

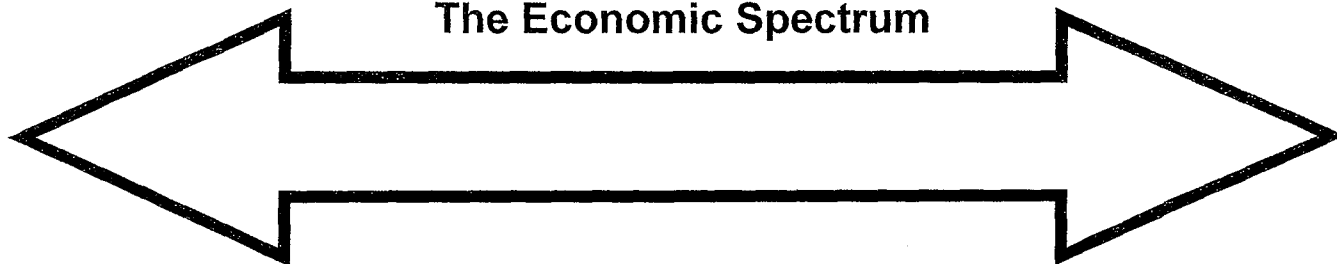
REFINING THE IDEOLOGICAL SPECTRUM

The traditional two-dimensional spectrum is limited in its ability to illustrate the broad range of individual political beliefs. This is because liberals and conservatives differ on the role of government; their perspective changes depending on whether they are looking at an economic issue, or a social/political issue. Put more specifically, conservatives tend to believe that there should be less government intervention in economic matters, while liberals feel there should be less governmental regulation of social and political matters. This is difficult to demonstrate on the traditional spectrum.

LIBERAL

CONSERVATIVE

The Economic Spectrum



Economic liberals favor *broad* government involvement in economic policymaking and regulation of business.

Examples:

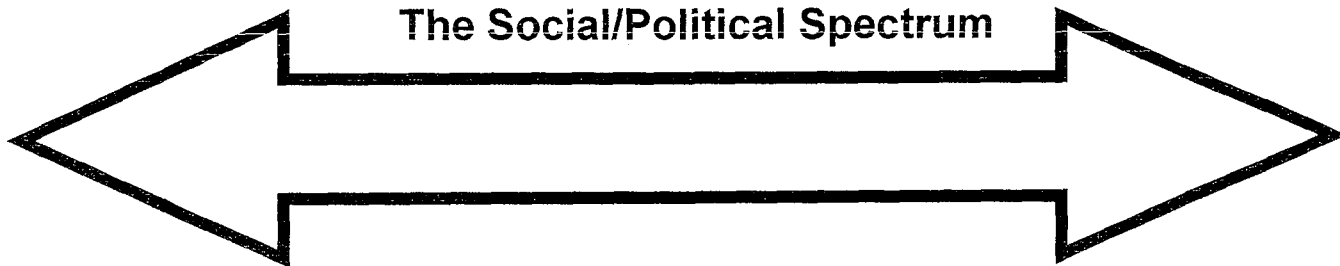
Economic conservatives favor *limited* government involvement in economic policymaking and regulation of business.

Examples:

LIBERAL

CONSERVATIVE

The Social/Political Spectrum



Social and political liberals favor *limited* government regulation of individual behavior.

Examples:

Social and political conservatives favor *broad* government regulation of individual behavior.

Examples:

IDENTIFYING IDEOLOGY

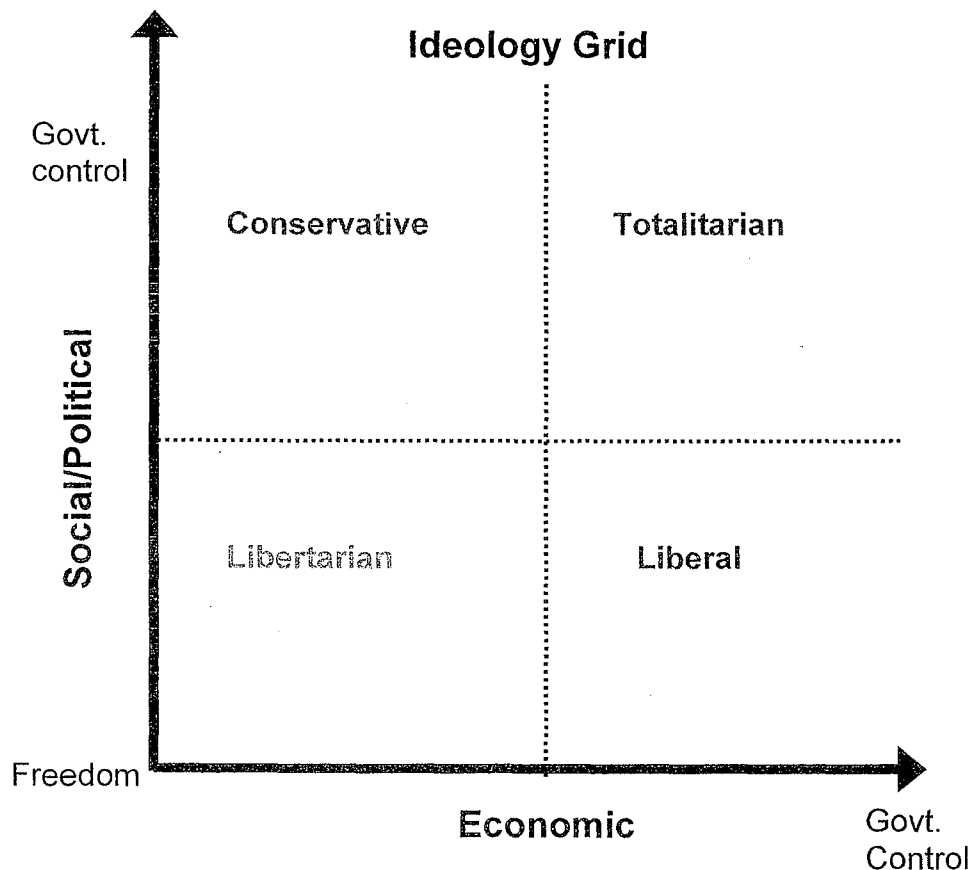
Read each of the quotes below. For each quote decide if the speaker is likely a liberal, conservative, libertarian, or totalitarian. When you have made your decision, put the letter of the quote where you feel it belongs on the ideology grid.

