

BANKS OF MARBLE

By Les Rice

Les Rice was a New York State apple farmer and one-time president of the Ulster County chapter of the Farmers Union. His songs have made him well-known to farmers throughout the northeast. This song, 'Banks of Marble', written around 1948-49 deals with the farmer's perennial problem of "parity" and how it affects the farmer's life. Pete Seeger recorded the song on at least two albums; and in a note in one of his songbooks he wrote that Rice 'farms across the Hudson from me, near Newburgh [Orange County, New York]. Like most small farmers, he was getting intolerably squeezed by the big companies which sold him all his fertilizer, insecticide and equipment, and the big companies that dictated to him the prices he would get for his produce. Out of that squeeze came this song.. You can hear Pete perform this song on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-o3CJyIPE>, or on the Audio Archive page of the HFMS website at: http://houstonfolkmusic.org/HFS_Audio_Archive.html.

C **F** **C**
I've tra – velled 'round this country, from shore to shining shore
G7 **C** **G7** **C**
It re – ally made we wonder – the things I heard and saw.
CF **C**
I saw the weary farmer, a – plowing sod and loam
G7 **C** **G7** **C**
I heard the auction hammer, just a – kno – cking down his home.

CHORUS:

C **G7** **C**
But the banks are made of marble, with a guard at ev'ry door.
C **G7** **C**
And the vaults are stuffed with silver that the far – mer sweated for.

I've seen the seamen standing, idly by the shore
And I heard their bosses saying, "Got no work for you no more".

But the banks are made of marble, with a guard at ev'ry door.
And the vaults are stuffed with silver that the sea-men sweated for.

I've seen the weary miner, scrubbing coal dust from his back.
And I've heard his children cryin', "Got no coal to heat the shack."

But the banks are made of marble, with a guard at ev'ry door.
And the vaults are stuffed with silver that the mi-ner sweated for.

I've seen my brother working, throughout this mighty land.
I've prayed we'd get together, and together make a stand.
Then we might own those banks of marble, with a guard at ev'ry door
And we would share those vaults of silver that we had sweated for.