Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1976) reviews the work of this important institution. W. J. Eccles has also written a short book on *Canadian Society during the French Regime* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1968). Three important articles by G. Frégault, J. Hamelin, and W. J. Eccles are reprinted in *Society and Conquest,* edited by Dale Miquelon (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1977), in the section "The Debate on the Economy and Society of New France," pp. 85–131.

For a first-hand account of New France in 1750, students might consult the English translation of Peter Kalm's *Travels in North America* (2 vols., New York: Dover Publications, 1964).

Society and the Frontier*

W. J. ECCLES

Of the more tangible factors that influenced Canadian society there can be no doubt that geography was very important. The St. Lawrence River and certain of its tributaries dominated life in the colony. The land suitable for agricultural settlement stretched in a narrow band along the St. Lawrence, wider on the south shore than on the north. Near Quebec the Laurentian Shield, scraped nearly bare long ago by an advancing ice age, meets the river. Below this point only small pockets of land at river mouths were suitable for agriculture. Above Quebec, on the north shore, the Shield draws away from the river to a distance of some forty miles at Montreal. On the south shore the belt of fertile land is quite wide between Quebec and Montreal but becomes a narrow ribbon along the river toward Gaspé. West of Montreal there is also good land but on both the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, rapids make communications difficult. Consequently throughout the French regime land settlement was concentrated in the St. Lawrence Valley from a point a few miles west of Montreal to a little below Quebec, with pockets of settlement on both sides lower down the river.

Prior to 1663 the number of settlers and the amount of land cleared grew very slowly. In 1634 the first seigneurial grant was made to Robert Giffard by Richelieu's Company of New France. During the ensuing thirty years some seventy other seigneuries were granted. The company sent a few settlers to the colony but in the main let this responsibility fall to the seigneurs who, for the most part, lacked the means to engage in a large-scale immigration program. The religious orders did bring out a goodly number of servants, laborers, and settlers; and the crown from time to time sent detachments of soldiers to aid in the colony's defense. By these means the population slowly grew, and stretches of forest near the three areas of settlement, Quebec, Trois-Rivières, and Montreal, were

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cleared back from the shores of the river. In 1640 the total French population in the colony — settlers, soldiers, clergy, fur trade company employees — numbered only about 240; by 1663, largely as a result of the efforts of the religious orders, this number had increased to some 2500. After the latter date, under the stimulus of the crown, settlement increased very rapidly; by 1669 the population had increased by two thirds, and by the end of the century it was at approximately the 15,000 mark, doubling thereafter each generation to a total of some 70,000 at the Conquest.[1]

The St. Lawrence dictated the pattern of settlement in another way. It was the main means of communication in the colony, in summer by canoe or sailing barque, in winter by sleigh on the ice. The need for roads was thus obviated until the eighteenth century. Every settler desired land on the river, and the land holdings early took on the peculiar pattern that has endured to the present day, that of narrow strips running back from the river. Survey lines separating seigneuries ran at right angles to the river and as the generations succeeded each other the individual holdings became increasingly narrow. According to the law of the land, the *Coutume de Paris*, a seigneur's eldest son inherited the manor house and half the domain land; the rest was divided among the remaining children. The children of the humbler settlers, the *censitaires*, inherited equal parts of the parental land. After a few generations many of the individual holdings became too narrow to be worked efficiently, and in 1745 the intendant forbade anyone to build a house or barn on land narrower than one and a half arpents (approximately 100 yards) by thirty or forty linear arpents in depth. Those who contravened the *ordonnance* were fined 100 *livres* and their buildings were torn down at their expense.

By the eighteenth century the pattern was well established. Along both banks of the St. Lawrence from Quebec to Montreal the farms stretched back from the river, the houses and barns on the river bank spaced a few hundred yards apart. Every few miles there was a seigneurial manor house and a mill, and eventually a steep-roofed stone church. Later in the century concessions were taken up in the second range and another row of narrow strip farms stretched back from the rear of the first, with a roadway between the two. To anyone traveling by river up to Montreal nearly all of New France passed in review.

