Prosperity  
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Negative Case by Kendall Jarboe

**Summary**

The purpose of this case is to address the misconception that any form of prosperity—social or economic—can only happen with valuing the needs of the public. That is simply not true. For individual and societal success, private property rights must be valued. This is because when something is your own, you want it to succeed. In other words, you have *incentive* to help it develop.

Like many areas of life, efficiency is produced when it is in the hands of individuals, rather than governments. In the round, it is okay to recognize that prosperity can happen on both sides of the resolution. It’s extremely important that you establish that *long-term* and *successful* prosperity largely occurs when private property rights are valued above the needs of the public.

It is important to establish in cross-ex who decides what the needs of the public actually are. In the United States, where eminent domain is legal, the needs of the public is decided by the government. Be sure to research the idea of eminent domain and its constitutionality.

Prosperity

Rancher and Property Rights Activist Wayne Hage once said, “If you don’t have the right to own and control property then you are property.”[[1]](#footnote-2) The needs of the public are ambiguous and subjective while the significance of private property rights are historical and constitutional. Because of these reasons, I stand in negation of this resolution, *The needs of the public ought NOT be valued above private property rights.*

In order to have a clear discussion, I will define one key term in the resolution.

# Definitions

**Private Property Rights**: “exclusivity of rights to choose the use of a resource, the services of a resource, and the exchange of a resource at mutually agreeable terms.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

Now that we are all clear on what private property rights are, it is crucial to give a means by which we can all have a meaningful discussion in this debate round. That being said, I propose a value for the round.

# Value: Prosperity

The definition of development in the Merriam-Webster dictionary is, “the condition of being successful or thriving; especially economic well-being.”[[3]](#footnote-4) It is important to have the value of prosperity because it is what every country strives for, both as a society and the people living in that country. Prosperity takes into account not only how the public as a whole is doing, but also each person and his or her own success.

Now prosperity may sound like a lofty goal to achieve and to measure, so I will provide a criterion to address any concerns. A criterion is how we know the value has been achieved.

## Criterion: Incentive

When people have an incentive to complete a task, they more often than not end up performing that task. Having an incentive is related to having motivation or purpose. When individuals and communities act on incentives, they can be prosperous—not just at the current time, but long-term.

By valuing private property rights over the needs of the public, individuals are given incentives which leads to prosperity. I will elaborate on this idea with two contentions.

# Contention 1: Private Property Rights Promote Prosperity

Private property rights promote prosperity by giving people the incentive to complete tasks to the best of their ability. When you are personally able to reap the benefits of something, you make sure it is in the best possible condition it could be in. This idea is clearly demonstrated in the following example.

## Application: Pilgrims in Plymouth

Following their arrival to the New World, the Pilgrims soon found themselves in a sticky situation. The Plymouth Plantation in 1620 was founded with a system of communal property rights. The food and supplies that were gathered by individuals were held in common and given out according to the needs of the public which was determined by Plantation officials. Regardless of the amount each individual contributed, it was equally distributed and it was actually forbidden to produce your own food.[[4]](#footnote-5) William Bradford, the second governor of Plymouth, realized that,

“Under communal land stewardship, the community was afflicted by an unwillingness to work, by confusion and discontent, by a loss of mutual respect, and by a prevailing sense of slavery and injustice.”[[5]](#footnote-6)

Faced with starvation in 1623, every family was given a private parcel of land. Once they received their private rights to their property, never again were they faced with starvation. Bradford wrote,

“This change had very good success, for it made all hands very industrious, so as much more corn was planted than otherwise would have been. Giving people economic incentives changed their behavior.”

It wasn’t until the Pilgrims valued private property rights over the needs of the public that their community and individuals had incentive that led to prosperity.

# Contention 2: Prioritizing Public Needs Hinders Prosperity

It is always important to see what the needs of the public actually are. This resolution is dangerous to prosperity because the needs of the public are often determined by the government. Eminent domain is defined by the Cornell University Law School as, “The power of the government to [take](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/takings) private property and convert it into public use.”[[6]](#footnote-7) Let’s look at an example of where the public needs were valued over private property rights and it resulted in harm to prosperity.

