

INTRODUCTORY SOCIAL CREDIT TRAINING COURSE - LECTURE 4
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In this lecture we are going to study the question of how much power Governments should have and how that power can be restricted. The famous statement by Lord Acton that “all power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely” is one of the most profound observations ever made. No individual or group of individuals can be trusted with too much power. The obtaining of power results in the striving for still more power. Power is particularly dangerous when those wielding the power cannot be made directly responsible for their actions.

The central theme of history of the British people in particular, has been the constant endeavour to prevent power from being centralised, to keep all power decentralised by limiting the powers of Governments in various ways. There is no more vital issue confronting us than the urgent necessity to attack the totalitarian idea of more powers for Governments - particularly centralised Governments.

As we saw in our last lecture, Governments are merely instruments through which the individual should lay down the general rules under which the game of life is to be played. We hear much about what wonderful things Governments have done, or are going to do, for the individual members of society, but the facts of history prove that most reforms have been initiated by individual members of the community and forced upon reluctant Governments. Writing of this matter in 1867, the English historian, Thomas Henry Buckle, said:

“That the civilization of Europe is chiefly owing to the ability which has been displayed by two different governments, and to the sagacity with which the evils of society have been palliated by legislative remedies is a notion which must appear so extravagant as to make it difficult to refer to it with becoming gravity.....

No great political improvements, no great reform, either legislative or executive, has ever been originated in any country by its rulers. The first suggestions of such steps have always been by bold and able thinkers, who discern the abuse, denounce it, and point out how it can be remedied... At length, if circumstances are favourable, the pressure from without becomes so strong, that the government is obliged to give way; and, the reform being accomplished, the people are expected to admire the wisdom of their rulers, by whom all this has been done...

"It is only with the greatest difficulty that parliament is induced to grant what the people are determined to have, and the necessity of which has been proved by the ablest men. Posterity ought to know that great measures are extorted from the legislative by pressure from without; that they are conceded not cheerfully but with fear; and carried out by statesmen, who have spent their lives in opposing what they now suddenly advocate...

“.....since the most valuable improvements in legislation are those which subvert preceding legislation it is clear that the balance of good cannot be on their side. It is clear that the progress of civilization cannot be due to those who, on the most important subjects, have done so much harm that their successors are considered benefactors simply because they reverse their policy, and thus restore affairs to the state in which they would have remained if politicians had allowed them to run on in the course which the wants of society required ... The effects produced in European civilization by political legislation compose an aggregate so formidable that we may well wonder how, in the face of them, civilization has been able to advance. That under such circumstances it has advanced is a decisive proof of the extraordinary energy of man ...

"The world has been made familiar with the great truth, that one main condition of the prosperity of the people is that its rulers shall have very little power, that they shall by no means presume to raise themselves into supreme judges of the National interests, or deem themselves authorised to defeat the wishes of those for whose betterment alone they occupy the posts entrusted to them."

It is obvious that we no longer have the political wisdom of our forefathers. In his essay, "*The Situation and the Outlook*," C.H. Douglas says that "...Government is inherently and inevitably restrictive and therefore ... the amount of Government which a community can stand without collapsing is definitely limited, and if Governments are competitive, the most governed community will collapse first. And, therefore, the first policy to be applied to over-Government, i.e. Socialism, is and must be, a negative policy - a retreat from Government; less Government."

Let us now consider the main ideas developed by our forefathers in an attempt to limit the power of Governments and thus prevent the growth of that corruption Lord Acton warned about and which we have appalling evidence of on all sides today.

The idea of limiting the powers of Governments which we understand best, is the decentralisation of political power by decentralised Government - small political units in which the representatives of the people are more easily amenable to electoral control than is the case in big political units. Decentralised Government is local government. Local Government is government on the spot by those who understand the conditions of their own locality. In Government close to the people, there is less chance of delegated authority to an irresponsible bureaucracy - a feature of all centralised Governments. Centralised Governments, striving as they do for more and more power, try to legislate on so many matters which should either be the province of local Governments or right outside the control of all Governments, that the excuse is that there is too much legislation and that some responsibility must therefore be delegated to a bureaucracy. All Governments have argued in modern times that modern conditions have so complicated Government that some powers must be delegated to a bureaucracy. The complications mentioned can be traced to the policies of Governments interfering with matters over which they should have no control.

