Government Notes: Notes for use in writing the government section of the Island Report

I. Government Structure
   A. Unitary- National government makes and enforces laws for the whole nation
      1. Characteristics of countries that fit a unitary structure
         a. small land area
         b. homogenous population (the people share the same race, religion and language)
      2. Examples
         a. Japan
         b. United Kingdom

   B. Confederation- National government is small and weak. National government only controls things that all state/regional governments can agree on. State/regional governments have most of the power.
      1. Characteristics of countries that fit a confederate structure
         a. diversity: The more diverse the race, language and religion the more difficult it will be to agree on laws that fit everyone.
      2. Examples
         a. Articles of Confederation
         b. Confederate States of America (South in the Civil War)
         c. European Union
         d. United Nations

   C. Federalism- Strong national government that delegates power to state/regional governments. National laws take precedence over state/regional laws.
      1. Characteristics of countries that fit a Federal structure
         a. Large land area
         b. Diverse population
      2. Examples of countries with Federalist structure
         a. United States
         b. Canada
II. Government Authority

A. Authoritarianism
   1. dictatorship
   2. monarchy
   3. totalitarianism

Once again the movie “Babe” provides a good example of authoritarianism. The scene where Farmer Hogget invited babe to get the sheep out of the pen is a good example of the difference in the two types of government authority. The chart below shows the basic differences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of authority</th>
<th>Babe</th>
<th>Rex &amp; Fly (dogs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source of power</td>
<td>Democracy</td>
<td>Authoritarian (dictatorship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude about the people</td>
<td>Capable</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s reason for obeying</td>
<td>Self interest</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of enforcement</td>
<td>Force/military</td>
<td>Rule of law</td>
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B. Democracy
   Requirements of democracies
   1. right to vote
   2. can choose from two or more candidates. Countries like China allow people to vote but offer only one candidate to choose from.
   3. Rule of law. Representatives of the people make laws in the legislature that are mostly fair and enforced through a process that includes a trial by jury. Dictatorships often make and enforce laws at random.

III. Political Philosophy:

There has always been disagreement over the role or government. In the U.S. the disagreement can be broken down into two different philosophies.

A. Equality: Those who believe that equality should be the goal of government will focus on human rights and the environment. They want to change society to make it fairer. This usually calls for government to play a large role in society.
   1. characteristics
      a. Democrat  b. liberal  c. progressive  d. left wing  e. relative

B. Efficiency: Those who believe that efficiency should be the goal of government will focus on time and money. They believe that things work out better if you set standards and judge people on whether they meet those standards. They believe that this is done by limiting government involvement in people’s lives and allowing natural market forces to work things out.
1. characteristics  
   a. Republican  b. conservative  c. traditional  
   d. right- wing  e. absolute  

C. Political Spectrum  
Breaking the two approaches to government down into two basic 
categories works to help understand the differences between Democrats 
and Republican, but in reality people’s beliefs range across the entire 
political spectrum. Here is a basic view of how the political spectrum 
looks.  

| left wing | right wing |  
| equality | efficiency |  
| liberal | conservative |  
| progressive (want change) | MODERATE | traditional |  
| relative | 45 | 63 | 81 | absolute |  
| | 18 | | 108 |  

DEMOCRAT | REPUBLICAN  

As you can see from the diagram, a person could be a moderate Democrat and have more 
in common with a moderate Republican than with a liberal Democrat. What really 
matters is how far to the left or right a person is.  

D. Political Analogy: If people were like clay and their political beliefs made 
them either softer or harder, then  
   1. right wing conservatives would be like hard crusty clay 
   that can never change form.  
   2. On the other side of the spectrum, left wing liberals 
   would be like watery clay (mud) that will never take any 
   form. Both are dogmatic.  
   3. Moderates are like soft moldable clay that is flexible. 
   Moderates will compromise, though they may not be 
everything they want, work to solve problems in society.