

HANDOUT 5.1: THE 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	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.
Tradition	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 Intervention	Government has a moral obligation to take care of people in need.	There are many different approaches to caring for people in need.	Government should not interfere in the lives of individuals. Private charity and self-reliance are better. Government should not provide handouts.
Equality	Everyone should have equality of opportunity and condition (wealth or income).	Everyone should have equality of opportunity and a minimum level of conditions met to lead a healthy life.	Everyone should have equal opportunity, but it will not necessarily lead to equal condition. Working hard is the best way to get ahead.
Rights vs Law and Order	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.
Business and the Economy	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.
Ideology	Left is generally associated with being socialist or progressive.	Centre is generally associated with being moderate or liberal.	Right is generally associated with being conservative.