



## edward j dodson's cooperative individualist view

A hung parliament is one in which no political party has an outright majority of seats. The most recent elected hung parliament in the United Kingdom was that which followed the February 1974 general election, which lasted until the October election that year. Prior to that the last had been following the election of 1929.

Source: Wikipedia



The terms 'liberal' and 'conservative' are widely used in our political discourse. We apply them without much conscious thought. Yet, many of us who might willingly describe ourselves with one of these two labels are ourselves unsure of what we have in common with others who do likewise.

In a very general way, being liberal is thought to suggest approval of government intervention to promote an equality of treatment for all individuals under law. A liberal is also thought to support the social objective of greater equality of opportunity in relation to personal wealth and income. A conservative, on the other hand, is thought to favour a far more narrow interpretation of government's responsibilities in the protection of civil liberties or pursuit of equality objectives. In point of fact, these seemingly clear distinctions tell us very little.

Except for those individuals whose writing, statements or actions puts them clearly outside the mainstream, there is considerable cross-over by so-called liberals and conservatives on many policy issues. Often, an individual's ideological rhetoric conflicts markedly with the policy initiatives pursued when holding political office. There is a remarkably homogeneous value system holding a citizenry together, despite a nation's tremendous diversity in ethnic, religious, and racial makeup.

Despite a strong bias in favour of the propertied and a concentration of local and national power in the hands of a select number of families, native-born citizens tend to hold to the romantic notion that the playing field is, if not perfectly level, appropriately level. Not until the late nineteenth century did institutions come under direct attack by reformers and agitators. In the twentieth century an enlarged coalition that included enlightened industrialists and public officials, forged what has been called Liberalism in the United States and Social-Democracy or Democratic-Socialism elsewhere.

The public in the United States was unwilling to consider nationalisation of land or industry as proposed by European proponents of Social-Democracy or Democratic-Socialism. Reformers clamoured for child labour laws, for government support of education, and for a whole range of programs thought unnecessary or intrusive by earlier generations and by contemporary Conservatives.

Widespread unemployment in the 1930s opened the door to even more direct government intervention in the private affairs of individuals and businesses. The Second World War, the post-war anti-communist crusade, the civil rights movement, the rise of feminism and environmentalism, all contributed to the great enlargement of government enterprise and to the politics of Liberalism that has dominated the last half century.

Liberalism functions on the basis of compromise and a blend of policy choices, which I suggest present a left-right paradigm rather different from what is generally embraced. Under liberalism, full equality of opportunity cannot be realised. The securing of liberty is, in fact, prevented under liberalism by the degree to which privilege (ie., sanctioned inequality) dominates sociopolitical arrangements.

This venture into political philosophy asks the reader to think very differently about the characteristics of systems conventionally placed at the left or right. In the next issue of [L&L](#), I will explain why I believe that only under cooperative individualism is the just society realised.