

*When Rivalry Finds Its Place*

*(A citizen's reflection for the National Competition Policy Review)*

*"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."*

— *John Muir*

We live in curious times. A single corporation can eclipse the wealth of nations, not by producing more, but by trading on what others imagine it might one day be. It is celebrated as success, yet in ecological terms it resembles a species consuming so much of its habitat that the rest begins to starve.

Nature tells another story. Rivalry is ancient, but never without limit. Seeds race for light, predators balance prey, seasons strip excess back to essentials. Competition serves the system — it does not imperil it.

Nature knows competition. Seeds fall together in a clearing, each racing for the light. Some reach upward, others wither. Rivalry is not foreign to the forest — it is one of its oldest languages.

But nature also knows boundaries. Soil depth, water, predators, fire, and season all hold rivalry in check. No species grows without limit, no field blooms without end. Left unbounded, competition does not create balance, it consumes it.

Life finds its resilience in diversity. Some creatures compete, others cooperate, many do both. Fungi feed trees, bees pollinate flowers, predators keep herds from overrunning the grasslands. What looks like rivalry alone is in truth an intricate weave of contest and mutualism.

And when collapse comes — a fire, a flood, a fallen giant — competition does not end. It shifts. Succession brings new players to the stage. Space opens, cycles turn, balance returns, but never by rivalry alone.

A healthy system is not one without competition, but one where competition knows its place. The forest is proof: rivalry thrives at the edges, but the heart is held together by boundaries, by cooperation, by the silent architecture of restraint.

So it must be with us. Policy is our season, our soil, our restraint. It is the unseen hand that keeps rivalry from devouring what it needs to endure. If competition is to sharpen our productivity, it must remain true to this deeper law: that contest without boundary is not strength, but fragility.

— Submitted as a personal reflection