

# *Ideologies*

## **Conservatism:**

Conservatives are generally reluctant to change or reform things. Tradition is preferred.

This, in theory, led to support for the concept of *chivalry* – which required that the powerful defend the weak. The concept is known as *noblesse oblige*. Those with power and wealth have obligations to the weak. In practice, this idea was ignored as often as it was observed.

Conservatives often support such institutions as family and church – though, once again, their interpretation of these values is traditional and may not be the same as the wider interpretation of others. For instance, Conservatives generally oppose the concept of gay marriage, seeing the institution as something rooted in tradition and religion and therefore something that should only concern a man and a woman together.

Conservative fear that ill-conceived changes merely bring disruption.

Originally Conservatives favoured rule by aristocracies. Now, in an age when the role of aristocracies is gone or much diminished, they continue to see hierarchies as important. In more recent times, Conservatives have tended to favour big business interests and so they become natural allies of Classical Conservatives.

Conservatives are often strong nationalists.

Important Conservative figures include *Edmund Burke* and *Winston Churchill*.

## **Fascism:**

Fascism is a radical form of Conservatism that seeks not to preserve tradition but to reverse the developments of modern political thought and return to an idealized mythical past.

Fascism came about as a reaction to the twin stresses of economic collapse and the popular support for radical socialism in the aftermath of World War I.

Fascists believe in militarist values, including discipline and devotion to powerful leaders – coming out of the experiences of soldiers in the war. They are anti-egalitarian and see the world in terms of hierarchies. Strength and power are supreme goals – for the individual and the nation. Fascists see the world in *Social Darwinist* terms – a struggle of survival of the fittest.

Fascists are strongly nativist or racist. They see the role of the state as to promote the interest of the nation – as they define it, in racial terms.

They reject materialism and embrace mysticism – in their devotion to a leadership principle and to the indefinable essence of their nation.

Fascists sometimes support church values, or they may seek to replace them with national ones. Families are supported in theory, but in practice the state always comes first. The same can be said of their support of business interests.

Fascism was begun by *Benito Mussolini* and further developed by *Adolf Hitler*. The term now has such negative connotations that few right-wingers use it to describe themselves.

### **Classical Liberal:**

This is the original form of Liberalism and it reflects the views of thinkers reacting to what they saw as the excessive control of conservative government.

They believe in *laissez-faire* policies, which restrict government involvement in political life to an absolute minimum.

Classical Liberals place individual freedom in all areas, economic or intellectual, foremost.

They believe that *the invisible hand of the market* should be allowed to operate without government restrictions or regulation. They feel that this creates efficiency. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, such thinkers were often called *Utilitarians*.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were few Classical Liberals remaining, as most came to accept some Socialist modifications to deal with the social inequalities that Classical Liberalism brought. They are often described as *Libertarians* because of their commitment to individual liberties.

In the very late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries there has been renewed interest in Classical Liberal principles and a return to such notions as the desire for smaller government and deregulation of businesses – as seen in Conservative Ontario, under Mike Harris and Liberal BC under Gordon Campbell.

What was once seen as a left wing ideology, now fits as a center to right wing one, as the political spectrum extended far to the left of Classical Liberalism. Conservatives and Classical Liberals often find themselves allies in the face of more leftist ideals.

## **Reform Liberalism:**

Classical Liberal policies and the process of industrialization led to huge social divisions between the haves and have-nots.

The desperation of the poor and the sympathies of those who worried about this cultural chasm led to increasing support for Socialism.

This worried many Liberals who feared that the poor would be drawn increasingly to more radical and even violent forms of Socialism, and that this would lead to a social breakdown or even revolution.

Reform Liberals came to believe that government could play a role in eliminating the worst of these problems. An example of this is the work of Liberal economist **John Maynard Keynes**, who felt that government spending could jump-start a faltering economy when recession or depression hit (and that governments should save for a rainy day when the economy boomed).

Government regulation of businesses, while regrettable, might be necessary. Support policies to help the poor would require additional taxes – also regrettable, but absolutely needed. In short, Reform Liberals borrowed from Socialists and modified Liberal thought.

Reform Liberalism is mainstream Liberal thought today, though there has been renewed interest in such Classical Liberal ideas as tax-cutting and deregulation in recent years – as seen in the policies of Mike Harris in Ontario, Gordon Campbell in BC and George Bush in the United States.

## **Socialism:**

Socialism is not a single movement, rather it is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of beliefs that are united in thinking that people should be equal and that wealth needs to be redistributed to make this possible – a Robin Hood principle, of taking from the rich to give to the poor.

Socialists believe that the state must promote this equality.

Radical Socialists call for nationalization of all businesses on behalf of the workers. This requires dictatorial government to force it through.

Moderate Socialists call for **progressive taxation** (taxing the rich and businesses at higher rates than others) to fund services for the poor. Social Democrats favour this gradualist approach to creating equality.

Moderates generally favour a **mixed economy** of independent business and state controlled key services.

Important socialist thinkers include revolutionary radicals like *Karl Marx* and *August Blanqui*, as well as moderates like *Robert Owen*. Some moderates are almost indistinguishable from Reform Liberals. Britain's *Tony Blair* is a good example.

### **Marxism (Communism):**

All Communists are Socialists, but not all Socialists are Communists. Marxism is a radical subset of Socialism.

*Karl Marx* was a Socialist, but his belief system has been so influential that we should treat Marxism separately from our discussion of Socialism.

Marx was a *materialist*; he believed that only things that can be seen and felt existed. Therefore he was an atheist; he did not believe in God. He said "religion is the opiate of the masses." Marx saw religion as a tool employed by the ruling classes to keep their subjects down and to justify their domination.

Marx believed that economics drives history. He felt that what matters in history is who controls the *means of production*. He felt that history progressed through a series of class conflicts, in which the oppressed lower class eventually rises up to defeat and replace its masters. The final conflict would involve the *proletariat* (workers) overthrowing the *bourgeoisie* (Capitalists, or business owners). This would eventually lead to *communism*, when everyone is equal and the need for government would wither away.