This pattern of land settlement was not without its disadvantages. Until the end of the seventeenth century the Iroquois were an almost constant menace, and with the homes spaced in this fashion mutual aid in times of attack was almost impossible. Individual farms and their occupants could be destroyed all too easily before aid could be mustered. While the Iroquois assaults were at their height stockaded forts had to be built in the exposed seigneuries where the people could take refuge with their livestock, abandoning their homes to the depredations of the enemy. Attempts by some of the royal officials to have the settlers live in villages with their concessions radiating out like spokes of a wheel, were not very successful.

The Canadians insisted on having river frontage and living apart, lords of their own little domains, with access to the wider world beyond by way of the river.

By the mid-eighteenth century the farm houses in the first range and the churches, were nearly all of stone, thick-walled, substantial; steep Norman roofs were modified by a graceful curving wide eave, to afford shade in the hot Canadian summers. Peter Kalm, a Swedish professor of natural history who visited Canada in 1749, going by boat from Montreal to Quebec remarked:

> The country on both sides was very delightful to-day, and the fine state of its cultivation added to the beauty of the scene. It could really be called a village, beginning at Montreal and ending at Quebec, which is a distance of more than one hundred and eighty miles, for the farmhouses are never above five arpents and sometimes but three apart, a few places excepted. The prospect is exceedingly beautiful when the river flows on for several miles in a straight line, because it then shortens the distance between the houses, and makes them form one continued village . . . We sometimes saw *windmills* near the farms. They were generally built of stone, with a roof of boards, which together with its wings could be turned to the wind.[2]

The principal crop grown was wheat but the climate of the St. Lawrence Valley was not particularly suitable for this cereal. Heavy rains sometimes caused serious loss from smut; early frosts were a constant menace; and plagues of caterpillars occasionally destroyed everything growing. Yet crop failures appear to have been no more frequent than in France, where they were anticipated, on an average, once in five years.[3] In the early years the yield was high, the natural result of rich virgin soil. By the mid-eighteenth century it had declined considerably, despite the increase in the number of cattle and the consequent increased use of manure.

Peter Kalm was very critical of the inefficient agricultural methods he had observed in the English colonies. He was not less critical of those in New France; they both compared unfavorably with farming methods that he had studied in England, which he stated were the most advanced in Europe. One factor that militated against efficient agricultural production, in New France as in the English colonies, was the chronic shortage of labor. When able-bodied men could obtain land very cheaply, they were not inclined to work for others, except at excessively high wages. The wages paid skilled tradesmen were also high, resulting in a drift from the country to the three towns, which contained 25 percent of the colonial population. A much more important factor, however, was the large number of men, of necessity the young and physically fit, who were continually out of the colony on voyages to the west.

All the evidence indicates that the Canadian *habitants* and the laboring class in the towns enjoyed a higher standing of living and much more personal freedom than did their counterparts in Europe. This undoubtedly accounts, to some degree, for the difference in their attitudes and character that visitors from Europe all remarked on. But what seems to have had an even greater influence was their frequent contact, on terms of equality, with the Indian nations. Nor did they have to voyage far for this contact.

Within the confines of the colony, or close by, were several resident Indian bands. Near Quebec, at Lorette, resided a band of Huron, survivors of the 1649 diaspora. A few miles south of Quebec was the Abenaki village of St. François, removed from Acadia to protect the colony's southern approaches from Anglo-American incursions up the Connecticut River. Near Montreal were two Indian settlements: the Mission Iroquois at Sault St. Louis and the Sulpician mission that had first been established on the lower slopes of Mount Royal, then, as the town grew, had been moved first to the north side of the island, later to the western tip, and finally across the Lake of Two Mountains to Oka. The Mission Iroquois at Sault St. Louis (Caugnawaga to the Iroquois) were originally Mohawks who had been converted to Christianity by the Jesuits and had then removed to New France the better to preserve their new faith.[4] Members of other of the Iroquois nations, after conversion, subsequently moved to Caugnawaga to spare themselves the constant taunts of their fellow tribesmen who had remained pagan.

