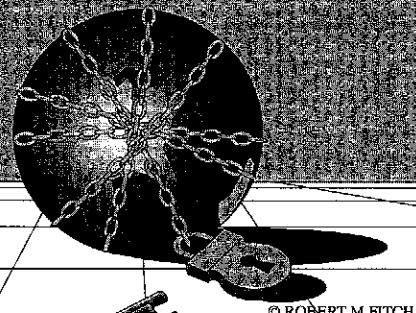


# GROUND SWELL

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF  
COMMON GROUND USA



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November- December 2002

## PEACE THROUGH CONFEDERAL DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE

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(The following scholarly essay, in part, was presented at the 2002 Council of Georgist Organizations conference session on the theme, "Peace, War, and Land Rights." It is reprinted here in full with the author's permission. Foldvary's articles on this theme have also appeared in "Land and Liberty" and "Geophilos".)

Social justice, based on individual empowerment and equal rights, is the key to peace. Social justice includes political rights such as voting, legal rights to equal treatment by law, and economic rights, the right to one's own labor and to an equal benefit of natural opportunities. Economic justice, as part of social justice, requires an equalization of the gifts of nature and a recognition of the supreme individual sovereignty of each human being. The way these principles can be implemented is with institutions that bring political power down to the local and individual level, equalize the rent of natural resources, and permit individuals to keep all their earnings and freely defend themselves from aggression.

Ethnic conflicts, violent political struggles, and thuggery by power seekers are afflicting peoples around the world. Key examples discussed below are the conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians, Kosovars and Serbs, Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir, Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Chiapas Mayans versus the Mexican government, and the horrific mutilations by the rebel thugs in Sierra Leone.

The international response to conflict has typically been after-the-fact attempts at peacekeeping and democratic nation building. But these have been largely inadequate, and even if they receive greater support, such efforts just treat the problems rather than cure them. In the Biafra war, for example, aid to Biafra, while helping the Biafrans in the short run, helped perpetuate the war and suffering.

Attempts to create unitary democratic governments usually fail because in a unitary state one group must ultimately be dominant, and also because the underlying economic conflict, usually related to land, is left untouched. As Jack Snyder states, "As more people begin to play a larger role in politics, ethnic conflict within a country becomes more likely." Ethnofederalism, federal governing structures that divide government along ethnic

lines while uniting the groups in a federation or confederation, is needed, rather than just a naïve imposition of voting. Even when a democracy is achieved, it can later collapse during a crisis, as did the Weimar Republic in Germany. Democracy and federalism must be combined with economic justice, grounded in a sharing of the benefits of the land.

An understanding of the remedy for such conflicts, as opposed to simply treating the symptoms with peacekeepers and aid, requires an inquiry in the causes. Despite the differing cultures and histories of these conflicts, they exhibit common themes and common causal origins. All these conflicts are rooted in social injustice with economic and political dimensions. The remedy for all these conflicts, as broadly described above, therefore has similar fundamental ethical, economic, political, and military dimensions.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an archetype of ethnic conflict. Its roots go back thousands of years, and it is a struggle that has resisted solution because an understanding of the economic and ethical foundations has been lacking. It is the purpose of this paper to analyze these foundations in order to understand the remedies that are required for a lasting peace. Other conflicts will then be examined to see whether the proposed remedy for the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is general enough to apply broadly to ethno-territorial struggles.

### I. Israel and Palestine

The heart of the conflict is the question of who has the proper claim to the land known through history as Canaan, Israel, Judea, Palestine, and the Holy Land. Going deeper, there is an economic and ethical question of what we mean by "the land."

The ownership of land has two basic components: 1) the right of possession, including the use of land and its transfer to others; 2) the right to the yield or return on the land, which for the pure land, excluding buildings and improvements, is land rent. Rights of possession are separable from rights to the rent.

The natural-law philosopher John Locke in his "Two Treatises of Government" stated that "The things of nature are given in common," whereas each person has ownership of himself. He then stated that one could claim possession of land so long as there was land (continued on page 2)