

Land was also set aside for the Anglican Church under the terms of the Constitutional Act. These lands were known as the **Clergy Reserves**. One-seventh of all public lands were to be set aside for the maintenance of "a Protestant Clergy" in the colonies. Revenue from these lands would be used to pay the costs of churches, schools and other Anglican Church activities in the Canadas. These institutions were intended to play an important part in keeping British traditions alive in Canada.

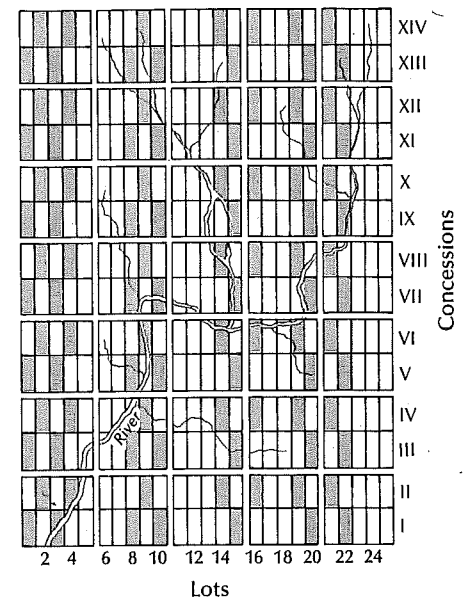
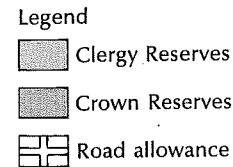
1. Name the three branches of parliamentary government. In your own words, explain the function of each.
2. Who held real power in the British North American colonies after 1791?
3. What were the Crown Reserves? What was their purpose?
4. What were the Clergy Reserves? Why had they been created by the authors of the Constitutional Act? How might Upper Canadians who were not members of the Church of England feel about the Clergy Reserves?

## Upper Canada: The Family Compact, Reformers and Radicals

Social, political and economic power in Upper Canada during the early 1800s lay in the hands of a small group of families which, because of intermarriage among its members, came to be known as the **Family Compact**. It controlled nearly every aspect of public life in Upper Canada. Members of the Family Compact included wealthy landowners, educators and leaders of the Anglican Church. They were closely linked to the lieutenant-governor for Upper Canada, both socially and politically. Nearly all of the Executive Council for the province was drawn from the Family Compact. The oligarchy used its power on the Executive Council to protect its privileged position and to attack its critics. It could veto bills it did not like and even expel its opponents from the Assembly. The Family Compact argued that it was only natural that they should be the leaders of their community. They saw themselves as the superior members of Upper Canadian society, loyal to the Monarchy, pillars of the church and the only ones educated enough to govern properly.

The attitudes of the Family Compact toward public education and other democratic institutions is nicely summed up in the following statement. It was made by a member of the oligarchy

### Layout of a Typical Township in Upper and Lower Canada



*One-seventh of the land of each township in Upper Canada was set aside for Clergy Reserves to support a Protestant clergy. Heated debates over who should benefit from these reserves led Lord Durham to recommend they be eliminated.*



*John Strachan was both an Anglican minister and an educator. He was rector of York when the town was burned by American troops during the War of 1812. What effect might this experience have had on Strachan's views on political reform?*

during debate over a move to bring public school to Upper Canada: "What do you need such schools for? There will always be enough Englishmen to carry out public business. We can leave the Canadians to clean up the bush." The Family Compact had no need for public schools. Their children attended schools such as York's Upper Canada College, run by the Anglican Church. Critics of the Family Compact called the college a "Prepare-a-Tory" school. The Family Compact had a strong ally in the Anglican Church. One of the leading members of the oligarchy was John Strachan, the first Anglican Bishop of Toronto. He strongly supported the Tory cause, and was an outspoken opponent of any reforms. Strachan resisted any changes such as public schooling that might end the Anglican Church's privileged place in the colony.

