

Lecture 13: "Wall Street Blues"

Wall Street Blues

W.C. Handy (written in 1929)

I can sing the Blues from the bottom of my heart
I can sing the Blues from the bottom of my heart
All my profit's gone before I ever got a start

Never had the Blues like the Blues I'm blue with now
Never had the Blues like the Blues I'm blue with now
Oh what I recall of the Street called Wall and how.

Wailing Wall, of Jerusalem, there is one in New York too
Where I got a wailing, now I'm ailing, wailin' cause I'm blue.

Margin-calling brokers, miles of ticker tape
Got a many a poor saphead wearin' crepe
Wailin' in Wall Street, I just can't enthuse
Bo hoo hoo in', I got the Wall Street Blues

More margin, that's what the brokers call.
More margin, I can't meet his call.
No more margin, now he's got it all.

Oh Wall Street you got me depressed
Downhearted, you can guess the rest
Rivers Eastend, graveyards at the west.

I used to be able, Wall's got me there,
now I'm just a little sheep without no hair,
Wailing Wall Street, my bugaboos
Bears down, got me bleating the Wall Street blues.

Limousines I wanted, Fords I viewed with scorn,
Temper Lawd the breezes to a lamb that is shorn.
Wailing Wall Street, have you heard the news
I'm standing on breadline with these Wall Street Blues,

Herbert Hoover, Calvin Coolidge,
they left me with these Wall Street Blues

[I bought Hudson River, thought I was all set
went in high and dry and came out all wet
Wailing Wall Street I soaked my shoes
deep diving got me the Wall Street blues.

You buy this hot tip Central Park and then
in at 59 out at a hundred and 10

Wailing Wall Street, I just can't refuse
stock exchanged me, I've got the Wall Street blues.

Weeping and wailing, I'm on my last leg,
Done killed the goose that laid the golden egg
Wailing Wall Street if you win you lose,
I've been gold-bricked, I've got the Wall Street blues.

Bought Gobels hot dog slow at 32,
turned to be baloney like all sausage do,
Wailing Wall Street wieners I would choose
now I'm skinned, I've got the Wall Street blues.]

for more verses see http://www.protestsonglyrics.net/Anti_Capitalism_Songs/Wall-Street-Blues.phtml

For a tune with lyrics see <https://www.musicfromthedepression.com/wall-street-blues/>

The Soup Song

Maurice Sugar/trad.
(Tune: My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean)

I'm spending my nights at the flophouse -
I'm spending my days on the street.
I'm looking for work and I find none
I wish I had something to eat!

Sou-ooop! Sou-ooop!
They give me a bowl of sou-oo-ooop
Sou-ooop! Sou-ooop!
They give me a bowl of soup.

I spent twenty years in the factory.
I did everything I was told.
They said I was loyal and faithful
Now even before I get old.

I saved fifteen bucks with my banker.
To buy me a car and a yacht.
I went down to draw out my fortune,
And this is the answer I got.

I fought in the war for my country.
I went out to bleed and to die.
I thought that my country would help me,
But this was my country's reply.

I fell on my knees to my Maker
I prayed every night to the Lord
I swore I'd be faithful forever,
And now I've received my reward.

Bacon, Beans and Gravy

(Tune: Ballad of Jesse James)

I was born long ago, in 1894.
I've seen many a panic, I will hold.
I've been hungry, I've been cold,
And now I'm growing old,
But the worst I've seen was 1931.
Oh, those beans, bacon and gravy,
They almost drive me crazy,
I eat them till I see them in my dreams.
When I wake up each morning,
and another day is dawning,
I know I'll have another mess of beans.

We congregate each morning
In the county barn at dawning,
And everyone is happy, so it seems.
But when our work is done,
We file in one by one, and thank the Lord
For one more mess of beans.

We have Hooverized on butter,
For milk we've only water,
And I haven't seen a steak in many a day.
For pies and cakes and jellies
We substitute sow bellies,
For which we work the county road each day.

If there ever comes a time,
When I have more than a dime,
They will have to put me under lock and key.

For I've been broke so long,
I can only sing the song,
Of the workers and their misery.

The Banks are Made of Marble

Les Rice

I've traveled round this country
From shore to shining shore
It really made me wonder
The things I heard and saw.

I saw the weary farmer
Plowing sod and loam
I heard the auction hammer
A knocking down his home
 But the banks are made of marble
 With a guard at every door
 And the vaults are stuffed with silver
 That the farmer sweated for

I saw the seaman standing
Idly by the shore
I heard the bosses saying
Got no work for you no more
 But the banks are made of marble

 That the seaman sweated for

I saw the weary miner
Scrubbing coal dust from his back
I heard his children cryin
Got no coal to heat the shack
 But ... miner sweated for

I've seen my brothers working
Throughout this mighty land
I prayed we'd get together
And together make a stand
 Then we'd own those banks of marble
 With a guard at every door
 And we'd share those vaults of silver
 That we all have sweated for

Coats off for Britain

(Leon Rosselson 1975)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Xo9v-vvHe8>

Excerpt from the Sleeve notes:

For as long as I can remember, politicians have been exhorting us to work harder in the national interest. The quotations that precede the song, contained in speeches by two prime ministers supposedly on different sides, are drawn from that great garbage heap of patriotic clichés that has sustained our political leaders in war and peace, slump, boom and crisis. Now the crisis grows more severe, the calls to pull together grow more urgent. Class differences, class conflicts are unmentionable, not to say un-British. Suddenly they're all waving the Union Jack. Bluff Jim Callaghan [Prime Minister of the Seventies] talks of a "great national effort".

