

thesocialistpostbag

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Done deal



Smug Sassoon.

It's reported in the Guardian (12 November) that a Tory treasury minister, Lord Sassoon has served notice that the coalition's work on City bonuses is done. Apparently he said on 3 November that "the government has taken action to tackle unacceptable bonuses in the banking sector".

Six days later Barclays announced that its latest bonus pot would total £1.6 billion - which (we are told) is about a third of what the government currently spends each year on university teaching. Little wonder that students are rioting!

Craig Johnston, RMT Transport Union, National Executive member

Shifting the blame

The blame for the disastrous recession is steadily being shifted. From what was clearly a free market systemic failure, the blame was quickly shifted to just the 'banksters'. The bosses aim to shift the blame even further from themselves and their system.

Recently Jérôme Kerviel, a Société Générale bank trader, was jailed for three years and had damages of €5 billion awarded against him, for 'rogue trading'. Obviously it wasn't the banks or the profit system that failed, just a few 'rogues'.

Having made Kerviel the 'fall guy' the real culprits hope to sleep easier in their beds. Meanwhile the bill for the crisis is mercilessly put on working people's shoulders worldwide. As workers' anger grows and they look to change things, let's make sure the finger is firmly pointed at the capitalist economic system.

Dave Griffiths

'Nasty' and 'nice' cuts

In George Orwell's book 1984, Winston Smith is threatened with savage cuts from the claws and teeth of a rat. The state does this to him so he will

plead with them to "Do it to Julia" and thus betray his lover and himself.

In the Crawley anti-cuts campaign meeting the representatives of the New Labour canaille had similar "do it to Julia" plans. They wish to appear reasonable by saying "of course some cuts are necessary but vote for me and I'll oppose this particular cut."

They have the cheek of the devil. New Labour kowtowed to the bankers and gave them billions to keep the gravy train on the rails. They expect us to pay the fare. The bankers would benefit from a short sharp shock - perhaps six months in prison for profiteering and economic sabotage - far more than the bonuses which are simply not good for them.

The anti-cuts movement will welcome support from any quarter but anyone from the Labour Party should be asked whether they would vote against "nice Labour cuts" as well as "nasty Tory cuts."

Derek McMillan

Tory fools



Willetts.

So, I read on the BBC website that Tory universities minister David Willetts thinks the new hike in tuition fees is a "fairer package". But if he thinks I'm going to pay up to £9,000 a year, he's got another think coming. Is he trying to price us out of higher education, why should I leave?

If he, the Conservatives and the Liberals think this is a fairer package, then they are fools. I think the student protest will go a long way to giving these idiots a big wake-up call. But we, the working class shouldn't listen to them. If we do, then we will end up how they want us to...

As the Black Sabbath song goes, "If you listen to fools, the mob rules." I think that lyric applies in this case. I believe if we stick together and don't back down, we can beat those lying, cheating fools.

Keiron Hopkins, Tonypandy

Forty years of 'Paranoid'

Forty years ago an influential rock album was released. CEDRIC GEROME reviews heavy metal group Black Sabbath's second album, Paranoid.

THE WHOLE world seemed in social and political turmoil in 1970. Black Sabbath's explosive sound captured the mood of Western youth. The album's opening track, "War Pigs" is a fierce indictment of the Vietnam War, of governments that start wars and send poor young people to fight them on the battlefield.

"Politicians hide themselves away. They only started the war.

"Why should they go out to fight? They leave that role to the poor."

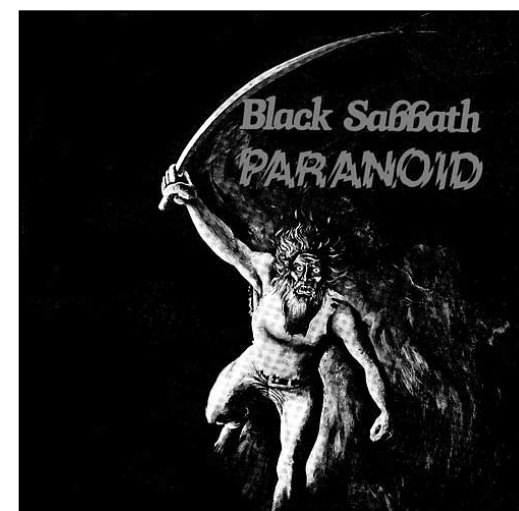
As British and US armies again target teenagers in deprived areas, offering them a one-way ticket to bloody campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, these lyrics have resonance today. Sabbath wanted to call the album "War Pigs", but the record company thought that "too controversial".

"Hand of Doom", inspired by gigs Sabbath played for traumatised American soldiers passing through Britain on their way back from Vietnam, describes the slow agony of a heroin addict. Heroin consumption was widespread among soldiers trying to escape the atrocities of war.

