Decisions for the First General Assembly

Case 1 - For your consideration….

All four towns and seven plantations along the James River have been asked to send two representatives each to sit in a General Assembly with the Governor and his council. Captain John Martin sent two burgesses to represent his plantation. It was revealed that his patent has a clause that makes him exempt from following the laws of the colony. His only responsibility is to help defend the colony against foreign or domestic enemies.

- Should different plantations be allowed to operate under their own rules?
- Should Martin’s burgesses be allowed to sit with the Assembly and make laws for the colony that they can choose whether or not to follow?

Case 2 - For your consideration…..

Captain Martin’s men were sent down river on a trading expedition to get corn for the plantation. After a difficult trip, they encountered Indians transporting a canoe full of corn. The Indians refused to trade the corn, so Captain Martin’s armed men used force to take a portion of the corn and loaded it onto their boat. They gave the Indians beads, copper and other trade goods that they felt equaled the value of the corn.

- Were Captain Martin’s men right or wrong in their actions? Why?
- If wrong, how should they be punished?

Case 3 - For your consideration…….

The Virginia Company council in England recommended establishing a set price for tobacco, with a higher price for first quality and a lower price for poorer quality. The Cape Merchant (person in charge of the storehouse) at Jamestown was responsible for selling the tobacco in England and giving the planter either goods of the proper value or a bill of exchange.

- Do you think the quality and price of tobacco should be regulated? Why or why not?
Case 4- For your consideration…

A number of Indians have started to live and work amongst the English settlements. They bring trade items and some also work for the colonists by hunting deer, fishing and processing corn.

- What are the benefits of Indians living in English settlements?
- What problems could arise from Indians living in English settlements?
- Should Indians be allowed to work and live in the English settlements?

Case 5- For your consideration…. 

Individual colonists had been trading metal tools, English dogs and guns to the Indians. Some had also been freely visiting Indian villages.

- What harm could there be in individual colonists trading English goods to the Indians?
- Why would the colony want to regulate what and who does the trading?

Case 6 -For your consideration…. 

Henry Spelman, who has been an interpreter for the colony for many years, is accused by Robert Poole, also an interpreter, of speaking badly about Governor Yeardley to Opechacanough (Powhatan’s brother who inherited the paramount chiefdom). Spelman successfully worked as a trader and held the rank of Captain. When questioned by the assembly, he denied most of the accusations against him but did admit to telling Opechacanough that a new, better governor would come within a year.

- How would Spelman’s actions hurt the colony?
- He is accused of being a traitor. What punishment should he receive?