

Handout 4.2: The Basic Political Spectrum

Please note: These terms are very broad and are meant to serve only as an outline of historically understood political positions on a single axis.

LEFT	CENTRE	RIGHT
Social conditions need to change as quickly as possible.	Change of social conditions should take place, but at a cautious pace.	The present system should be maintained. Change should only occur when absolutely necessary, and it should be slow and careful.
Society is not bound by tradition.	Tradition is important, but change must be accepted if it is the will of the majority.	Traditions must be respected. They provide society with stability and security.
Government has a moral obligation to take care of needy persons directly.	There are many different approaches to caring for the needy.	Government should not interfere in the lives of individuals. Private charity and self-reliance are better. Government should provide a helping hand, not a handout.
Everyone should have equality of condition (wealth or income).	Everyone should have equality of opportunity and condition.	Everyone should have equal opportunity, but working hard is the best way to get ahead.
The rights of individuals have the highest priority.	Law and order is important, but the rights of the individual come first.	Law and order should always be the highest priority.
The government should own key industries, banks, transportation facilities and natural resources.	Some form of government management of the economy is necessary.	Business and industry should be kept in the hands of private individuals.
Left is generally associated with being socialist.	Centre is generally associated with being liberal.	Right is generally associated with being conservative.