## Application: Kelo v. City of New London

In June of 2005, the Supreme Court ruled in a 5-4 decision in *Kelo v. City of New London*, Connecticut that the city could use eminent domain to take away private property from its owners and sell to developers because it would benefit the public. Despite protests, the homes were bulldozed over with the plan to create a $300 million research center, a hotel, and residential and office space. However, ten years after the Court ruling, the property remains empty and undeveloped. Several plans fell through because there was no incentive for a private company to make the investment. In fact, one of the supposed developers in the area announced its relocation and the city lost 1,400 jobs as a result.[[7]](#footnote-8) Homes were taken away and property destroyed all because the government believed the public needs should be valued over private property rights. The community as a whole was negatively affected and individuals could not be prosperous because their private property rights were not valued.

# Conclusion

In the end, we can clearly see that both the individual and the area they reside in want to be prosperous. As I showed through my criterion, prosperity is promoted long-term if individuals have an incentive and motivation towards maintaining their property. Incentive is achieved when private property rights are valued above the needs of the public, not the other way around. The best way to promote prosperity is by valuing private property rights.

Affirmative Brief: Prosperity

The best ways to attack the value of prosperity is by (1) showing how valuing public needs actually achieve more prosperity than valuing private property rights. In fact, prosperity actually *depends* on the needs of the public. Iowa State University writes about the idea of Needs Assessment. In their Community and Economic Development category, the importance of establishing the needs of the public is highlighted.[[8]](#footnote-9) Additionally, (2) prosperity is actually subjective to the government. If the negative is arguing that the needs of the public are ambiguous, then isn’t prosperity just as ambiguous? For the criterion of incentive, while someone may have the incentive to be prosperous, that doesn’t mean their success will translate to success of the community.

The same is true for Contention 1. The only way to see a nation prosper is if the needs of the public are taken into account. American leader and civil rights activist Cesar Chavez once said, “We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community...Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.”[[9]](#footnote-10) The application of the pilgrims can be countered with the response that in the beginning, they really didn’t have any private property rights, it was all needs of the public. That’s not “valued above”; it is valuing 100% and nothing else. You could also argue that, at the time, the public needed to have private property rights so therefor, there is no conflict.

Contention 2 can be addressed first in cross-ex. Ask your opponent if the needs of the public are *always* determined by the government. As for the application, *Kelo v. City of New London* is an extremely rare example of this happening. Ask for more applications in cross-ex. The “public” is actually the one who were extremely outraged by the Supreme Court ruling. You can respond by saying that the needs of the public were never actually valued at all. Actually, prosperity has resulted from *Kelo v. City of New London*. More than 80 percent of states have changed their laws in regards to eminent domain because of what happened in New London.[[10]](#footnote-11) It could be argued that this is because of the needs of the public required it.

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3. Merriam-Webster. Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 16 July 2016.<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/prosperity> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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5. Bethell, Tom. "How Private Property Saved the Pilgrims." Hoover Institution. N.p., 30 Jan. 1999. Web. 14 July 2016.<http://www.hoover.org/research/how-private-property-saved-pilgrims> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. "Eminent Domain." LII / Legal Information Institute. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 July 2016.<https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/eminent_domain> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Weingarten, Benjamin. "10 Years Later, Here’s What Happened to the Land Seized and Sold to Developers in a Controversial Supreme Court Case." The Blaze. N.p., 23 June 2015. Web. 15 July 2016.<http://www.theblaze.com/blog/2015/06/23/10-years-later-heres-what-happened-to-the-land-seized-and-sold-to-developers-in-a-controversial-supreme-court-case/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
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9. "UFW: The Official Web Page of the United Farm Workers of America." UFW: The Official Web Page of the United Farm Workers of America. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 July 2016.<http://www.ufw.org/_page.php?menu=research&inc=history/09.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. "Life After Kelo - AEI." AEI. N.p., 8 June 2007. Web. 16 July 2016.<https://www.aei.org/publication/life-after-kelo/> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)