Voter A: "I worked my way up from poverty to become the successful business owner I am today. I get frustrated when I think that my tax money goes to support people who won't help themselves. I think part of the blame belongs with the media – they promote all the wrong values."

Voter B: "I really don't care what other people do in their free time, as long as they don't bother me. I sure don't like it when the government tells me what to do with my money or in my own home – I'm certainly not going to turn around and do the same thing to my neighbors."

Voter C: "I really worry about the state of the world today. It seems like more and more kids are growing up in poverty and there's no one there to help them. I think we need to do more toward providing healthcare and education programs for our young people."

Voter D: "These days, you can't be too careful. I think we need to spend a lot more money on the national defense. I wish there was a police officer on every corner! The police could search my car all they want, since I don't break the law. I also think the government should crack down on the media – their reporting gives our enemies an inside look at all our military preparations."



IDENTIFYING THE POLITICAL POSITIONS OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS

Although there is a danger in simplification and generalization, it can often be quite helpful to pigeonhole ideas, people, and organizations, particularly when one is trying to master new subject matter. It may be helpful to reread the introduction before starting this exercise.

Radical	Liberal	Conservative	Reactionary
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Individual freedom is an absolute▪ The goal justifies the means▪ Political ideals must not be compromised▪ Belief in the economic system of Socialism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reform by moderate means▪ Expect the best of men▪ Expanded role of federal government in solving social problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Content with the present system▪ Men need enlightened control▪ The fewer government programs the better	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Traditional authority must be maintained▪ All laws must be observed▪ Political ideals must not be compromised▪ Communism is the root of many problems

LEFT 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 RIGHT

RADICAL LIBERAL MIDDLE-OF-THE-ROAD CONSERVATIVE REACTIONARY

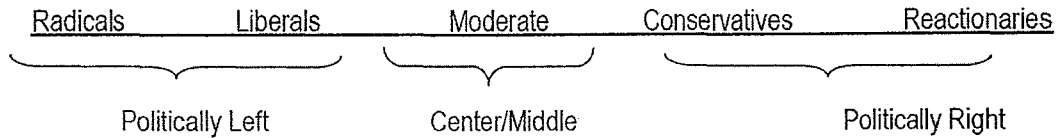
The terms liberal, conservative, radical, extremist and a few similar labels, are perhaps used more than any others in social studies classes, in political conversations and by the communications media. However, it is doubtful that many people have a clear understanding of these terms and the differences they signify. It is difficult to pick up the editorial page of any newspaper without reading about the in-fighting of the liberals and conservatives in either the House or the Senate. One is also likely to read about radical or reactionary groups or interests at work somewhere in our society. Because these terms are so often and so carelessly used, it is important that the interested student and the concerned citizen be able to define them and recognize when they are properly used.

Although this volume presents a comparison of extreme viewpoints on the political spectrum, it is first necessary to compare mainstream liberalism and conservatism so that a sense of perspective may be gained in approaching the far left and the far right.

One may distinguish between liberals and conservatives in two ways: 1) their readiness to change, 2) their philosophical differences. Let us first consider their readiness to accept or bring about change.

READINESS TO CHANGE

If one were to construct a continuum showing the reaction to change, the following stopping points would be noted:



Radicals and liberals are called left-wingers or leftists and welcome change. Conservatives and reactionaries are called right-wingers or rightists and are quite reluctant to accept change. If each position on the continuum were defined I would read as follows:

The Radical He favors a radical or basic change. He is quite impatient and would quickly support a revolution to bring about the desired change.

The Liberal He is ready to move forward and accept change but would be considered a reformer rather than a revolutionary.

The Conservative He is quite content with things the way they are.

The Reactionary He wants to change also, but wants to retreat into the past and restore the order of things the way they used to be.

A former advisor of Franklin D. Roosevelt's, Rexford Tugwell, skillfully uses the example of a community's need for a new train station to illustrate the difference between liberals and radicals: "Liberals would like to rebuild the station while the trains are running; radicals prefer to blow up the station and forego service until the new structure is built."¹ One might add that conservatives would prefer to keep the old station, being satisfied with it, while reactionaries would abandon the station entirely since they do not approve of trains in the first place.*

I believe that liberals tend to design houses, conservatives to build them. The liberal mind, by and large, moves more quickly than the conservative's to original thought.

¹ Rexford G. Tugwell, *The Industrial Discipline and the Governmental Arts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1934-5), p. 229

* In this hypothetical situation, the reader must consider the need for a new train station and the method of building it open to question, otherwise the liberal solution would appear to be the only prudent one.