

Curing a Conflict

Philip Mitchell used the Nolan Chart in an entirely different way in the June 1984 *Time for Liberty*. Dr. Mitchell, a psychologist and communications consultant to Advocates for Self-Government, has a message which can help us more deeply understand political diversity.

We can use this new idea to help resolve some of the unnecessary conflict in the liberty movement. Most exciting to libertarians is that the resolution of that conflict is the key to finding the 60 percent who already agree with us and don't know it. We can use the key to help them encounter, evaluate, and embrace our ideas.

In the original Nolan Chart, we discriminate people by *what* they believe; i.e., the "substance" of their political ideas. In Figure 5, Mitchell is analyzing an entirely different facet of our human makeup: differences in *how* people approach political issues, not *what* the issues are.

For the purpose of making his point, people near the center are labeled "centrist" and people outside the center area, no matter what quadrant, are called "crusaders."

The center area represents people who look at political issues with primary concern for *how* things are done, *how* things appear, and the *intentions* behind a person's political actions. While centrists have different positions on *what* they believe on the issues, this is not as important to them as the fact that they agree with other centrists "about the means and styles of approaching life."

Each of the corner areas represents people with clear distinctions in ideology. These differences in *what* they believe are key to their attitudes. They are deeply committed to *what* they believe. We'll refer to them as "crusaders."

After thus setting his basic definitions, Mitchell drops the bombshell: A centrist who holds libertarian beliefs is more apt to vote for a liberal or conservative centrist politician than a fellow libertarian who is a crusader.

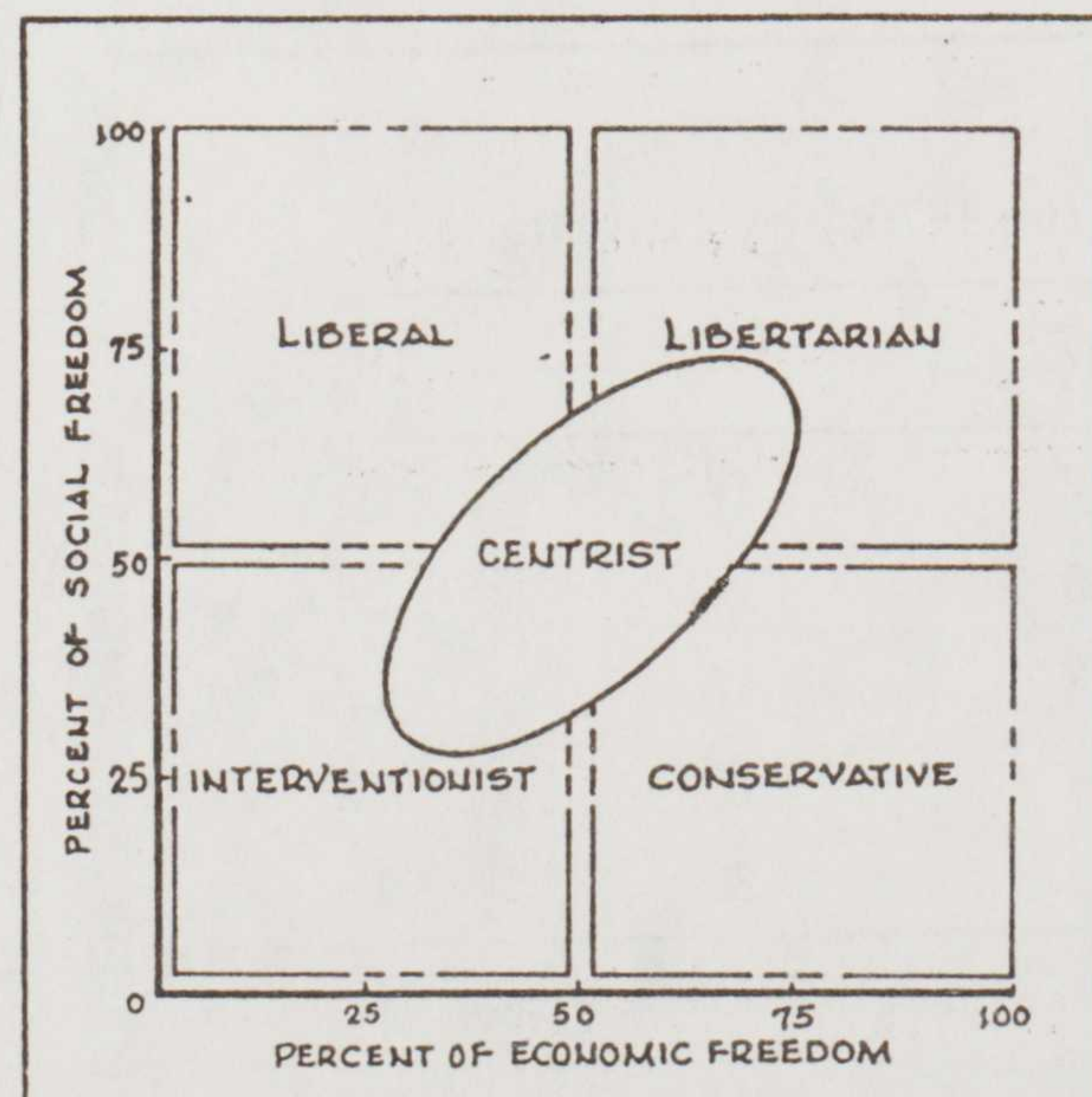


Figure 5 Graphics by Roy McKinney

Centrists are concerned with how social change occurs; crusaders are concerned with what occurs.

This sheds considerable light on some of the ongoing frictions in the libertarian movement. Centrists and crusaders view each other with hostility.

Crusaders divide people according to how "pure" their beliefs are. They see centrists as "unprincipled, wishy-washy cattle" who are "pawns" of another corner.

Centrists divide people by how they put their beliefs into action. They see crusaders, even those with similar ideology, as unreasonable radicals whose very methods will prevent reaching their shared goals.

While a superficial evaluation denies these two camps will ever blend, Mitchell says they can, they need to, and shows us how to do it. Both sides need each other. By themselves, neither side of the how-what split can make a significant change. Both have something to offer: The crusaders provide the "fire, drive, and sense of direction." The centrists have sheer numbers and a "sense of *how* to present things" so they will be accepted.

The marriage of the two will happen as members of each side look beyond the illusions they have about the other, and recognize that "both form and substance are assets."

Much of what we're doing in the Advocates for Self-Government works to resolve this split. We need to reach those 60 percent of the young managers who already agree with us. The way to do it is to design better ways to communicate libertarian ideas—ways that are just as honest and "pure" as those of the past, but present our ideas in attractive and acceptable ways.

So the next time someone asks, "where do libertarians fit in the world of politics," smile. Presume your questioner is among the 60 percent. He or she needs to know how to fit us into the political map; once that's done, he or she can start evaluating our ideas with an open mind. Get out your pen and a scratch pad and draw the four continents of the Nolan Chart for your friend. And have fun doing it!

Doonesbury

JAN 16, 1985



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