

to a share in its administration and so the laws of England, which debarred Roman Catholics from holding any public office because of their religion, were declared inapplicable to Canada—a simple oath of allegiance being substituted for the oath required to be taken by His Majesty's Protestant subjects.

Second. It provided for a council of twenty-three members to assist the Governor-General in administering the public business of the province. This gave the opportunity of recognizing the French Canadians officially, and so the Governor-General called to his assistance eight Roman Catholics—a minority to be sure, but a minority whose opinion had to be respected in all matters of administration.

Third. The French and English languages were to be of equal standing in the debates and published ordinances of the council, a privilege not allowed in any other colony of the Empire.

Fourth. While the laws of England as to criminal matters prevailed throughout the province, the law of France as to civil matters prevailed.

Fifth. Wills and testamentary documents could be executed either according to the law of Canada or according to the forms prescribed by the law of England.

Whether the Quebec Act is viewed as a public declaration that Canadians were to enjoy the largest measure of religious toleration or whether it is viewed as an act of diplomacy to foster their attachment to the British Crown, or whether it is taken as a declaration of partnership deliberately formed between His Majesty and his new subjects for the better government of the country, it is a remarkable historical document. Certainly no Act of the British Parliament affecting one of her colonies ever displayed more foresight and statesmanship, and although it may not be that we owe the permanency of our Canadian possessions to the passing of that Act, it is more than probable that had the British Parliament not adopted the conciliatory spirit towards the Canadians, of which it was the expression, the destiny of Canada might have been completely changed. To lose the loyal attachment of the Canadian clergy and the Canadian habitant was to lose Canada, and were it not for the concessions of the Quebec Act it is more than probable that the French Canadian would have listened to the appeals made by the revolting colonies, rather than submit to laws that deprived him of the ordinary privileges of citizenship.