

ISLAND SIMULATION: THE RULE OF LAW

The law should apply to everyone. No one should be exempt from the law because he or she holds a position of power. If we have a system of law, everyone must respect and obey the law.

This is the basis for the rule of law. It is the belief that it is better to be ruled by laws than to be ruled by leaders who can act any way they like. For example, if a king, queen, or dictator rules us, it is simply a person exercising power without guidelines. If the law rules us, leaders cannot use their power any way they like. Political leaders, police, and judges are subject to the same laws as everyone else. They must apply the laws or guidelines to everyone, including themselves.

The rule of law also requires peaceful and orderly ways to change laws. There must be guidelines about how to change the law that can be understood and used by everyone.

This idea about the rule of law is demonstrated in our legal and our political system. Our political system allows us to control how our laws are made through a democratic, parliamentary process. This process gives us an organized way to change the law and change our elected leaders.

With this knowledge about the rule of law, consider how you would go forward in the following situation...

A group of eight people are on an island that is six kilometres long and two kilometres wide. The island is located in a large ocean. This island is not on any map. No plane or ship passes it at regular intervals. A warm water current flows past the island. The highest elevation is a three hundred metre hill at the north end of the island. There is a fresh water spring on the island, plenty of fruit trees, and a population of wild pigs. Two-thirds of the island is covered with plants.

The boat that brought you to the island is wrecked and sunk in deep water at least five kilometres away. Nobody knows where you were going or where you are. The last time you touched land was 500 kilometres away.

Through a miracle, no one was hurt. You are as well as you are right now.

What are you going to do?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- Do we know that there is no one else here?
- Why do we need to know if anyone else is on the island?
- Do we know if we need protection?
- What do we need and in what order?
- Who will our leaders be?
- What should we do to get started?
- What decisions must be made?
- How will these decisions be made?
- What will be done to those who do not obey?
- How will disagreements be settled?
- What will happen if we disregard the rules?
- What things do we have?