Through their power on the Executive Council, the Family Compact controlled the sale of Crown lands, including the assignment of the Crown and Clergy Reserves. They also had control over public works projects such as the building of roads, bridges and canals. Its use of this power led the Family Compact into direct conflict with the pioneer farmers of Upper Canada.

Much of the best farmland in the colony was kept for the Crown and Clergy Reserves or sold to members of the Family Compact. They knew that increasing demand for farmland, created by immigration to Upper Canada, would drive up the price of these lands. Many of these lands lay idle, uncleared bush in the midst of struggling pioneer farms. These farmers wanted to buy some of the unused land to increase their capacity to produce food for the growing population of Upper Canada. They were also concerned about the transportation problem created by the idle lands. The uncleared areas blocked road routes, raising the cost of transporting crops to markets. The impact of the Family Compact's control over land grants and road building is shown in the following statement by Robert Gourlay, a spokesman for the grievances of the pioneer farmers.

These blocks of wild land place the actual settler in an almost hopeless condition; he can hardly expect during his lifetime, to see his neighbourhood contain a population sufficiently dense to support mills, schools, post-offices, places of worship, markets or shops; and, without these, civilization retrogrades.

Roads under these circumstances can neither be opened by the settlers, nor kept in proper repair, even if made by the Government. The inconvenience arising from the want of roads is very

great...I met a settler from the Township of Warwick...returning from the grist mill at Westminster, with flour and bran of thirteen bushels of wheat; he had a yoke of oxen and a horse attached to his waggon, and had been absent nine days, and did not expect to reach home until the following evening...he assured me that he had to unload wholly or in part several times, and after driving his waggon through the swamps, to pick out a road through the woods where the swamps and gulleys were fordable, and to carry his bags on his back and replace them in the waggon [to cover] a distance less than 90 miles [150 kilometres].

[Statement made by Robert Gourlay to Lord Durham following the Rebellion of 1837.]

Gourlay organized meetings of farmers to hear their concerns and to help them present their grievances directly to the British government. In response, the Family Compact used their power on the Executive Council to have Gourlay arrested and expelled from the colony. One of Gourlay's most vehement attackers was Bishop Strachan:

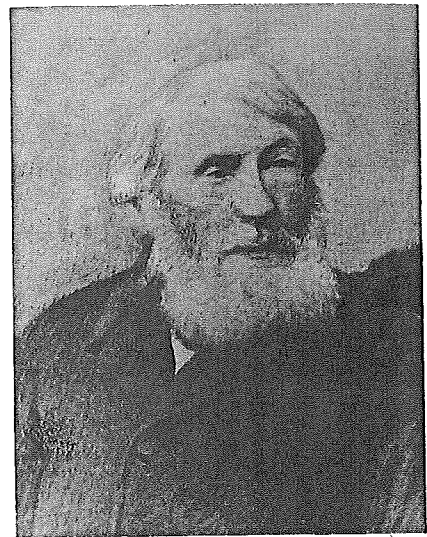
There has been here for a year past a Mr. Gourlay from Fifeshire trying to set us by the ears. He has done a great deal of mischief in the Colony by seditious publications exciting discontent among the people. I saw through him at oncé and opposed him with my usual vigour upon which the Press groaned with his abuse of me. By this he destroyed much of his influence. A character like Mr. Gourlay in a quiet Colony like this where there is little or no spirit of inquiry and very little knowledge may do much harm...by exciting uneasiness irritation & exciting unreasonable hopes.

[Letter written by John Strachan, December 1, 1818.]

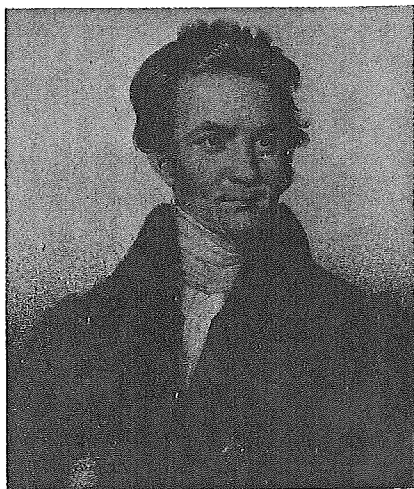
On November 27, 1818, the Family Compact used their control over the Assembly to have passed *An Act to Prevent Certain Meetings in the Province of Upper Canada*. It made the kind of meeting held by Gourlay and the farmers illegal.

