

CHAPTER 4

How did we get here?

For most of recorded history, power came in a few distinct forms.

Religious authority: God talks to me, not you.

Military Authority: My sword/lance/bow/gun is bigger than yours.

Hereditary Authority: My Dad's a big shot, ie. he's the King.

In most cases, the leaders who demonstrated the most regard for their followers were the most successful in the long term. They are inevitably known as 'Good King So and So'.

While conquering and gaining wealth were important in the short term, some leaders understood that real prosperity came from trading, being able to charge taxes and supporting commerce — and later, industry, underpinning the rule of law.

Put simply, if you make rules that are reasonably fair and then apply them consistently, people will generally accept them.

NAKED LEADERSHIP

Wise leaders also knew that rebellion usually gains its recruits from the poorest levels of society. They discovered that the way to create stability was to help people gain enough to lose their fear of not surviving. Attaining this basic 'comfort level' would encourage them to relax and go along with the flow for as long as they continued to feel that there was a fair chance to get ahead, or at least to live a comfortable life.

In contrast, leaders who were extremely cruel, untrustworthy and dishonest inevitably had people trying to knock them off.

Over time, rulers began to realise these basic truths and to teach them to their offspring. Royalty, the Church and the military developed a system of leadership that, despite some excursions into the bizarre (Torquemada's party tricks might be considered a *tad* excessive), slowly matured into a system that people could at least understand or, at best, find reasonably fair.

Still, the bedrock of the system remained the fear of severe consequences because someone had power over you.

- Annoy the Church, you might find yourself burned at the stake.
- Annoy the King and off with your head.
- Annoy the military and...well you get the point (and you might!).

We had not developed the ability or the desire to reason with our (for want of a better word) subordinates.

Either they did as they were told or it was the Big Goodbye.

Then something interesting happened. Beginning way back with the invention of the printing press (1041 in China/1436 in Europe), the means to spread education amongst the general public was born. Gradually, knowledge only previously available to those in authority became more available. As people learned more, they questioned more. Sometimes the questions turned to arguments.

As the arguments gained popularity, society began to change. Ideas like social justice, while not new, gained a wider audience.