

The Quebec Act 1774 – 1791

Cause :Unrest and rebellion against Britain in the 13 Colonies

- Beginning in the 1760's there was anger in the Thirteen Colonies toward the British mother country
- Some people in the Thirteen Colonies began to talk openly about rebellion against the British Empire
- The British Government anticipated that they might have to fight their own British colonies to keep them in their empire
- They believed they needed the loyalty and support of the people of Quebec
- As a result Britain took up the recommendations of Governors Murray and Carleton
- Britain gave up the policy of **assimilating** the French and instead tried to **gain their loyalty by granting them rights**.

Goal of the Quebec

- To win the support of the people of Quebec for the British Mother country
- The British authorities wanted the support of :
 1. The French speaking Seigneurs
 2. The French speaking officials of the Catholic Church
 3. The *Canadien* [French]common people
 4. The English speaking merchants of Quebec
- The whole Quebec Act can be seen as a bribe to those groups to get their support in the coming conflict with the Thirteen Colonies.
- They did not want the people of Quebec to join the rebellion of the Thirteen Colonies

Changes to the Territory

- The territory of Quebec was enlarged to include Great lakes, Ohio River Valley, and part of the Mississippi River valley
- This was meant to win the support of the English speaking merchants of Quebec
- The Montreal merchants were now in control of a large area for them to carry out and profit from the fur trade.

Changes to the Laws

- **British criminal law** was kept in place
- **French civil law** was restored
- This was meant to win the **support of the French speaking seigneurs**
- Civil law dealt with property rights
- The seigneurial system was not recognized in British civil law
- The return of French civil law meant that the Seigneurs **had legal title to their land**

Changes to Land Distribution

- The Royal Proclamation had tolerated the seigneurial system but it was not protected in law.
- The Seigneurial System was legally recognized + Seigneurial rights were guaranteed because of the return of French civil law.
- The seigneurs could keep their position as land owners, collect rents, and keep all their privileges.
- The British Township System was kept for new lands granted

Changes to Religion:

- The Royal Proclamation had tolerated the Catholic religion, until it could be replaced with the Protestant Religion
- The Quebec Act granted **full freedom to practice the Catholic religion**
- The church gained the right to appoint new Bishops
- The **Tithe** was restored: The British government would enforce the **church tax** that all Catholics had to pay.
- The Catholic Church was therefore able to grow and expand by funding: churches, Catholic schools, the training of priests etc...
- With these changes the Catholic Church had all the same rights under a British King that they used to have under the French King

Changes to the Structure of Government

- The government structure remained the same
- The legislative assembly was still not created
- But One important Change was made: the Test Act was removed
- This was meant to get the support of the French speaking Seigneurs and middleclass
- They could now be part of the British government: be members of the council and hold government jobs.

Reactions in the Thirteen Colonies

- The Thirteen Colonies became more angry with their British mother country
- They saw the Quebec Act as an insult
- They were angry that Britain would give rights + such easy treatment to a conquered people [French Canadians]
- They were angry that they still had no access to settlement and the fur trade in the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes region.