Opposition to the Family Compact grew steadily in the 1820s. In the election of 1824, the Tories lost their majority in the Assembly. The victorious Reformers were led by Marshall Bidwell, the son of an American immigrant. They set out to make government and society in Upper Canada more democratic.

One of the Reformers' first acts was to pass a bill allowing Methodist ministers to conduct weddings, a power previously



Robert Gourlay arrived in Upper Canada in 1817. He immediately began to gather information on land policy and life in Upper Canada for an immigrant's guide. Gourlay wanted to use the guide to encourage immigrants to settle on his land holdings. The Family Compact opposed Gourlay's activities and cancelled his land grant. Gourlay's criticism of the Family Compact's actions led to two libel trials and, in 1819, his banishment from Upper Canada on charges of sedition. How did the Reformers use Gourlay's banishment to help their cause?



A Methodist minister and educator, Adolphus Egerton Ryerson was also an important member of the reform movement in Upper Canada. Ryerson is best remembered for his demands for government sponsored schools and compulsory education. What benefits would Upper Canada get from such an education system?

reserved for the Anglican Church. Strachan accused the Methodists of wanting to create an American-style republic. Through the influence of the Family Compact on the Executive Council, the bill was thrown out. Two years later, the Family Compact again used its power to veto a bill approved by the Legislative Assembly calling for the sale of the Clergy Reserves. The proceeds of the sale would have been used to finance public education in the colony.

Religious freedom and public education were becoming important issues in Upper Canada. By the early 1820s, Methodists and other Protestant sects clearly outnumbered the Anglicans in the colony, especially among the pioneer farming families. By supporting greater religious freedom, the Reformers gained the backing of the Methodists in Upper Canada, particularly their leader Egerton Ryerson.

Ryerson wanted important changes made in the way Upper Canada was run, changes that would benefit the farmers, small merchants and workers of the colony. He fought for religious freedom and an end to the privileged place of the Anglican Church in colonial society. Above all, he was a passionate advocate of a free public school system paid for out of government revenues. Like most of the Reformers, Ryerson was loyal to the British Crown and British parliamentary traditions. These men wanted only such rights and freedoms as they felt they were entitled to as British subjects.

Some of the Reformers wanted greater changes than those demanded by men like Bidwell and Ryerson. This group, known as Radicals, had been influenced by republican ideas from France and the United States. They wanted to see an end to British rule in Canada. Led by men like William Lyon Mackenzie, these men wanted to destroy the power of the Family Compact. They also wanted to ensure that no oligarchy could ever again be established in Canada. To achieve this end, Mackenzie called for the establishment of a republican form of government, responsible only to the people.

Mackenzie was a newspaperman, a member of the Legislative Assembly and the first mayor of Toronto. He used all of these roles to attack the Family Compact and to argue for a new system of government for Canada. His newspaper, the *Colonial Advocate*, was a major weapon in his attacks on the oligarchy. One editorial described the Family Compact in this way:

[It is] the most extraordinary collection of sturdy beggars, parsons, priests, pensioners, army people, navy people, place-

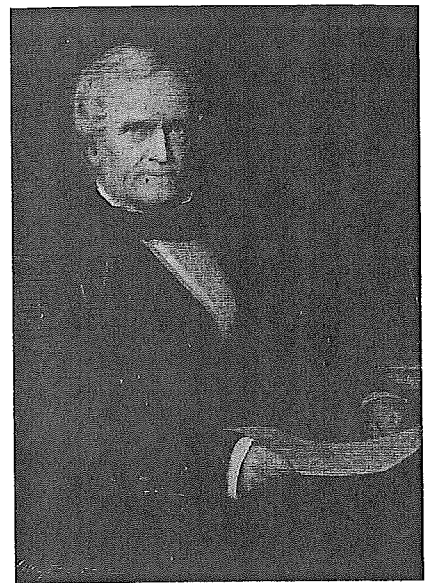
men, bank directors and stock and land jobbers ever assembled to act as a paltry screen for a rotten government. They cost the country about 40 000 pounds a year and the good laws by which it might benefit they tomahawk. They don't like to be called a nuisance.

