-slavery patrol or a Civil War blockade ship. The embargo mentioned could be either the slave-trade embargo of 1800 or the military embargo of 1812. Many singers choose to modify the lyrics to make them more "politically correct" according to modern standards.

This has been recorded by A. L. Lloyd, Maddy Prior and the Girls, The Hardtackers and others. I don't remember where or from whom I learned this.