

THE DOG AND THE WOLF

I once heard a story about a nice fat town dog who was wandering in the country and met a skinny wolf. Their conversation soon progressed to where the skinny wolf asked the fat dog how it happened that he appeared so well fed. The fat dog explained that his association with the people in the town included regular and generous feedings by a certain family. His bed was also warm and comfortable, while the family seemed to ask nothing in return except his friendship.

The idea appealed to the wolf, who admitted that it was rather tiresome to be hungry most of the time. The dog invited the wolf to come to town and partake of the comforts thereof. The wolf accepted and as they walked along the way, the dog explained further about the joys of town life.

After they had progressed for some distance, the wolf noticed a slightly scuffed spot on the hair of the dog's neck, and so he asked the dog about it. The dog dismissed it as a rather minor result of wear from the collar he sometimes wore.

After a worried silence of some moments, the wolf asked more about the collar. The dog just said that it was needed for his master to attach the leash. Upon learning what was meant by a leash, the wolf made his big decision and turned back to his former home in the wilderness.

Another dog story is about a Russian wolfhound visiting Paris and meeting a French poodle. The poodle asked how things are in Russia. The wolfhound answered that all is fine there: "I get to live in a gold-plated doghouse, and my bed is covered with fine sable, and I am fed caviar on a regular basis."

The poodle then asked him why he would bother to come to Paris. The wolfhound answered: "But I like to bark once in a while."

Both of these dog stories could be misleading because they imply there is a trade-off or conflict between freedom and prosperity. Both stories are commonly told with the intention of illustrating that point. Such a trade-off may be the case in the dog world but not in human political systems. Real freedom and prosperity should not be in conflict. The fact is that one of the principal arguments in favor of freedom is that it is the cause of prosperity. Adam Smith, in his book, *Wealth of Nations*, over two hundred years ago made that very clear and explained it well.

People have misunderstood freedom and prosperity for a long time. When my freedom interferes with your prosperity, questions need to be raised, and time is necessary for working out the gray areas. But we need to start with black-and-white areas.

The words "freedom, liberty, rights, private property" are so much overlapping that it will be easy to catch me using them rather interchangeably.

Talk of freedom has been used to justify some practices which upon close examination do not add up to freedom at all. A famous example is chattel slavery when it was argued that a person should be free to own other people as slaves. Talk of freeing the slaves was taken as a blow to the rights of private property. Of course their arguments break down as soon as we consider the right of other people not to be slaves.

Right today, many of the dominant schools of thought fall sadly short in their discussions of natural rights and freedoms. They fail to consider the differences between the different types of property. Some of those differences were noted centuries ago but are largely lost from attention now.

I am not alone in my opinion that the massive problems which beset the world's economies today are totally unsolvable until some naturally rightful freedoms are treated as such in our public law.