



Lower Canada: The Beginning of Unrest

Seigneurial System

Many of the people in Lower Canada were farmers. They lived in the countryside where most of the land was owned by the *seigneurs*. Under the *seigneurial system*, the landowners divided up their land into long rectangular parcels that they rented out to habitants or tenants. The **habitants** lived in small houses with one or two rooms.



Inside a habitant's home

They farmed the land and paid the *seigneurs* rent. While the farmers struggled to make a living, wealthy merchants, the clergy, and members of the government lived in grand chateaus and stone houses in the cities. The farmers were not happy with this unfair distribution of wealth.



A merchant's chateau

WORD POWER

seigneurs – men of rank and influence

seigneurial system – a system based on the French feudal system of land distribution and occupancy

Loyalist/Immigrant Influence

Until the early part of the nineteenth century, the majority of the population in this part of Canada was French. Then, during the American Revolution, **British Loyalists** poured into Lower Canada. Next came a wave of **British immigrants**. Soon the number of English speaking people outnumbered the French speaking population.



British immigrants arriving in Lower Canada

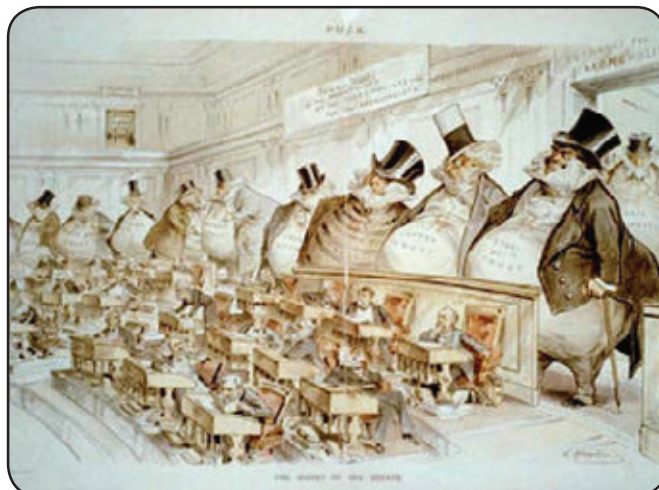
The English-speaking Loyalists and immigrants quickly took control of trade in Lower Canada. French-Canadian merchants were cut off from trading with France as they had done when the region was New France. English merchants were often favoured over French merchants for government jobs.



Lower Canada: The Beginning of Unrest (continued)

The English merchants wanted to build canals on the St. Lawrence River to increase trade opportunities. They also wanted to get rid of the seigneurial system and French law. They expected to get support for this from the British governors.

The French-Canadian leaders resented the growing power of the English merchants. They viewed them as dangerous enemies. The French-Canadian leaders believed the future of French Canada was in farming. They wanted to keep the seigneurial system. They controlled the Legislative Assembly and wanted to increase its power. They also wanted to reduce the power of the British governor.



Political cartoon portraying the Chateau Clique

WORD POWER

elite – the socially superior part of a society; someone who has power or influence because of their position or education

In response to the French-Canadian bid for power, the British governor began to choose his Executive and Legislative Councillors from his supporters. Soon a small group of English-speaking businessmen held most of the power in Lower Canada. This **elite** group was called the **Chateau Clique**. They were friends and acquaintances of the governor. They promoted policies that helped their own business

interests rather than the interests of the French-speaking people. The French who wanted to reduce the governor's power were branded as radicals.

Political Tension

Two political parties were formed during this time. The **Tory Party** supported the English businessmen and their interests. **Parti Canadien** supported the French interests. Over the years, tension increased between these two parties as they each fought for their own interests. There was a brief time when the two parties came together to fight a common enemy. During the War of 1812, the French joined with the English to keep the Americans from moving into British North America.

The Tory Party

After the war was over, the old rivalry started up again. The Tories wanted to create a society similar to Britain's with political power in the hands of the aristocracy. They wanted the economy to be based on local and international trade instead of agriculture. The Tories wanted unconditional attachment to British royalty and the British Empire and a culture influenced by Protestant reform.

Parti Canadien

The Parti Canadien wanted a society based on local sovereignty. They didn't want such close ties with Britain. They wanted an economy based on agriculture, domestic trade, and local markets. The Parti Canadien thought the middle classes should use their power on behalf of the working class. They wanted to continue with the *Custom of Paris*, a code of civil laws used in New France. They also were loyal to the Catholic Church and wanted nothing to do with Protestant reform.

Name _____



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Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. Describe the *seigneurial* system.

2. What contributed to English-speaking people outnumbering French-speaking people?

3. How did the French-Canadian leaders feel about the English merchants?

4. What was the Chateau Clique?

5. Who wanted to get rid of the *seigneurial* system and French law?

6. Why was there political tension between the Tory Party and the Parti Canadien?





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Tell whether the following statements are true or false. Write T for true or F for false.

1. The French joined with the English during the War of 1812. _____
2. The French held most of the power in the government. _____
3. English merchants wanted to build canals on the St. Lawrence River. _____
4. The French believed the future was in farming. _____
5. Merchants lived in small houses with one or two rooms. _____

The *Tories* and the *Parti Canadien* had different goals. Fill in the blanks with the name of the party that matches each stated goal.

6. They wanted an economy based on local and international trade. _____
7. They wanted a society based on local sovereignty. _____
8. They wanted to continue with the Custom of Paris. _____
9. They wanted unconditional attachment to Britain. _____
10. They wanted a culture influenced by Protestant reform. _____



Name _____

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Use the information pages, library resources, and the internet to help you complete your answers.

1. In your opinion, what are some causes of unrest among any group of people?
List four possible causes.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

2. Refer to the pictures of a habitant's home and a merchant's chateau. List differences in their quality of life by taking details from the pictures and using your own ideas.

3. How did the arrival of the British Loyalists and British immigrants contribute to the growing unrest in Lower Canada?

4. Summarize the main features or goals of the two political parties formed at this time.

Features or Goals	Tory Party	Parti Canadien
Who will hold political power in society		
Basis for economy		
Religious Influence		