

# THE *Freeman*



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From:

## ECONOMIC COMPETITION

■ The self-interested individual cares nothing for **production** as such. What he is interested in is the **acquisition** of things which are scarce. If the easiest method of acquisition is that of production, then he will produce. If there is some easier way, he will pursue that way. The purpose of the law and government is to make it difficult and dangerous to acquire by any other method than that of production, or free and voluntary exchange of products, which means the same thing. Insofar as the state succeeds in this attempt and thus forces all individuals to acquire by methods of production, it is justifying its existence....

Then the brutal struggle for existence is transformed into economic competition. Perfect economic competition is merely a system under which each individual finds it most advantageous to acquire by productive or serviceable effort of some kind, and so, in Adam Smith's words, "to promote the public good while trying to promote his own."

THOMAS NIXON CARVER, "Political Science: General Introduction," in **Lectures on the Harvard Classics**, Collier & Son, New York, 1914.

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