



Frédéric Bastiat's Legacy of "Property, Not Plunder"

8 July 2010

On Wednesday, June 30, the French political philosopher and satirist Frédéric Bastiat would have celebrated his 209th birthday. No writer ever explained the danger of legal plunder better than Bastiat. His brilliant arguments against socialism led the great F. A. Hayek to call him "a publicist of genius" and Joseph Schumpeter to call him "the most brilliant economic journalist who ever lived."

He used logic and humor to explode the fallacies on which interventionism and statism rest. He showed that destruction - through war or natural disasters - cannot create wealth, that restricting trade cannot expand prosperity, and that using force to benefit some at the expense of others erases from everyone's conscience the distinction between justice and injustice.

Bastiat showed that respect for property and free exchange is the foundation of freedom, prosperity, social progress, and peace - at home and abroad. Our property is always at risk from thieves. We lock our doors and employ police to protect us from common thieves, but protection from the biggest thieves - those who use the law to plunder - is much more difficult.

For that we need a moral awakening: stealing by the ballot box is no better than stealing by picking pockets. The Atlas Economic Research Foundation is dedicated to creating that moral awakening.

Atlas, in conjunction with [Students for Liberty](http://studentsforliberty.org/) (<http://studentsforliberty.org/>), has launched the ["Property, not Plunder" Project](http://atlasnetwork.org/atlasold/bastiatlegacy) (<http://atlasnetwork.org/atlasold/bastiatlegacy>) to educate the public and raise awareness of Bastiat's legacy. In 2010, Atlas is taking the clear and easily understood messages of Bastiat to people of more than a dozen languages with essay contests, translation and publication of Bastiat's work (in print and online), Freedom schools, videos, new media such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Orkut, Vimeo, and more.

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