

Companion to the English Reaction to the Quebec Act (1774)

Taken from Douglas Baldwin's *Revolution, War, and the Loyalists* (Page 25)

The Quebec Act of 1774 officially recognized the unique way of life of the French Canadians in Quebec. The Act was well received by the *seigneurs* and Roman Catholic clergy, who were relieved that their traditional status was officially supported.

The *habitants*, while generally satisfied that their way of life would not change, were unhappy that they were now officially obliged by the government to pay tithes to the church. The British merchants were pleased that their British landholding system and Protestant religion would be recognized. However, they continued to demand an elected assembly. They also disliked the French seigniorial landholding system.

As the number of English-speaking people in Quebec increased, they petitioned the British Parliament to give them an elected assembly.

However, some of the French-Canadian leaders did not like the idea of an assembly elected by the people. They were afraid that an assembly would mean higher taxes. An assembly might also take away some of the rights they had been given under the Quebec Act.

The most outspoken complaints came from the Thirteen Colonies. One newspaper charged that "a Roman Catholic French Canadian is considered a better subject than a New England Protestant."

Provisions of the *Quebec Act* (1774):

1). There would be no **representative assembly** in Quebec; that is, no elections would be held. Instead, the colony would be governed by the governor and a council of advisors, both French and English, appointed by the governor. They would make laws for the colony.

2). British criminal law, with trial by jury, would replace French criminal law. French law would be applied to all civil matters, such as business and property disputes.

3). The seigniorial system of holding land would be preserved. Seigneurs could continue to collect their dues. However, people could apply for free ownership of land, as in the British system, if they chose.

4). Freedom of religious practice would be granted to both the Roman Catholics and Protestants. Catholics could be judges, lawyers, and jurors. The Roman Catholic church could collect tithes from its members.

5). Quebec's boundaries would be enlarged (see map to right).

6). No one would be allowed to settle in the lands reserved for Aboriginal peoples.

