Maryland, My Maryland

1. The des-pot's heel is on thy shore, Mary-land, my Mary-land!

2. His torch is at thy tem-ple door, Mary-land, my Mary-land!

3. A-venge the pa-tri-ot-ic gore, That flecked the streets of Baltimore,

4. And be the bat-tle-queen of yore, Mary-land my Mary-land!

6. Dear Mother! burst the tyrant's chain, Maryland!

7. Virginia should not call in vain, Maryland!

8. She meets her sisters on the plain —

9. I hear the distant thunder-hum, Maryland!

The Old Line's bugle, fife, and drum, Maryland!
New State Song

By Debbie Prager
Washington Post Staff Writer

Maryland! My Maryland! O official state song, sung by school choirs, chimed hourly by the University of Maryland chapel bell, imprinted in the state code of law.

Is this honored paean to patriotic deeds of yore no more than a rabble-rousing rebel yell set to music?

Yes, according to State Sen. Howard Denis (R-Montgomery), who has filed a bill to delete this 1861 ditty from the books as Maryland's state song.

"It's very offensive," Denis said during a telephone interview. "I don't see how any self-respecting citizen of the state can sing the lyrics."

Denis said he'd often heard the song sung at state functions but, like most Marylanders, never paid close attention to the words. Then recently he happened to come across the song while thumbing through the Maryland annotated code.

As he read the verses, Denis said he was stunned to realize that the song, sung to the tune of the German Christmas carol, "O Tannenbaum," was a blatant appeal for Maryland to join the Confederacy during the Civil War.

"I was appalled," Denis said.

Down on Maryland's eastern shore, veteran State Sen. Fred Malkus (D-Cambridge) chuckled. "He must have read the ninth stanza," Malkus said with a laugh. "I've never read all nine myself."

The ninth stanza refers to the Union as "northern scum."

Denis admits he was puzzled by that line. "'Huzzah! She spurns the Northern scum'? Is that the spirit we want the state song to reflect?"

Denis also objects to the verse that entreats Maryland to help "burst the tyrant's chain"

The words criticize the North. But that's history. That's a fact. I supported the song then. And if I was there now, I'd oppose changing it," he said.

Fred Malkus noted, "Maryland almost did join the Confederacy—would have too if they hadn't locked up the mayor of Baltimore and half the legislators. But I don't guess the song's done anybody any harm."

State Comptroller Louis L. Goldstein, a long-time pillar of Maryland tradition, declined to give his opinion of the bill but said, "Songs are written in the spirit of the time. When you start talking about the 'Star Spangled Banner' a lot of people say we ought to change that. This song is in the law of the State of Maryland. People sing it and a lot of them enjoy it."

See SONGS, Page 13, Col. 1
A Sour Note in Maryland

SONGS, From Page 1

Among those who sing it is the Prince George's County honors chorus. The group, made up of the county's top student singers, performed the tune at the Kennedy Center last year and ironically has been invited by Del. Kay Bienen (D-Prince George's) to sing "Maryland! My Maryland!" at the opening of this year's legislative session.

Mary Heywood, coordinating supervisor of music for the Prince George's school system, claims she has never analyzed the meaning of the song's words.

"I know we've had difficulty explaining the words to elementary school children. But I've always accepted it as the state song. No problem," she said.

Other state officials agree that the song is gory but maintain that a gory state song is better than no state song at all. However, Denis has a solution to that. His idea is to have Maryland's poet laureate, Lucille Clifton, sponsor a contest for a new state song.

"I think it would be a great opportunity for an outpouring of sentiment on how people feel about the state of Maryland," Denis said enthusiastically. "Some student might win a prize and we would have a new state song."

Then there was an audible pause on the phone. "My only hesitation is that people will consider this a frivolous bill. Granted, it's not like the state budget or Metro, but it's a very serious matter."

The other verses of the state song are:

2. Hark to an exiled son's appeal, Maryland!
   My mother State! to thee I kneel, Maryland!
   For life and death, for woe and weal,
   Thy peerless chivalry reveal,

   And gird thy beauteous limbs with steel, Maryland! My Maryland!

3. Thou wilt not cower in the dust, Maryland!
   Thy beaming sword shall never rust, Maryland!
   Remember Carroll's sacred trust,
   Remember Howard's warlike thrust,

   And all thy slumbers with the just, Maryland! My Maryland!

4. Come! 'tis the red dawn of the day, Maryland!
   Come with thy panoplied array, Maryland!
   With Ringgold's spirit for the fray,
   With Watson's blood at Monterey,
   With fearless Lowe and dashing
   May, Maryland! My Maryland!

5. Come! for thy shield is bright and strong, Maryland!
   Come! for thy dalliance does thee wrong, Maryland!
   Come to thine own heroic throng,
   Stalking with Liberty along,
   And chaunt they dauntless slogan song, Maryland! My Maryland!

7. I see the blush upon thy cheek, Maryland!
   For thou wast ever bravely meek, Maryland!
   But lo! there surges forth a shriek
   From hill to hill, from creek to creek
   Potomac calls to Chesapeake, Maryland! My Maryland!

8. Thou wilt not yield the Vandal toll, Maryland!
   Thou wilt not crook to his control, Maryland!
   Better to fire upon thee roll,
   Better the blade, the shot, the bowl,
   Than the crucifixion of the soul, Maryland! My Maryland!