

Anxious to avoid the expenses of administering another colony, they did not greatly interfere in the local way of life. They did, however, implement a basic administrative system under the terms of the Proclamation Act (1763) and later the Quebec Act (1774). The Quebec Act proclaimed an extension of the colony's boundaries, gave full freedom to the Roman Catholic Church, maintained the seigneurial system of land tenure and permitted the use of French civil law.

During the American Revolution, American troops besieged Quebec City throughout the winter of 1775 in an attempt to seize the colony. They were not successful.

With the coming of peace, attention turned towards internal political reform. The Constitutional Act of 1791 divided Quebec into two provinces — Upper Canada and Lower Canada. It provided for a nominated legislative council and an elected legislative assembly in each province. The first election under this arrangement took place in 1792. Reforms, however, did not keep pace with the growing demand for change.

Heading the reform movement in Lower Canada was Louis-Joseph Papineau, who commanded the respect of the French-speaking majority in the legislative assembly. In 1834 Papineau and his followers issued a long list of grievances for which they

demanded redress. When Britain refused to allow the election of members to the legislative council, a general insurrection broke out in 1837. Fortunately, there was little violence but the rebellion served as a spur to prod the British into re-examining their policies. Lord Durham was appointed Governor-General and given authority to study the problems and recommend solutions.

When he returned to England, Durham proposed that the two Canadas be reunited and granted responsible government. This occurred in 1841 under the provisions of the Act of Union. Five years later, reformers assumed the reins of government.

The reformers, led by Louis Lafontaine, supported the political and cultural recovery of the French Canadians. In 1854 the moderates in the reform party joined forces with those in the Conservative party — the British merchants of Montreal. This small group of political figures and businessmen formulated plans for the confederation of the provinces of British North America, and dominated the political scene until 1896.

The British North America Act of 1867 was a practical compromise in order to resolve certain economic, political and military issues. The Act enshrined French as an official language. "Canada East" became the province of Quebec, with its own provincial government and specified powers in social and civil affairs. The