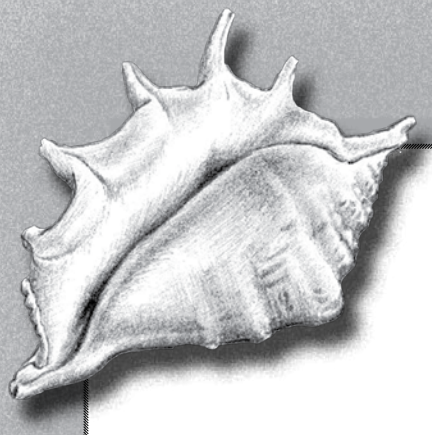


Rational Changeover of Government

Looking back to Chapter One, it could be said that the boys established a basic island-state. As the story has moved forward, the boys' society and their concepts of law and governance have degenerated. Their unity and system of government finally collapses when Jack breaks away from the group.

Though sometimes more dramatic, changes in Canadian government are more orderly than what is taking place on the island.

Elections

One of the mechanisms for orderly renewal of government in Canada is elections. Elections give the public a chance to select who will represent them in the legislature. The *Constitution* requires that elections take place no later than every five years, except during national emergencies such as war. Although the time limit between elections is five years, the federal government and many provinces have fixed election date legislation that suggests elections be held on certain days every four years. Fixed election date legislation is not constitutionally binding.

When the boys elected Ralph as their chief, they never went a step further to establish an election cycle. However, this does not necessarily mean Ralph could remain chief forever. As illustrated by Jack's attempt to have Ralph voted out, the boys' rudimentary democracy allowed for a change of leadership without an election.

Confidence Votes

Like Jack's vote to have Ralph ousted as chief, Canada's system of Westminster-style governance has a similar mechanism that can allow for a change of government without an election necessarily happening. It is called a confidence vote.

A confidence vote is an orderly means for the people's elected representatives to remove a government from power. Like its name suggests, when a confidence vote takes place, the elected members of a legislature express whether or not they have confidence in the government.

Motions of confidence take place in several different ways. Opposing members of the legislature can put forth motions of confidence. Governments can declare bills as motions of confidence. And bills that involve spending money are automatically considered motions of confidence.

If a government loses a confidence vote, one of two things will usually happen. One option is for the Queen's representative to ask another group of elected members to form a government. This can only happen if the potential alternative government can demonstrate that they will have the confidence of the majority of the legislature's elected members. The other option is for the Queen's representative to call a general election.

Back to the Island

Jack's confidence vote on Ralph's leadership suggested that Ralph retained the confidence of the majority of the boys. However, a majority of boys then quietly joined Jack's breakaway group. So even though the boys' democracy allowed for an orderly change of leadership, the boys failed to use this tool in an open and honest fashion.

Consider

1. When Jack asks the boys to vote on Ralph's leadership, no boys vote in favour of ousting Ralph. Yet, several boys follow Jack after he departs.
    a) Do you think the boys' vote would have turned out differently if they had voted by secret ballot?
    b) Why is it important that private citizen's votes are secret?
2. In Canadian legislatures, almost all votes by elected representatives are done in the open. Why is it important that citizens know how their elected representatives have voted on issues?
3. When Jack breaks away from Ralph's group, he says "I'm not going to play any longer" (p. 140). What does the word "play" tell us about the seriousness with which Jack treats their island society and governance?

For Future Reading

Observe the development of Jack's new tribe. Does he build it on the idea of democracy or dictatorship?