Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

LESSON OUTLINE & OBJECTIVES (don’t copy)

• In today’s lesson we will learn about
  – why we have government
  – the three levels of government in Canada
  – how to describe the government of Canada
  – who our heads of State and Government are
  – different political opinions,
  – the difference between “right” and “left”
  – the difference between Libertarian and Authoritarian
  – how to interpret a Nolan Chart

The big question:
  -no question today, but get ready for tomorrow!
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

WHAT IS GOVERNMENT?

• Government creates rules and manages services that require “community” or shared commitment, for shared benefit.

• These are often services that can’t be effectively delivered by a private business, or a service that is essential for all people.

• A simple example is a community where all members pay a portion of the development and maintenance costs of a water system.
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

HOW ARE WE GOVERNED?

• In Canada, we are governed by three levels of government
  – Federal (national- Government of Canada)
  – Provincial (our province- Government of BC)
  – Municipal (local- Regional District or Council)

• At each level we vote to choose our representatives.
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

HOW ARE WE GOVERNED?
• People pay taxes to the three levels of government so that they can provide **services and regulations**.

Examples:
• Some of these **services** include:
  - Defence
  - Welfare
  - Health Care
  - Roads
• Government provides **regulations** to assist and improve society.
  - Criminal Code
  - Land Zoning
  - Car Licensing
• Government **represents** us internationally
  - Foreign Affairs
  - UN
  - Ambassadors
• Government also issues **money**
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

HOW ARE WE GOVERNED?

• The government of Canada is based on a style of government called “Westminster Government”.

• A Westminster government draws its name from the seat of the British Parliament at Westminster in London.

• This model of government is both representative and responsible, i.e. that Members of Parliament represent citizens and are responsible to Parliament & electors for their actions.

• Both the federal and provincial governments follow the Westminster model.
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

HOW ARE WE GOVERNED?
• Canada’s government can be described as:
  – A **representative democracy**, (we elect leaders who make decisions on our behalf)
  – a **constitutional monarchy** (we have a monarch, whose power is limited by a constitution)
  – a **federation** (a collection of regional governments [provinces] that are governed by a central government as a nation [country].)
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

WHO GOVERNS US?

• In Canada, at the national (Federal) level:
  – Queen Elizabeth II, represented by the Governor General, is our Head of State.
  – Our Prime Minister is our Head of Government.

• At the provincial level:
  – The Queen is represented by a Lieutenant Governor
  – Our Premier is the leader of the government.
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

Head of Government

– Our **Prime Minister** and our **Premiers** lead our governments.
– They all want to improve our country/province.
– But they all have different ideas about what goals are most important, and how to achieve them.
– These ideas, or opinions about how government should operate form “ideology”.
– Politicians make decisions based on their ideology, and we judge them based on our own.
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Ideology

- The most simplistic way to organize ideology is by “Left” or “Right”
- Ideology can placed on a line, or “spectrum”, showing either “liberal” or “conservative”.

← more “liberal”  more “conservative” →

Left Wing  centre  Right Wing
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Left Wing
At the very basic level- if you are left leaning, you usually support:

– Economic Equality: gov’t controls on the economy to protect consumers, equalize economic opportunities, redistribute wealth and provide support for the poor and disadvantaged.

– Intellectual (Personal) Freedom: Minimizing gov’t controls & regulations on social & personal activities to protect individual freedoms.
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

Right Wing
At the very basic level- if you are right leaning, you usually support:

- **Economic Freedom**: Minimizing gov’t regulation of the economy to allow people to maximize their potential (*lower taxes*).

- **Intellectual (Personal) Equality**: Strong support for gov’t controls on social and personal activities to protect society and traditional values.
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

The Nolan Chart

• But- the straight line can’t show all the possibilities.
• One can be right wing on economic issues, but left wing on personal issues.
• We have two new extremes, **Libertarian** and **Authoritarian**.
• If you prefer the absence of any gov’t control- you are Libertarian.
• If you prefer significant gov’t controls, you are Authoritarian.
• The **Nolan Chart** is used to more accurately chart political ideas.
• *It can be drawn as a square, or as a diamond*…
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

The Nolan Chart

- First used as a square, like a quadrant graph.
- Commonly used as a diamond, showing the L-R spectrum.
Lesson #1: Governance & Political Thought

Review Questions for Lesson #1

1. What are the three levels of government in Canada?
2. What three ways can you describe our government?
3. What model of government is our system based on?
4. Who is our Head of State?
5. Who is our Head of Government?
6. On a simple spectrum, “Increasingly Liberal” is what side?
7. On a simple spectrum, “Increasingly Conservative” is what side?
8. Personal Freedom is typically left or right wing?
9. Economic Freedom is typically left or right wing?
10. Supporting wide ranging gov’t controls is ________________ IAN.
11. Advocating the absence of gov’t controls is ________________ IAN.