Another reason for this Iroquois defection to Canada was the desire to avoid the Albany rum traders. Not all the Indians were incapable of resisting the temporary delights that intoxication brought; the authorities of both New France and New York were frequently asked by the chiefs of Iroquois and Algonkin nations to keep liquor away from their villages. The governors of New France, for the most part, did their best to comply and managed to curb the abuse to a considerable degree. The same could not be said of the authorities at Albany. There, rum and whiskey of such appalling quality that it was little better than poison was the main item of trade, used to get the Indians drunk before they traded their furs and then defraud them. This practice was so common that the Dutch traders at Albany were little more than Canada's secret weapon, for although many of the western Indians would bypass the French posts to go to Albany where they were given all the liquor they could drink,[5] they were not so besotted that they did not later realize the consequences. This is not to say that there were no Canadian traders willing to use liquor in the same way in their commercial dealings with the Indians. The Jesuit missionaries at Sault St. Louis waged a constant struggle to keep such traders away from their charges, and the Oka mission had removed to this site largely to keep the converts away from the taverns and unscrupulous purveyors.

The members of this latter mission were a mixture of Iroquois and northern Algonkin; the common factor was their conversion to Christianity. During the colonial wars these warriors, particularly those of Sault St. Louis, performed valiant service; indeed, the authorities at Albany were greatly concerned lest most of the Five Nations should remove to Canada. Had this occurred Albany and all the northern settlements would have had to be abandoned. Although in expeditions against the villages of the Five Nations the Mission Iroquois could not be depended on — they frequently gave their kinsmen warning — the devastating raids on the settlements of New England were carried out by war parties composed largely of these domiciled tribesmen, combined with Canadian militia, and led by officers

in the colonial regulars, the Troupes de la Marine. Thus the Canadians were closely associated with the Indians, waging war after their fashion, using their techniques and becoming as adept in the harsh, cruel methods as any Iroquois or Abenaki. There was therefore a demonstrable degree of truth in the opinion of the Canadians expressed by one French officer: "They make war only by swift attacks and almost always with success against the English who are not as vigorous nor as adroit in the use of fire arms as they, nor as practiced in forest warfare."[6]

In peacetime, too, the Canadians were in constant association with the Indians. The Indians were frequent visitors to Montreal, and to prevent constant blood baths, the intendant had to set aside certain taverns for the Indian trade, allocated by nation, and strictly regulated. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the Canadians early adopted much of the Indian way of life and became imbued with some of their character traits. Native foods such as corn, squash, and pumpkins found ready acceptance. Indian means of travel — the snowshoe, toboggan, and canoe — were quickly mastered. Many of the Canadians, who were inveterate pipe smokers, preferred to mix their locally grown tobacco with the inner bark of the cherry or dogwood tree, a custom borrowed from the Indians. In their mode of dress the *habitants* copied the Indians, with an effect rather startling to European eyes. The women, except when dressed up fine for Sunday mass, wore a short jacket or blouse and a short skirt which, Peter Kalm several times observed "does not reach to the middle of their legs."

It was during their frequent trips to the west that the Canadians were most exposed to the Indian way of life. Immediately following the establishment of royal government in 1663 the population of the colony expanded rapidly, from approximately 2500 to an estimated 15,000 by the end of the century. Of the latter number as many as five hundred of the active males were always off in the west on trading expeditions. It was during these years that senior officials, newly arrived from France, began to comment on the striking difference between the Canadians and their peers in France. Inevitably, these officials were first struck by what seemed to them the deleterious social and economic effects of the metamorphosis.