Another very good reason why local, decentralised Government is necessary, is because the smaller the political unit, the less chance there is of majorities being used to destroy the rights of minorities. There has been no more dangerous definition of democracy than that which says that it is majority rule. In his "Sham Democracy" a book which should be read by every student doing this Course, James Guthrie writes:

"Those in control of the modern State can, and do, penalise minorities, because they claim they represent a majority - the fact being overlooked that we are all, at one time or another, a member of a minority. Parents are in a minority; farmers are in a minority; the country dwellers are in a minority; skilled men are in a minority; the politically wise are very much in a minority. But so-called democratic governments demand the right - and they continually exercise this right - to over-rule every minority, which together make the majority. In other words, in practice we are witnessing governments using the technique of the manipulated mass-vote to disfranchise successive minorities and transfer their rights to the manipulators."

The success of the political vote depends upon whether the individual can preserve and extend his sovereignty by the use of it. We can best study the menace of the majority vote by considering the creation of one world political unit. Under such conditions, twelve million Australians would, in the world central Government, obviously be hopelessly outvoted by the representative of, say, China.

Now surely no one in his right senses would suggest that Australian affairs should be controlled by a majority political Vote on a world scale.

Another aspect of the political vote which has been given considerable attention in recent Social Credit literature, is the use of the secret vote, which permits not only majorities to be used to disfranchise minorities, but also permits this to be completely irresponsible.

In his address, "*Realistic Constitutionalism*", Douglas said " ... the individual vote: must be made individually responsible, not collectively taxable, for his vote. The merry game of voting yourself benefits at the expense of your neighbour must Stop --- There is a clear method by which to approach this end - the substitution of the open ballot for the secret franchise ..." "

The following extracts from an article by Hewlett Edwards, first published in the English "*Social Creditor*", will provide the student with the basic arguments concerning the secret vote:

"Decisive exercise of judgment is that policy formation which is the function proper to an individual as an elector. This is the basic factor in any system, which approaches the reality of democracy; and it can only be operative in the choice between practical, well defined alternatives. This is the antithesis of what exists, for the key note of elections is confusion, not clarity; they are contests between catchwords, slogans, vast generalisations and diffuse abstractions ... a technique of perversion ... has reduced the political system to an effective bar between the ordinary man and his common sense. The common sense, which is at once his compass and his arm. So bereft, he is unable to take part in the formation of directive policy, and must submit to the imposition of other policies, alien to his own ..."

"Probably the most debilitating factor of current political action is the irresponsibility of those concerned. Freedom - the ability to choose or to refuse - is primary; but it is commonsense that a man should be simply and directly answerable for his actions. It is that which binds him back to facts.

This is dependent on action being open and avowed; it is the free expression of opinion which is a part of the English tradition, not the secret ballot which dates from 1872. At the present juncture it is not easy to find many who will admit to having put the present government into power, the elector hides behind the secret ballot when it suits him; Party members are screened by "Party decisions", and those who enact so many regulations ... are shrouded in an anonymous service. Such devices are so many channels for the exercise of power without responsibility... Measures which diminish the integrity of the economic vote have been accomplished by an increasing advertisement and use of the political vote; to the effect, e.g. that the only recourse left to a man who wants to buy a banana is political..."

"It is often said, without realisation of what lies beneath the surface, that 'the world is going mad'; and there is something in it. Only the ordinary man by use of his compass and his arm - his commonsense - can reverse the process. But he cannot vote with commonsense - unless the issues presented for decisions (at elections) are reduced to such as commonsense can deal with. This manner of summing up a proposition, its consequences and its cost; whether this is what you want, and whether this is what you want to pay for - forms a medium in which the ordinary man is still capable of the decisive act; and wherein he is accustomed to take direct responsibility, profiting if he 'buys well', and losing if he does not."

Douglas suggests that the secret vote be abolished and replaced by an open, recorded, and

published vote, and that those who vote for the Government (*to increase taxes, are - ed*) to pay all increases in taxation, etc., which the Government may levy.

The most dangerous conception of responsible Government is that which insists that once a Government has been elected to office, it should have all power to do as it likes. A little thought will indicate the menace of this conception. Writing in his book, "*The King and his Dominion Governors*", Dr. H.V. Evatt points out how a Government is only the Government for the time being and should not be unlimited in its powers. He instanced how the Government of Newfoundland abolished itself without consulting the people of Newfoundland. Our British forefathers learned through hard experience that definite checks were required on elected Governments. This brings us to a study of Upper Houses, the Crown, and other checks on Governments.