Even the Archbishop of Canterbury joins the crusade, delivers stirring messages urging the national reconstruction. Only for him there's more to it than hard work. We need, he declared in one memorable Easter sermon, not only the will to work and the will to fight but also "prayer, which draws on the endless resources of God." Coats off for Britain! is clearly not enough. The slogan really should be, Go to Work On Your Knees!

Harold Wilson
March

As a nation there is nothing we cannot do.

Edward Heath
June

1974

What we know need is a programme for
national unity. It must be a programme
that the overwhelming majority of people

There have to be sacrifices and the
government will not shirk telling the
people what has to be done.

in this country can see is sensible and
behind which they can unite.

I'm afraid it means giving something up
for all of us...

The slogan now is
"Coats off for Britain"

(Chorus:) Coats off! Coats off! Coats off for Britain, there's a battle to be won.
On the Stock Exchange, and on the dole,
Selling garden gnomes and digging coal,
It's coats off! Coats off! Coats off for Britain, everyone!

Coats off for Britain! says Her Majesty,
From the bottom of her very gracious heart,
Trying to boost the nation with a Royal Proclamation,
To encourage everyone to play his part.
While politicians palter and the bills remain unpaid,
Her step will never falter and her smile will never fade.
Dutifully doing what she's born and bred to do,
Working hard from morn till late, receiving dreary Heads of Stare,
Arranging Royal Weddings and a Royal Birth or two,
For me and you, to pull us through.
And on the Royal Yacht Britannia they'll be singing then:

Coats off for Britain! says the businessman,
Flying to his island in the sun,
Trying to boost the nation, selling cures for constipation.
Got to keep the British worker on the run.
He's a patriotic gentleman, just put him to the test,
All he needs is the incentive and in Britain he'll invest.
Of course, if taxes take their toll and strikes become a strain,
And profit margins start to shrink, he'll have to have another think,
And maybe move his money into property in Spain.
He's not to blame. You'd do the same.
And from his overseas tax haven he'll be singing then:

Coats off for Britain! says the high-priced call girl,
In and out of bed all day,
Trying to boost the nation with a bit of copulation,
If you're British I'll be giving it away.
Sheikhs fly in from Abu Dhabi, politicians from Peru.
Never mind Westminster Abbey, it's her charms they've come to view.
She's got the Diplomatic Corps in tow from Holland to Hong Kong,
Her speciality's a winner, it would make a saint a sinner,
When she strikes a patriotic pose and thrills them with this song,
With nothing on, she can't go wrong,
She's got their expectations rising as they sing along:

Coats off for Britain! says the working man,
Screwing little screws non-stop,
Trying to boost the nation with a dash of perspiration,

Though we'll never climb the ladder to the top.
Now the country is in crisis, so don't strike for higher pay.
We must all make sacrifices and work harder every day.
We've got to pull our belts in, it's the same for rich and poor.
Today the cupboard's empty, but tomorrow there'll be plenty.
It's the same old song, we've heard it all a million times before,
In peace and war, "Don't ask for more!" They're always singing it:
(Chorus)

All Along the Rossendale

Mick Jones

The cotton mills are closing down all over Lancashire
From Burnley to the Mersey from Oldham to the Wyre
And all along the Rossendale you can hear a weary cry
As the wind across the Pennines heaves a low and deathly sigh

Save our sheds from unemployment that's all that we demand
We're clemmin' and we're starving with no money in our hands
Redeployment is the answer from Whitehall's empty mouth
Bring your friends and family there's a job for you down south

And meanwhile for the last time the factory whistle blows
The profit margin's falling and capital's run low
And the stockbrokers of Altrincham are selling all their shares
Don't give a damn for the working man, no one really cares

As the sun sets over Pendle and the rain begins to fall
The Government at Westminster ignores the weavers' call
And the glory that was England dies beneath those coal black hills
A vision of Jerusalem and those dark satanic mills

Transcribed from 'All Along the Rossendale' on Lea Nicholson, Horsemusic Trailer LER 3010
(LP, UK, 1971) by FAM

cf also <http://www.mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=9989#796597>
Here is how Petra Jones, Mick Jones' daughter chips in on the Mudcat.org forum.
<http://www.mudcat.org/usersearch.cfm?who=GUEST%2CPetra%20Jones>
in particular: http://www.mudcat.org/detail.cfm?messages_Message_ID=3072257

The Redundant Mr Brown

Ian MacGillivray

The factory gates are closing for the very last time
Three hundred men redundant, they form a long, long line,
Pride and dreams are shattered of each man in the queue,
As a very civil servant asks 'What else can you do?'

I worked and slaved for thirty years, since ever I left school,
My hands and mind accustomed to a special kind of tool,

Well, it's too late now to change my craft and learn a trade again,
I'll just have to join the employment queues and wait out in the rain.

How can I go home today and say what has been done
To wife, two teenage daughters and a twenty-year old son
That their dad's position's shifted and there's no work left to do,
He'll just have to stay at home all week and go and join the queue.

Penny-pinching days and back, we hoped that they don't know [?],
Respect is lost now from the kids and they're not wrong,
And it's funny how the butcher and the baker and them all
Are so careful with their credit ever since our downfall.

'Ah, Mr Brown we've got good news, we've landed you a job,
A forty-two hour working week, per hour it pays six bob,
We know you won't refuse this chance 'cause there won't be many more,
'Cause there's not many porters needed in a departmental store.'

People raise their hats to me and they say 'good afternoon'
They say 'it's nice to see that you have got a job so soon',
I can walk the streets again and hold my head up high,
But I'll have to be a porter until the day I day.

Transcribed from Bobby Eaglesham Weather the Storm Fellside Recordings FE033 (LP, UK, 1982)
by FAM