

Landlord

David Rovics

The pa - troons came from Hol - land to A - me - ri - ca Be - came
land - lords where none had been be - fore Soon one man owned half a mil - lion
ac - res On both sides of the Hud - son Ri - ver shore He in -
Who gave you the right to be a land - lord To live a life of ease while o - thers toil
Who gave you the right to be a rich man While the rest of us pay you so we can
work this soil

He invited families to move in and give him thirty percent
Of everything they grew each year, this is how they'd pay the rent

His name was Rensselaer, he became one of the richest men on Earth
In today's terms ninety billion dollars is how much he'd be worth
All this for doing nothing but saying all of this was his
"I have the power of the state behind me and I'm in the landlord biz"

After two hundred years of this and one revolution won
Another Rennsalaer had another son
And this Rennsalaer was greedier than his ancestors dead and passed
It was now the 1840's and things started changing fast

It was the straw that broke the back, the bottle was uncorked
They started organizing meetings, the tenant farmers of New York
They found the strength of numbers, they found the power of suggestion
They found each other asking the same question

Chorus

They vowed that they would stop the rent collection, they vowed they'd bring this madness to an end
And when one blew the tin horn of distress, they'd soon find they had a thousand friends
Dressed in calico skirts with masks upon their faces, on horseback, armed with knives and guns
They chanted and they yelled, they kept their farms, and they kept the sheriffs on the run

Chorus

The governor's militias tried to stop them, but nothing could be done to break their will
And by 1848 the landlords buckled and sold their holdings to the farmers in the hills
Yes they overthrew this feudal system, but it's replaced now by speculators and banks
And you can still hear the homeless families asking of all the landed gentry in our ranks

Chorus (2x)

Who gave you the right?