In his address, "*Realistic Constitutionalism*", to the British Constitutional Research Association, Douglas said:

"In some form or other sovereignty in the British Isles for the last two thousand years has been Trinitarian. Whether we look on this Trinitarianism under the names of Kings, Lords and Commons, or as Policy, Sanctions and Administration, the Trinity-in-Unity has existed, and our national success has been greatest when the balance (never perfect) has been approached.

"...by the strengthening and elevation of Common Law, and its repository in the care of an effective Second, non-elective, Chamber, or by some other method, clearly defined limits must be placed on the power of a house of Commons elected on a majority principle. . . . Common Law is something which, if it changes at all, ought to change very slowly indeed, and the greatest difficulty should be placed in the path of an attack upon it, both by insisting on its supremacy over House of Commons enactments, and by making it subject only to something at least as arduous as an amendment to the United States Constitution . . ."

English Common Law can be traced right back to Magna Carta. It was built up to protect the rights of the individual. When the Common Law was more widely understood, before the growth of what the former Chief Justice of England, Lord Hewart termed "bureaucratic lawlessness", the individual's rights were firmly protected.

The Courts existed to ensure that his rights were upheld, even against the Crown itself. Today the Courts don't uphold the Common Law, but are used by the "new despotism" for its own ends,

Sir Henry Slessor, the imminent jurist, has said: "The future of the Common Law is plainly more than a matter for lawyers. The Law of England is a unique contribution to Christian civilisation; its decay may prove to be one of the greatest tragedies of our age."

In Australia, as in America, we do not have a non-elective Upper House such as the House of Lords in Great Britain. The Upper House in the Federal sphere, the Senate, was the result of the Federal Constitution, and was intended to be a protection for the local State Governments. The Party system has destroyed the value of the Senate, and it is indeed fortunate that the Australian people have been protected to some extent from the predatory design of the Federal Government, by the written Federal Constitution.

One of the most important tasks confronting Australian Social Creditors is to make a positive defence of the Federal Constitution, the great bulwark against a complete centralised despotism from Canberra.

Apart from Queensland, all Australian State Governments have an Upper House, the

franchise differing in most States, but all insisting on some property qualification. Those who have never studied the history of Government complain that Upper Houses are anti-democratic and oppose the will of the people. It is amazing how many people accept this nonsense. The basic idea of the Upper House, brought to this country from Great Britain and based upon sound tradition, was to preserve the Trinitarian balance in Government. The Upper House, restricted to those with specific qualifications, was intended to be elected by a more responsible vote.

Its function is not, as some ignorant people contend, to block all legislation, but to ensure that legislation is not rushed through Parliament, legislation which could destroy the rights of the electors before they knew what was happening.

Those people who complain that Upper Houses insist on opposing legislation affecting property rights, completely ignore the fact that the ownership of property of some description provides the individual with some degree of liberty and security. The most serious charge that can be levelled against Upper Houses is that they have failed to protect the basic rights of the people.

Probably the most classic example in recent times of the great benefit of a responsible Upper House, is the manner in which the Tasmanian Upper House refused in 1944 to permit the Tasmanian Parliament to transfer enormous powers to the Federal Government, thus destroying the Federal Constitution. All the totalitarians were loud in their cries protesting how an "anti-democratic" Upper House was preventing a "democratic" Lower House from doing as it desired. Now, the Tasmanian Upper House accepted its responsibilities and insisted that no powers should be transferred to Canberra without the people's direct consent at a Referendum. The responsible action of the Tasmanian Upper House resulted in the 1944 Referendum, at which the Tasmanian electors voted overwhelmingly against surrendering to Canberra the powers willing to be granted by the Tasmanian Lower House. In other words, if it had not been for the Tasmanian Upper House, the Tasmanian People would have had their rights destroyed without redress.

Those who oppose Upper Houses also rail against Constitutional limitations to Governments. How often do we hear it said that it is ridiculous that the Federal Government, elected by a majority of the people, should be restricted by the Federal Constitution. We also hear the High Court attacked. Like most written Constitutions, our Federal Constitution embodies the political traditions of our race.