Indeed, the members of the Family Compact did not like to be called a nuisance. They were enraged by Mackenzie's attacks on their power and privilege. In 1826, a gang of young Tory thugs, many of them sons of Family Compact leaders, broke into the offices of the *Colonial Advocate* and smashed its printing press. This attack only strengthened Mackenzie's demands for change. Accused of libel by the Family Compact, Mackenzie was expelled from the Assembly four times in 1831. Each time, he was reelected by the voters of York.

Conflict between the Tories and the Reformers came to a head in Upper Canada as a result of the election of 1836. The lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada, Sir Francis Bond Head, had emerged as the true leader of the Conservatives. He used his position to campaign against reform, smearing the Reformers by calling them "Yankee-loving traitors." The lieutenant-governor made the key election issue loyalty to the Crown versus republicanism. Ironically, Bond Head was attacking reform at the same time as the Whig government in Britain was introducing major reforms to the mother country's system of government.

The Conservatives were aided in their efforts by the voting system in the colony. Only white adult male landowners could vote. Women, servants, landless workers and non-white people were unable to take part in the election. To further complicate things, voting was not done in secret as it is today. Votes were cast by a show of hands, with balloting being used only if there was no clear winner. Supporters of each faction would use verbal and even physical intimidation to influence the voters. The Tories, for example, were able to use the Orange Order, Irish Protestants fiercely loyal to the Crown, to provide a little muscle on voting day.

The judges and magistrates were often members of the Family Compact. Many Reformers were arrested, while justice turned a blind eye to the Tory mobs. Sir Francis Bond Head's campaign worked: the election of 1836 resulted in a landslide Conservative victory. Many of the moderate Reformers, including Marshall Bidwell and Robert Baldwin, gave up in despair. The Radicals, led by Mackenzie, began to plot an armed rebellion against the Family Compact-controlled colonial government.



*William Lyon Mackenzie used his newspaper, the Colonial Advocate, to demand reform and the end of the oligarchy created by the Family Compact. Frustrated by his inability to bring about change peacefully, Mackenzie organized an armed rebellion in 1837. Do you believe armed rebellion is sometimes necessary? Explain.*

1. What is sedition? Why would the Family Compact regard Gourlay's efforts to help farmers air their grievances as seditious?
2. What does Strachan's letter (page 33) tell you about his views of the majority of Upper Canadian settlers?
3. How might the farmers of Upper Canada have felt after passage of the act prohibiting their meetings?
4. What problems did pioneer farmers in Upper Canada face because of the Crown lands?
5. Why did Ryerson and the Methodists support the Reformers?
6. How did the system of voting in Upper Canada help the Tories rather than the Reformers?

## Lower Canada: The *Château Clique* and The Patriotes

The struggle for reform in Lower Canada, as in Upper Canada, was rooted in conflicts between the elected Legislative Assembly and the powerful oligarchy which controlled the Executive Council. During the early 1830s, the political conflict in Lower Canada was made more complex by the desire of the Canadien majority to protect their culture. The Canadiens felt that their culture was threatened both by the governing oligarchy and by the many English-speaking immigrants who were coming to the colony.

In Lower Canada the conflict was not between Conservatives and Liberals as it was in Britain or Upper Canada. Here, the roots of conflict lay in the history of Quebec and the conquest of that French outpost by the British. As you have learned, both the Quebec Act and the Constitutional Act of 1791 had protected the traditions and culture of French Canada. These traditions found their political expression in the elected Legislative Assembly, which was dominated by the Canadien majority in Lower Canada. The British governor of the colony, however, drew the members of his Executive and Legislative Councils from the British merchant class.