The Marquis de Denonville, governor general from 1685 to 1689, was appalled by certain attitudes and habits of the Canadians. Instead of laboring on the land, they preferred to spend their lives in the bush, trading with the Indians, where their parents, the *curés*, and the officials could not govern them, and where they lived like savages. Even when they returned to the colony these youths showed a shocking proclivity for going about half naked in the hot weather, as did the Indians. "I cannot emphasize enough, my lord, the attraction that this Indian way of life has for all these youths," Denonville wrote to the minister. But he then went on to say, "The Canadians are all big, well built, and firmly planted on their legs, accustomed when necessary to live on little, robust and vigorous, very self willed and inclined to dissoluteness; but they are witty and vivacious."[7] The intendant Jean Bochart de Champigny in 1691 wrote in

much the same vein, stating, "It is most unfortunate that Canadian youths, who are vigorous and tough, have no inclination for anything but these voyages where they live in the forest like Indians for two or three years at a time, without benefit of any of the sacraments."[8]

Peter Kalm in 1749 was also much impressed by the martial qualities of the Canadians, acquired through their frequent sojourns in the west. He noted that they were exceptional marksmen: "I have seldom seen any people shoot with such dexterity as these. . . . There was scarcely one of them who was not a clever marksman and who did not own a rifle." He then went on:

> It is inconceivable what hardships the people of Canada must undergo on their hunting journeys. Sometimes they must carry their goods a great way by land. Frequently they are abused by the Indians, and sometimes they are killed by them. They often suffer hunger, thirst, heat, and cold, and are bitten by gnats, and exposed to the bites of snakes and other dangerous animals and insects. These (hunting expeditions) [*sic*] destroy a great part of the youth in Canada, and prevent the people from growing old. By this means, however, they become such brave soldiers, and so inured to fatigue that none of them fears danger or hardships. Many of them settle among the Indians far from Canada, marry Indian women, and never come back again.[9]

Some of the Jesuit missionaries in the west took a much more jaundiced view of the effects of the close relations between the Canadians and the Indians. Fathers St. Cosme and Carheil at Michilimackinac made that post appear, from their description, a veritable Sodom or Gomorrah, where the only occupations of the Canadians, apart from trading furs, were drinking, gambling, and lechery. Things had come to such a pass that the *coureurs de bois* took Indian women with them rather than men on their trading expeditions. The men claimed that these women worked for lower wages than men demanded, and were willing to perform such chores as cutting firewood and cooking. The missionaries refused to be persuaded that other fringe benefits were not involved.[10] The governor general Vaudreuil, although he did not support the Jesuit proposal to keep the Canadians and Indians as far apart as possible, was strongly opposed to mixed marriages. He claimed that the children of mixed blood incorporated the worst character traits of both races and were a constant source of trouble. He therefore issued orders forbidding such marriages at Detroit, the main French post in the west at that time (1709).[11]

These complaints on the part of the missionaries have to be taken with a pinch of salt. To them chastity, or failing this monogamy with the benefit of the marriage sacrament, was the ideal. They expected these *voyageurs* who, if married, had left their wives in the colony to live like monks while in the west. The Indians had different moral values and chastity was not among them. Father Charlevoix, who was not a missionary, took a more tolerant view of Canadian society in the 1740s. He commented:

> Our Creoles are accused of great avidity in amassing, and indeed they do things with this in view, which could hardly be believed if they were not seen. The journeys they undertake; the fatigues they undergo; the dangers to which they expose themselves, and the efforts they make surpass all imagination. There are, however, few less interested, who dissipate with greater facility what has cost them so much pains to acquire, or who testify less regret at having lost it. Thus there is some room to imagine that they commonly undertake such painful and dangerous journeys out of a taste they have contracted for them. They love to breathe a free air, they are early accustomed to a wandering life; it has charms for them, which make them forget past dangers and fatigues, and they place their glory in encountering them often. . . . I know not whether I ought to reckon amongst the defects of our Canadians the good opinion they entertain of themselves. It is at least certain that it inspires them with confidence, which leads them to undertake and execute what would appear impossible to many others. . . . It is alleged they make bad servants, which is owing to their great haughtiness of spirit, and to their loving liberty too much to subject themselves willingly to servitude.[12]

These observations on the cupidity of the Canadians, coupled with their spendthrift attitude, are significant for these same traits were quite pronounced among the Indians. Like the Indian, the Canadian did not see any merit in storing up worldly goods; both looked down on those who did, and up to those who spent their money ostentiously on good living. The Canadians, too, became proud, independent, and improvident, glorying in their physical strength, their hardihood, and their contempt for danger, caring little for the morrow. One French officer commented, in 1757:

