

from France and partly of the militia of the province; second, the officials of the French government; third, the habitant, who constituted about three-quarters of the population and who was attached to the soil either as an ordinary trader or as a farmer; and fourth, about one thousand, more or less, of English descent and of the Protestant religion. With the capture of Quebec, the French soldiers and officials returned to France. The Canadians that had been enrolled for defensive purposes returned to their homes to follow their ordinary pursuits. There remained, therefore, only those who had a personal interest in the country and who would naturally be expected to adapt themselves, if possible, to their changed conditions, rather than abandon their farms and their homes and return to France. The only two classes to be feared were the soldiers and officials and with their departure British occupation was greatly facilitated.

Notwithstanding these favourable circumstances it could hardly be expected that a people so long accustomed to a system of laws sanctified by the authority and traditions of their forefathers, should at once accept a new system entirely different in its forms and methods of administration. Moreover, they felt that to be barred by their religion from holding positions of trust to which English-speaking citizens were freely admitted was a reflection upon their manhood and their religion at once hateful and degrading. Accordingly they appealed from time to time to the British government for such modifications in the administration of the laws as would relieve them of these disabilities and for the restoration of their ancient privileges under the French régime.

The circumstances under which this appeal was made were peculiarly favourable. In the British colonies to the south, known as the thirteen colonies, the passing of the Stamp Act of 1765 had created much uneasiness. The New England states were particularly active in their hostility to the imposition of taxes in any form by the British government, and in 1773 public resentment expressed itself in the destruction of a cargo of tea in the Boston harbour. And so British statesmen felt that if to the discontent of the thirteen colonies were added the disaffection of the Canadians, the tenure of their newly acquired possessions in Canada would be very precarious. Accordingly a bill was introduced into the British Parliament known as "The Quebec Act," which superseded the military rule then prevailing.

This Act has some significant features deserving special examination. First. It assumed that the Canadians were to be permanent occupants of the country and were entitled