Tradition may be termed the accumulated experience of the past; it is what has been found to work. The idea of tradition is essentially sound, and even the most primitive develop it in order to ensure the survival of the tribe. Over a long period of time our forefathers learned that Governments must have their powers limited, otherwise "snap" legislation could destroy what took hundreds of Years to build up. All British constitutional safeguards can be directly traced to our Christian background. In an article, "Under What King?" Douglas wrote in 1945:

"The Church (during the Mediaeval period) claimed to be, and was to quite a considerable extent, a living body of Superior Law, not different in intention but far higher in conception, to the Constitution of the United States."

Compared with the Australian Constitution, the American Constitution has the advantage of being more difficult to amend. We can best understand the conception of a tradition, whether it is embodied in a Common Law interpreted by a non-corruptible judiciary, a House of Lords such as in Great Britain, or in a written Constitution, by referring to that most English of games, cricket. Although there are specific rules under which the game is played, the actions of the players is also modified by a code of sportsmanship. How often do we hear,

"That is not done", or "It isn't cricket"? This code is not continued by a "voting" process; it is a living, permanent tradition. We now come to a brief examination of the function of the Crown. It is often contended that the major principle of the British Constitution is the omnipotence of Parliament. So far from this being the case, the great Bill of Rights specifically lays it down that the individual may petition the Monarch.

The essential idea behind the Bill of Rights was... that the British people had certain rights and liberties, established by custom and not subject either to the whim of Parliaments or the conspiracies of politicians, and the Monarch was the supreme Defender of these Personal Rights. In his "*Realistic Constitutionalism*" Douglas writes:

"The essential soul of a nation is in its character, its culture and tradition. The King is the natural embodiment of Honours and Sanctions - of Culture and Tradition, and as such, is naturally the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces."

Because of his embodiment of the nation's culture and tradition, the Monarch, and those various representatives of the Monarch in all parts of the British Commonwealth, represents all the people and has the power to veto all legislation. If used, the veto could compel legislators either to place legislation directly before the people, or if they felt that the people would not sanction it, not pursue it any further. It is interesting to note that even in a Republic such as America, the Trinitarian idea of Government has been maintained, with the President having the power of veto of any legislation.

So far from legislation being easy to pass, it should be made a process which permits the greatest possible consideration to be given to it. If Upper Houses and the Crown are functioning as they were conceived by our forefathers, they would be ensuring that legislation be reduced to a minimum and carefully examined.

SOCIAL CREDIT TRAINING COURSE

QUESTIONS ON LECTURE 4

Student NOTE: The half-way mark towards any final objective is always a goal worth obtaining. After Lecture 4 you will be heading for that final objective. We know you will find the remainder of the course as interesting and challenging as the first four lectures.

1. Why have Governments generally opposed genuine progress?
2. Suggest policies to further Douglas's suggestion that there should be a "retreat" from Government."
3. Under what circumstances do you think that majority rule may be acceptable,
4. Briefly outline why you oppose World Government.
5. What is the purpose of a Constitution?
Do you think the churches should concern themselves with Constitutionalism?
If so, why?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON LECTURE 4

1. Governments have generally opposed genuine progress because they are the embodiment of too much centralized power which paralyses the genuine individual initiative which is an absolute prerequisite for all real progress.
2. Policies aimed at “retreat from government” should begin with decentralization of political power by decentralized local government. Smaller political units in which the representatives of the people are more under the effective influence of direct electoral control than with the large political unit. There would be less delegation of authority and thus less or no irresponsible bureaucracy. The substitution of the open responsible ballot for secret franchise would be a key policy to bring about the above objectives. Policy being defined as the action taken to given effect to a desired objective. Decentralized political power, common law and some form of trinity-in-unity in relation to sovereign power, have in the past been the Great British deterrents to all powerful tyrannical government.
3. For strictly local matters by those directly involved, in conditions where the individual can preserve and extend his sovereignty, by the use of the vote, open and recorded, not secret, and where each person exercising the vote is held individually responsible. This also means voting to choose or refuse one thing at a time.
4. Because world government is the ultimate in the complete centralization of all worldly power.
5. The main purpose of a constitution is to limit the power of governments. The church should interest itself in constitutionalism because a constitution is the guardian of common law and individual rights which are the basis of a truly Christian civilization.