The album shows a pessimistic outlook on the world, with Ozzy Osbourne's yelling voice, the aggressive distorted guitar solos of Tony Iommi, the explosive drummer Billy Ward and bassist Geezer Butler.

Sabbath's sound broke decisively with the musical spirit of the 1960s. As Osbourne commented later: "In the late 1960s and early 1970s, it was all flower power and how wonderful the world is. That just didn't seem true to us."

All Sabbath's members were brought up in industrial Birmingham. Ward's loud drumming reflected the deafening sound of factory work. Iommi was forced to re-



string his guitar after two fingers were sliced off operating a machine in a coal plant. The band's surroundings were harsh, their futures appeared bleak, and this was directly transported into their music.

Iommi said that this background definitely influenced their music. Ward said: "It was a great way of releasing anger. I look back now and I realise we were really angry kids." If you only know the name "Black Sabbath" through Osbourne's pathetic TV shows, don't be put off, this album is definitely worth a listen.

Adrian Edmondson and the Bad Shepherds

ADRIAN EDMONDSON and the Bad Shepherds play punk songs from the late 70s and early 80s with a twist of slowing down the songs using 'thrash' mandolin, uilleann pipes and fiddle!

Brian Loader

They recently played at Derby in front of 500 people. Many older readers will know Adrian Edmondson as the punk Vyvyan in the comedy television series "The Young Ones". On stage, Adrian wore a "I still hate Thatcher" t-shirt and mentioned with an extremely broad grin "She is in hospital, it is getting close," to wild cheers.

His band sung punk classics from the Clash, Sex Pistols, Jam, Stranglers and Ramones such as "I fought the law", "White riot", "God save the



Vyvyan - still hates Thatcher.

Queen," Anarchy in the UK, and "No more heroes any more" (which includes mentions of Leon Trotsky and Lenin, leaders of the 1917 Russian revolution).

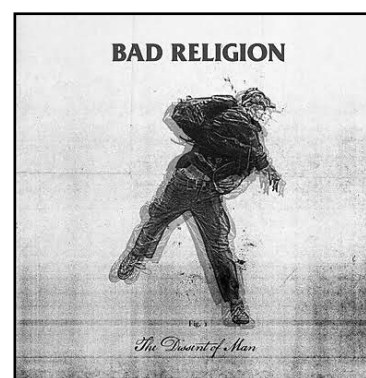
Even delivered at a slower pace

than the originals these still hit the nerve for all those present. The same punk classics would be as relevant today following the Con-Dem government's draconian cuts, a massive attack on working class people.

The Dissent of Man - Bad Religion

THIS ALBUM, the inside page of whose cover is laid out like the title page of Charles Darwin's The Descent of Man, deals with the troubles of disaffected youth in 'The Wrong Way Kids.' It tackles patriarchy and dysfunctional families in 'The Pride and the Pallor', while 'Ad Hominem' deals with the hypocrisy of ideas of the religious right.

Some of the songs have a much more relaxed pace than you'd expect from a punk rock band, perhaps because this year marks 30 years of the band's existence. Yet punk's core principle of rebellion against authority, remains, with the image of a rebellious youth on the



album's cover.

"Seeds of rebellion lay outside

your front door, if you nourish them and water them they'll grow into a healthy 'What For?', and if revolution isn't what's in store, how can you care any more?" rips 'The Resist Stance'

Bad Religion has never advocated any particular solutions although 'Meeting of the Minds' says that "No longer will the market decide what the government should provide". Instead this band has opened the eyes of some young people, who then sought out socialist ideas to transform society, including the author of this review. Long may this continue!

Iain Dalton

Comment: 100 years on, fight the cuts

A CENTURY AGO Britain's first official investigation into unemployment and poverty was carried out in York, by a team of researchers led by philanthropist factory owner and social reformer Seebohm Rowntree.

Britain was slowly emerging from economic recession. Many local unemployed people and

their families were interviewed and reported chronic ill health and malnutrition, spiralling debts and alcoholism as common problems. There were no state benefits or NHS then to cope with the scale of social deprivation.

Rowntree's account was read across Britain, shocking the middle classes who were removed

from the reality of workers' lives. The work became influential, highlighting the dire need for a publicly funded welfare state and universal benefits, major concessions fought for tirelessly by the working class organised in the trade union movement.

A century on, we see mass unemployment, economic crisis,

social inequality and poverty returning at an alarming rate. The government, however, is attacking the welfare state on an unprecedented scale and pushing the economy towards a second major economic crisis.

They aim to make the less well-off pay for the crisis with their jobs, benefits and public services while

the bankers who helped cause the crash get huge bonuses! Workers, unemployed people, students and pensioners must unite behind the trade union movement's banner and build an organised mass fight-back against the decimation of our welfare state.

Dave Younger