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## Restructuring Economic Relationships

Published in the Analysis and Commentary section of  
*Geodata*, Issue Number 2, Winter 1988.

Chief Sitting Bull said to Annie Oakley:  
“The white man knows how to make everything,  
but he does not know how to distribute it.”

The problem of the severe maldistribution of wealth in the United States clearly has not been solved by the predominant 20th century economic theories and policies. Keynesian economic policies of transfer payments through various New Deal and Great Society programs now stand revealed as short-term, stopgap reforms by which the middle classes were taxed more heavily so that the poor could have merely a subsistence existence. Reaganomics peeled off some of the band-aids but the wounds did not heal -- they only bled more profusely.

We must also dispel the fantasy that technological invention can solve our economic crisis. There is no machine that can save us. Our advanced technology has become labor enslaving and displacing rather than labor saving and enhancing because of the extreme concentration of capital ownership.

The primary task is to restructure the economic relationships of our society. We can rely on the traditional economic policies of neither the right nor the left. An ethic of fair play must inform the inputs of economic production: land and resource ownership, capital ownership and finance policy.

We need to rethink the whole area of work, jobs, and wages. In addition to fair wages and equal pay for equal work we must add another factor -- all workers have a right to own a fair share of the capital they produce.

This right stems from the obvious fact that labor, whether blue collar, white collar, pink or polka dot, makes the capital. Our challenge is to correct this fundamental injustice. The labor power of employees on nearly all levels of the economic ladder has been steadily usurped through mechanisms of wealth concentration.

That labor may reap its due rewards, a wide variety of employee stock ownership plans as developed by Louis Kelso and others should be implemented, as well as industrial cooperative models such as the highly successful ones utilized by the Basque people of Mondragon, Spain.

The extreme concentration of capital ownership grew largely out of an earlier concentration of land and natural resources ownership. Land speculation continues to be a major concentrator of wealth.

Most of our cities and neighborhoods currently function like mini-third world countries. The goods and services we produce ultimately trickle up into the banking accounts of the very wealthy through various wealth concentration mechanisms such as real estate speculation, usurious money lending, concentration of capital ownership and diverse currency manipulation practices.

Studying and analyzing the economic structures of our communities will help us to realize what must be done to move toward a thorough democratization of economic arrangements.

We need to know the answers to questions such as:

- Who owns the land and natural resources of our city / region?
- What are and who owns the major industries?
- What is imported and what is exported?
- Who pays what taxes and what for?
- Who is hungry, homeless, and hopeless and why?

Answers to the above questions will give us a high degree of awareness from which to direct our efforts toward securing a broad base of ownership of capital and fair share rights to land and natural resources.

The author rides with Apache and Navajo friends down cliffs into the sacred and ancient lands of Canyon De Chelly.

