BEYOND LEFT/RIGHT

By Marshall Fritz

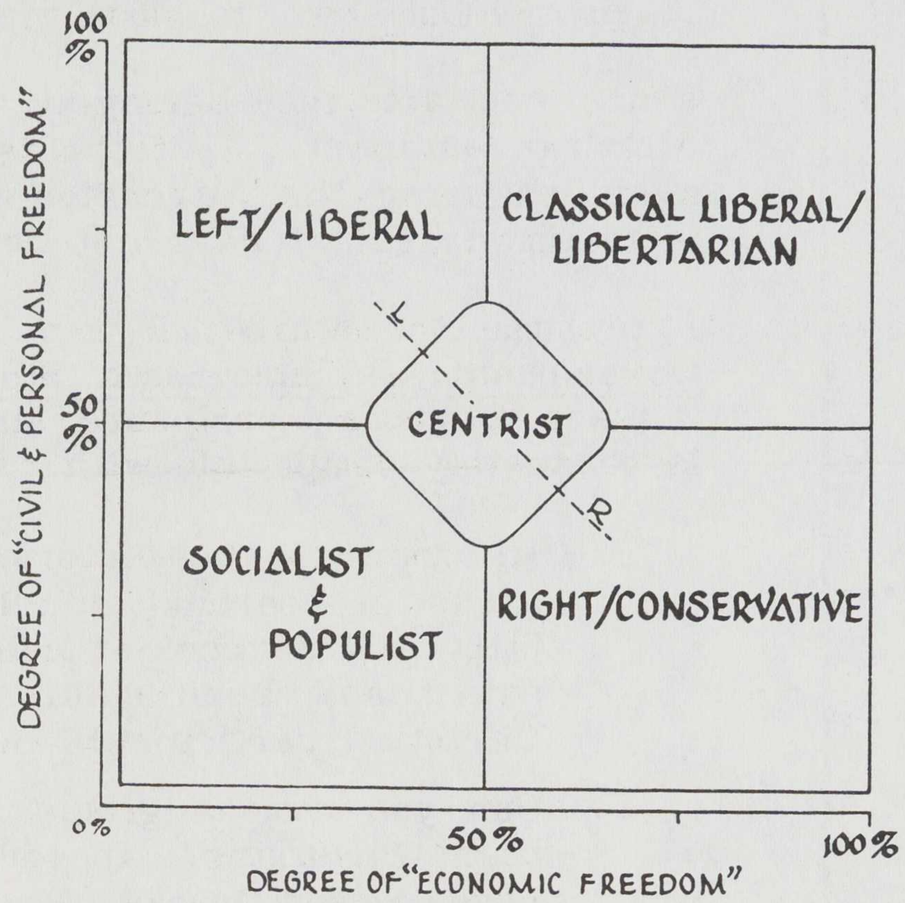
Compared to the Left/Right Spectrum, the Nolan Chart provides a more meaningful way of distinguishing among political ideas, people and parties.

It solves the most obvious flaw of the older approach, the confusion of where to put Fascism. Because most Socialists don't like Fascists, they put Fascism on the "Right." But Fascism it is a form of Socialism, so many analysts place it on the "Left."

The Nolan Chart solves another, less obvious weakness of the of the older spectrum. What does the left/right spectrum measure? How does one make any rational determination of who is "Left" or "Right?" The left/right spectrum never really was a spectrum. It is simply a left-over metaphor based on the seating arrangement of the French Assembly in the late 1700's.

In devising his chart in 1970, David Nolan made an arbitrary division of human action into two categories: actions which are measured economically and those which are not. He put these on two axes, and in each case measured the amount of liberty (versus political government) desired by the holders of each political philosophy.

The chart has subsequently been enhanced by dividing into four quadrants plus an area for "Centrists."



The Nolan Chart overcomes the weaknesses of the outdated left/right political spectrum.

Left/Liberals favor personal choices in social matters but intervention in economics. Government is to serve the disadvantaged. Good intentions are valued. Diversity in social behavior is tolerated; similarity in economic situation is preferred. Cooperate with libertarians in defending civil liberties; cooperate with socialists in advancing economic controls.

Right/Conservatives favor personal choices in economics but intervention in social matters. Government needs to defend the community from threats to its moral fiber. Legislation and Law are valued. Diversity in economic situation is tolerated; similarity in social behavior is preferred. Cooperate with libertarians in expanding economic freedoms; cooperate with populists to enforce community standards in social matters.

Socialists and **Populists** favor governmental intervention in both social and economic matters. The needs of the individual must be subordinate to the needs of society. Using government to "right wrongs" is valued. Sameness in both economic and social areas is favored.

Classical Liberals/Libertarians favor personal choice in both social and economic matters. Government's only purpose is to safeguard individuals from coercion and violence. Individual responsibility and tolerance of diversity are valued in both social and economic areas.

Centrists favor selective governmental intervention and temporary affiliations with others. They take a strong stance on few issues, a middle position in most matters and want practical solutions to current public issues.

ADVOCATES FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT, INC.
5533 E Swift Ave, Fresno CA 93727
209-292-1776