> "They are not thrifty and take no care for the future, being too fond of their freedom and their independence. They want to be well thought of and they know how to make the most of themselves. They endure hunger and thirst patiently, many of them having been trained from infancy to imitate the Indians, whom, with reason, they hold in high regard. They strive to gain their esteem and to please them. Many of them speak their language, having passed part of their life amongst them at the trading posts."[13]

It would seem an obvious conclusion that the Canadians had acquired this attitude from the Indians, and were able to do so because the necessities of life were relatively easily come by in Canada. In other words, this character trait was a product of relative affluence and the frontier environment. It was to no small degree the fact that the Canadians did come to share this attitude with the Indians that their individual relations with them were usually better than were those of the Anglo-Americans. Ruette D'Auteuil, the attorney general at Quebec, spoke the truth for his day when he claimed that, the price of trade goods being equal, the Indians preferred to have dealings with the French rather than with the English.[14] This view was later corroborated by a British commentator who stated that, "the French have found some secret of conciliating the affections of the savages, which our traders seem stranger to, or at least take no care to put it in practice."[15]

Not only did the Canadians travel to the far west, they also voyaged northeastward, serving as crews on fishing boats in the Gulf and in the seal- and whale-hunting expeditions along the coast of Labrador. There, too, they came in frequent contact with Indians, and also with the Eskimo. In wartime they served on privateers, preying on shipping along the New England coast. French privateer captains frequently called at Quebec to take on crews, Canadians being very highly regarded for their toughness and bellicosity.

Canadians in all sections of the colony were accustomed to make trips to distant parts of the continent and to live among peoples of an entirely different culture. The whole continent from Labrador and Hudson Bay to the Rocky Mountains and the Gulf of Mexico was their world. Unlike their counterparts in Europe who rarely moved beyond the confines of their native parish, there was nothing parochial about them; they were men of broad horizons and a continental outlook able to accommodate themselves to almost any conditions anywhere. Were life to become too restrictive in the settlements along the St. Lawrence or were a wife to nag too constantly, some of them at least could hire out as *voyageurs* for the west or as crew on a voyage to Labrador, France, or the West Indies. Even those who never made such a trip could feel that the opportunity was there, and this must have given them a sense of freedom. They could not help but hear the tales of those who had voyaged far afield, of the strange peoples with stranger customs in these distant lands. They, too, shared the experience, vicariously.

Royal officials in the eighteenth century, upon first arriving in the colony, were quick to remark that the Canadians had become a distinct people with values and manners markedly at variance with those of the same class in the mother country. Usually they were quite taken aback by the attitudes and way of life of the Canadians. Only after they had been in the colony for a few years did they come to appreciate the positive side of what had at first seemed a society and people sadly in need of discipline and reform. It was the free and easy, seemingly dissolute, ways of the Canadians, their independent attitude, their insistence on being led not driven, that irked the officials, both civil and military. Other observers were struck by their profligacy, their feast or famine attitude, their recklessness. A Sulpician priest upon arrival in the colony in 1737 remarked that the bulk of the people — military officers, merchants, artisans, and *habitants* alike — were "as poor as artists and as vain as peacocks" and spent every sou they had on ostentatious living. He was shaken to see country girls who tended cows during the week, on Sundays bedecked in lace and hoop skirts, wearing their hair in the very elaborate, high-piled style known then as *à la Fontange*.[16]

Despite these shortcomings, all observers agreed that the Canadians were tough and hardy, gloried in feats of endurance that made Europeans blanch, could travel from one end of the continent to another while living off the land, and had no equal in forest warfare. It was also noted that these same men, when in their homes, were uncommonly courteous, with a natural air of gentility more usual among the nobility than the lower classes.[17] In this respect they compared very favorably with their counterparts, the peasants of France and the settlers in the English colonies. Peter Kalm was particularly struck by this and in his journal he noted that:

> The inhabitant of Canada, even the ordinary man, surpasses in politeness by far those people who live in these English provinces. . . . On entering one of the peasant's houses, no matter where, and on beginning to talk with the men or women, one is quite amazed at the good breeding and courteous answers which are received, no matter what the question is. . . . Frenchmen who were born in Paris said themselves that one never finds in France among country people the courtesy and good breeding which one observes everywhere in this land. I heard many native Frenchmen assert this.[18]

It would, of course, be very easy to ascribe these peculiarities to the frontier environment of New France. There can be no doubt that the frontier had a good deal to do with this, but the changes that took place in Canadian society were very complex. It is therefore necessary to examine conditions in the colony closely to discover the various elements that differed from those of France and then decide which ones were occasioned by the frontier.

Perhaps the basic factor was the abundance of free, fertile land, and the peculiar terms of land tenure under the seigneurial regime. This meant that the Canadian *habitants* were assured of as much land as they could cultivate, and they paid for it only very modest seigneurial dues, if they paid any at all, amounting to less than 10 percent of their annual income from the land.[19] Apart from this obligation, and the tithe for the church, fixed by royal decree at one twenty-sixth of the wheat grown, the *habitants* paid no other taxes. Labor service for the seigneurs, in the form of *corvées*, was very rarely imposed and was, in fact, a violation of the *Coutume de Paris*. In the few seigneuries where it was imposed it consisted of one day's labor in March or an exemption payment of two *livres*. Parish and royal *corvées* for work on the seigneurial common land, roads, bridges, or fortifications were a form of taxation but they usually amounted to not more than three or four days of labor a year, and the seigneur was supposed to do his share, under the supervision of the militia captain.

Unlike the peasant in France who spent his life sweating, scrimping, cheating, and saving to put aside enough money to buy a small piece of land or to purchase exemption from manorial obligations, and who had to keep his little hoard well hidden, wearing rags, living in a hovel, giving every appearance of near starvation to prevent the tax collectors from seizing his savings, the Canadian could spend what he had earned without a care. He could buy land for his sons so as to have them near him and spare them the necessity of clearing virgin forest on a new seigneury, or he could spend his earnings on consumer goods and entertainment. Whereas the economics of the situation would tend to make the French peasant mean and grasping, the Canadian could afford to be openhanded, with little care for the morrow.

In 1699 the intendant Jean Bochart de Champigny commented that for the most part the *habitants* lived well, enjoying the right to hunt and fish, privileges that were stringently denied their European counterparts. In that age wood and leather were vital commodities; the Canadians had ample supplies of both. Canadians who moved to France complained bitterly of the shortage and high cost of firewood, and declared that they suffered far more from the damp winter cold there than they ever had in Canada. In the eighteenth century the intendant Gilles Hocquart remarked

that no one starved in Canada. Of few lands in Europe could this have been said. The normal consumption of meat was half a pound per person a day, and of white wheat bread, two French pounds a day. Moreover, the climate allowed the Canadians to keep plentiful supplies of meat, fish, and game frozen hard for use throughout the winter; but a mid-winter thaw that lasted too long could be calamitous. At the town markets fish were sold frozen and cut with a saw. Eels, taken at Quebec by the thousand, were a staple food; smoked or salted, they were described by Frontenac as the "*habitants*' manna." They were also a major export item to France, being considered far better than the European variety. Ice houses were common, making possible iced drinks and desserts all summer, not just for the wealthy as in France, but for the majority of the population. The colored ices served by the French in hot weather were a source of wonderment to visiting Indians when entertained by the governor, and their effect on the decayed teeth of certain elderly chiefs was electric.