This powerful oligarchy was known as the *Château Clique*. The group took its name from the Château St. Louis, the governor's mansion in Quebec City. Among its members was John Molson, founder of the famous brewing company. The *Château Clique*

avored the building of canals to link the factories of Montreal and Quebec to markets in Upper Canada. As well, they actively fought against traditional land and civil laws in the colony. The *Château Clique* wanted the Canadien population to adopt a British way of life. During the 1830s, the *Château Clique* blocked the efforts of reformers to achieve responsible government in the form of an elected Legislative Council.

The British merchant class was angered by what they saw as the blocks that the Canadien-dominated Assembly placed in the way of freer trade and commerce with Upper Canada. Transportation between the Canadas was difficult in the early 1800s. The growing market in Upper Canada was being served by American suppliers, not the industries of Montreal and Quebec. The Executive Council sought funds to build canals and roads to link the colonies. The taxes to pay for these projects had to be approved by the Assembly.

The British in Lower Canada regarded the Canadiens as ignorant and backward people. They could not understand why the Canadiens kept their old ways of farming, fur trading and doing business. The Canadiens' lack of interest in the new agricultural and industrial methods that had resulted from the Industrial Revolution was incomprehensible to the British merchants.

For their part, the Canadiens regarded the British as arrogant conquerors. They resented the power and privileges enjoyed by the members of the *Château Clique* and other British merchants. They feared that the best lands in the colony would go to English-speaking immigrants. The Canadiens were angered by the low opinion many of the British had of their traditional way of life. Above all, they were concerned that this attitude would lead the British to seek assimilation of the Canadiens into the newcomers' way of life. The French writer de Tocqueville, who visited Lower Canada in 1831, noted that the Canadiens "regard with jealousy the daily arrival of newcomers from Europe. They feel that they will end up being absorbed. . . the English and French merge so little that the latter keep the name Canadiens, the others continuing to call themselves English."

The gap between the two cultures widened as economic conditions worsened in Lower Canada during the 1830s, especially for the ordinary Canadiens. Many of the industrial jobs in the factories and mills of Quebec and Montreal went to British immigrants. When an economic depression began in 1833, unemployment rose in the cities, affecting Canadiens and immigrants alike. In the countryside, the harvest was poor.

*Our Land: Building the West*



*Cornelius Krieghoff sensitively recorded the Canadiens' way of life in his paintings. He lived and travelled in Lower Canada throughout the mid-1800s.*

The Canadiens saw the immigrants as an economic as well as a cultural threat. That threat was made more ominous by outbreaks of cholera brought to Quebec by the immigrants. One cholera outbreak in 1832 killed more than 3000 residents of Quebec City. That same year, English soldiers killed three Canadiens during an election rally. All of these problems served to increase anti-British feelings in the colony.

Such feelings were only part of the growing struggle for reform in Lower Canada, however. Improved travel and communications had brought the educated young men of the colony into contact with new political ideas then finding expression in the United States and France. Well-educated, trained as doctors, lawyers or scholars, these



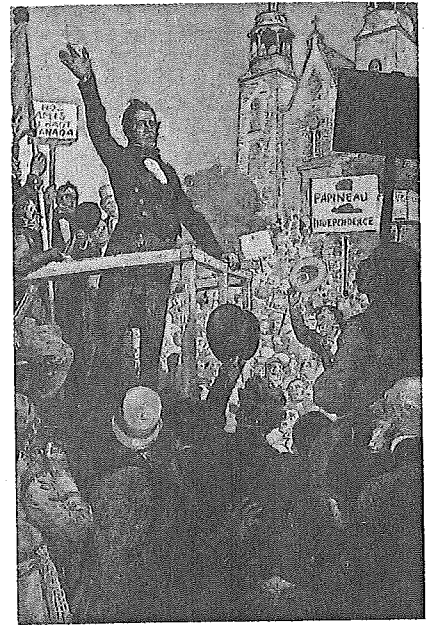
young Canadiens were unable to play a significant role in government because of the power of the English oligarchy. Their frustrations were rooted both in the cultural division between French and English in Lower Canada and in the undemocratic nature of the colonial government.

