

Just as I hope you will give careful consideration to my ideas on freedom, just so will I be most pleased to give careful consideration to yours. For unless there is a common understanding of the meaning of freedom, we will continue to fight each other in its name.

Individual Freedom

IT SEEMS TO ME that much of the confusion over the meaning of liberty and freedom begins with an incomplete or inadequate explanation of what the phrase "individual freedom" really refers to.

While human freedom necessarily concerns the individual, it does so only in the sense that *freedom always refers to a relationship or condition between two or more persons*. While it is necessarily always individuals who understand, practice, and advance freedom, the concept applies only when there is some sort of contact between two or more of them. The *idea* of freedom would be useless to a person isolated forever from any contact with any other person. Contrasted with the ideas of food and shelter—which can be applied to one person alone—the idea of human freedom has no meaning except in society.

Reference to the concept of freedom, then, always applies to a condition or relationship between two or more persons. Just what is

that relationship? Certainly it would be nonsensical to describe freedom as a relationship of violence, where some persons are trying to impose their wills upon other persons. Probably the best word to describe that condition is tyranny.

Freedom Defined

Freedom is a relationship or condition of non-molestation. The word "molestation" is here used to include murder, defamation of character, theft, libel, fraud, violence or the threat of violence, or any other act of aggression by one person against another person's life, liberty, good name, or property. And the fact that the molestation may be legal—slavery, restrictions against trade, *compulsory* unionism, and so on—does not deny that freedom is infringed.

Since freedom describes a relationship of non-molestation *between persons*, it is misleading to speak of freedom as though it applies to one person alone. This is misleading because it is incomplete; because it refers to only part of a necessary relationship; because it tends to obscure the fact that one or more other persons are necessarily involved.

Yet, the idea of freedom is almost always used in the sense that *one individual* can be free and have his freedom, even though he