The vitamin content of the Canadian diet, being much richer in protein, was considerably higher than that of the peasants and urban working class in France, who had to exist on coarse bread and vegetable stews with meat only on very rare occasions.[20] In Europe the bulk of the population went to bed hungry most nights. Such was rarely the case in Canada. Mme. Marie-Isabelle Bégon, widow of the governor of Trois-Rivières, who in 1749 moved from Montreal to the family estate near Rochefort querulously asked, "Where are those good partridges we left for the servants? I would gladly eat them now."[21] It is not surprising that the fine physical stature of the Canadians occasioned frequent comment from persons recently come from France. In fact, the Canadians were better fed then than a sizable percentage of North Americans are today:

If the Canadians had been willing to work hard, they could all have been very prosperous. Some of the royal officials, charged with improving the colonial economy, declared that the men showed a marked distaste for hard work and that the unbridled vanity of their womenfolk kept them poor. In 1699 Champigny noted: "The men are all strong and vigorous but have no liking for work of any duration; the women love display and are excessively lazy."[22] Denonville, thirteen years earlier, had also remarked that the indolence of the men and the desire of the women to live like gentle ladies kept the people poor and the colony's economy backward. Such comments have to be considered in context.

The Canadian *habitant* could provide for his basic needs without too much effort, and he preferred to devote his extra time, not to produce an agricultural surplus to please the intendant or to add to his own store of worldly goods, but to the relaxed enjoyment of his leisure hours. He would grow enough flax or hemp to supply his own needs, but frequently declined to raise a surplus for export. Rather than raise more cattle, he raised horses; by the early eighteenth century all but the poorer families had a carriage and sleigh for social occasions, and every youth had his own horse, used not for the plow but for racing, or to pay calls on the

neighborhood girls. During the War of the Spanish Succession the governor and intendant became concerned over this, claiming that in winter the men no longer used snowshoes because they always traveled by horse and sleigh. It was difficult, they stated, to find enough men who could use snowshoes when they were needed for war parties against New England. The question might well be asked; how many peasants in Europe owned horses and carriages, let alone used them for mere social purposes. The average horse cost forty *livres* (roughly $80.00 in today's money) and a good one a hundred *livres* or more,[23] thus the Canadian *habitants* were relatively affluent, and this could not help but have influenced their social attitudes.

Given these conditions it is hardly surprising that the Canadians were by no means as submissive or even respectful, on occasion, toward their social superiors as was thought fitting. As early as 1675 the members of the Sovereign Council were incensed by derogatory graffiti on walls in Quebec, and several years later the intendant had to threaten stern action against those who composed, distributed, or sang songs that he regarded as libelous and defamatory of certain prominent persons in the colony. This last, however, might be regarded as merely the continuance of an old French tradition that had flourished in the days of the *Mazarinades*. Thus, rather than the frontier environment, economic affluence and the French temperament were the more significant factors here.

Much is made of the prevalence of lawlessness on the Anglo-American frontier. To a limited degree this was also true of New France, and it is significant that it was at Montreal, the fur trade and military base, the main point of contact between European and Indian cultures, more than at Quebec, that respect for law and order was sometimes lacking. In 1711 the governor and intendant had to establish a police force in Montreal, consisting of one lieutenant and three archers, to make the citizens keep the peace and to control drunken Indians. An educated soldier in the colonial troops, newly arrived in Canada, remarked that the citizens of Montreal called those of Quebec "sheep," and that the character of the latter was gentler and less proud. The Quebecers reciprocated by calling the men of Montreal "wolves," a label that the soldier thought apt since the Montrealers spent much of their time in the forest among the Indians. In 1754 an officer recommended that Quebec men be employed to transport supplies to the Ohio forts because they were much "gentler" and almost as vigorous as those from the Montreal area.

Despite the frequent tavern brawls and duels, the incidence of crimes of violence was not great. But what is much more significant is that, given the nature of the populace, accustomed to the relatively unrestrained, wild, free life that the fur trade afforded, very rarely was there any overt resistance to authority. On the few occasions when the people protested openly and vigorously something done, or not done, the authorities were able to subdue them quickly without recourse to punitive measures. Most of these manifestations — some five in all — were occasioned by high prices

charged for certain commodities, leading the people to believe that the merchants were profiteering and that the authorities were delinquent in not taking steps to stop them. The heaviest penalty inflicted on the leaders of these "seditious gatherings" appears to have been less than two months in jail.[24] The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the Canadian people had little to complain about, but when they did complain too vigorously, order was maintained without the overt use of force.