The reform movement in Lower Canada combined Canadien nationalism with republican ideas of democratic government. These ideas found eloquent expression in a brilliant young lawyer and spellbinding orator, Louis Joseph Papineau. Under his leadership, the Parti Canadien, which held four-fifths of the seats in the Legislative Assembly, often clashed with the governor and his Council. The Assembly steadfastly refused to approve taxes for building canals and roads. Such taxes, they argued, would place heavy burdens on small farmers while helping the wealthy British merchants.

By 1832, the Reformers in Lower Canada had split into two groups, a moderate wing led by John Neilson and a more radical group led by Papineau. The radical wing took the name Patriotes, reflecting the nationalist spirit of their cause. The Patriotes were able to effectively control the Assembly. After the killings during the 1832 election, they passed a motion of censure against the governor. During the same session, the Patriotes approved a bill calling for an elected Legislative Council in the colony. Such a move would have paved the way for responsible government in Lower Canada.

In 1834, the Assembly went even further in its demands for responsible government. The Patriotes approved a list of ninety-two resolutions outlining the Canadien grievances over the way the colony was governed. They again demanded an elected Legislative Council, and sought all of the powers and privileges enjoyed by members of the British Parliament. With the ninety-two resolutions as their platform, the Patriotes won an overwhelming victory in the election of 1834. A resolution calling for responsible government was again approved by the Assembly in 1836.

In 1837, Britain's colonial secretary, Lord Russell, responded to these demands with ten resolutions of his own. While acknowledging the need for increased popular support for the government, Russell firmly rejected any form of responsible government for the colony. His response strengthened the reformers' demands for greater democracy, not only in Lower Canada but in Upper Canada and Nova Scotia as well. It also served to dangerously widen the gap between the British and Canadiens in Lower Canada.



*This portrayal of Louis Joseph Papineau was painted by C.W. Jefferys long after the rebellions of 1837. What is Jefferys trying to say about Papineau? What event do you think has just taken place?*

### THE BRITISH VIEW OF THE CANADIENS

The following description of the Canadiens was written in the early 1800s and shows the attitude held by many British residents of Lower Canada.

The French Canadiens are an inoffensive, quiet people, possessed of little industry and less ambition. . . . The Habitans [sic] content themselves with following the footsteps of their forefathers. They are satisfied with a little, because a little satisfies their wants. They are quiet and obedient subjects, because they feel the value and benefit of the government under which they live. . . . They are religious from education and habit, more than from principle. . . . They live in happy mediocrity, without a wish or endeavour to better their condition. . . .

The Habitans have almost every resource

within their own families. . . they make their own bread, butter and cheese; their soap, candles and sugar. . . . They build their own houses, barns, stables and ovens. Make their own carts, wheels, ploughs, harrows, and canoes. . . .

A Canadien will seldom or never purchase that which he can make himself; and I am of the opinion that it is this saving spirit of frugality alone, which has induced them to follow the footsteps of their fathers, and which has prevented them from profiting by the modern improvements. . . . and the new implements of agriculture introduced by the English settlers.

[John Lambert, *Travels through Lower Canada, and the United States of America in the years 1806, 1807 and 1808*, London, 1810.]

The reform movement in Lower Canada was much more anti-British in sentiment than its counterpart in Upper Canada. The reformist Canadiens found support from Irish Catholics who had come to Quebec in the Great Migration. Both the Irish and the Canadiens felt oppressed by their Protestant, British rulers. Papineau was joined on Patriote speakers' platforms by men like Edmund O'Callaghan, who wrote in his newspaper, *The Vindicator*, on April 14, 1837: "The British government have decided to make Lower Canada the Ireland of North America. One duty now remains—let them study the history of the American Revolution."

1. What was the name given to the oligarchy in Lower Canada? How did their views of how Lower Canada should be governed differ from those of the Canadiens?
2. What reforms were Papineau and his Patriotes seeking?
3. Why were many Irish immigrants to Lower Canada willing to support the Patriotes?