

A Problem Statement

Three children – Anne, Bob, Carla – should get a flute about which they are quarreling.

Anne claims the flute on the ground that she is the only one of the three who knows how to play it (the other do not deny this), and that it would be unjust to deny the flute to the only one who can actually play it. If that is all you know the case for giving the flute to Anne would be strong.

Now Bob speaks up, and defends his case for having the flute by pointing out that he is the only one among the three who is so poor that he has no toys of his own. The flute would give him something to play with (the other two concede that they are richer and well supplied with engaging amenities). If you had heard only Bob and none others, the case for giving it to him would be strong.

Carlo also speaks up and points out that she is been working diligently for many months to make the flute with her own labor (the other confirms this), and just when she had finished her work, 'just then', she complains, 'these expropriators came along to try to grab the flute away from me'. If Carla's statement is all you had heard, you might be inclined to give the flute to her in recognition of her understandable claim to something she has made herself.

Group Work:

Nature of social institutions that can address the problem of (just) distribution