The attitude of the Canadians toward the religious authorities makes it plain that their opinions had to be taken into account. When it was decided, immediately after the inauguration of royal government in 1663, to impose tithes on the people for the support of a secular clergy, the bishop stipulated that it be at the rate of one thirteenth of the produce of the land, payable in wheat. The people protested vigorously, claiming this to be more than they could afford. The bishop reduced his demand to one twentieth, but the *habitants* and seigneurs would agree to pay only one twenty-sixth of their wheat, not of all their produce, with a five year exemption for newly settled concessions. With this the clergy had to be satisfied. That it was not enough is made plain by the fact that the crown had to provide the clergy with an annual subsidy to make up the difference between what the tithe produced and what the *curés* needed. By the 1730s however, as more land came into production, many of the parish priests were relatively well off.

Further evidence that the Canadians were anything but subservient to clerical authority is provided by the frequent *ordonnances* of the intendant ordering the *habitants* of this or that parish to behave with more respect toward the cloth; to cease their practice of walking out of church as soon as the *curé* began his sermon; of standing in the lobby arguing, even brawling, during the service; of slipping out to a nearby tavern; of bringing their dogs into church and expostulating with the beadle who tried to chase them out. Frequently the bishop thundered from the pulpit against the women who attended mass wearing elaborate coiffures and low-cut gowns. But all to no avail; décolletage remained that of the Paris salons. When Bishop St. Vallier somehow learned that the female members of his flock wore nothing but petticoats under their gowns he was horrified. In a curiously phrased pastoral letter he demanded that they immediately cease to imperil their immortal souls in this manner.[25] What the response was is not known. And a practice that might be advanced in support of the thesis that the frontier bred initiative was the Canadian custom of *mariage à la gaumine*, a form of "do it yourself" marriage ceremony which both the clergy and the civil authorities frowned on severely.[26]

At the upper end of the social scale, the most significant feature of this Canadian society was the aristocratic and military ethos that dominated it. This was not unique to Canada; it was part of the French old régime heritage. In the seventeenth century the aim of the rising, powerful bourgeois class was to gain entry into the ranks of the nobility, or at least to emulate the way of life of the aristocracy. Molière made this plain in *Le*

Bourgeois Gentilhomme. Despite the fact that the Canadian economy was basically commercial and dependent largely on the fur trade, bourgeois commercial values did not dominate society; indeed, they were scorned. The ambitious Canadian merchant wished to be something more than prosperous. That was merely one rung on the ladder. The ultimate goal was entry into the ranks of the *noblesse* and receipt of the coveted Order of St. Louis for distinguished service. More than wealth, men wished to bequeath to their sons a higher social status and a name distinguished for military valor, some great achievement, or the holding of high office. The proverb, *"Bon renom vaut mieux que ceinture dorée,"* summed up the Canadian philosophy at all levels of society.[27]

Wealth was, of course, desired, and ethics frequently went by the board in its pursuit. Men who might well have been ennobled for valiant service were denied if they lacked the means to live in a fitting manner. Wealth was sought, not for itself, but to enable men to live in the style of the class they sought to enter. Father Charlevoix, the Jesuit historian, writing in the 1740s commented on one aspect of this proclivity: "There is a great fondness for keeping up one's position, and nearly no one amuses himself by thrift. Good cheer is supplied, if its provision leaves means enough to be well clothed; if not, one cuts down on the table in order to be well dressed." He then went on to compare the Canadians with the English colonists to the south: "The English colonists amasses means and makes no superfluous expense; the French enjoys what he has and often parades what he has not. The former works for his heirs; the latter leaves his in the need in which he is himself to get along as best he can"[28]

In Canada it was in some ways much easier than in France for ambitious men to adopt the values and attitudes of the nobility and even to become ennobled. Despite the fact that society was very much status ordered, it was relatively easy for a talented, ambitious man or women to move up the social scale. Four factors help account for this: the availability of free land, the economic opportunities presented by the fur trade, the Royal edict of 1685 which permitted members of the nobility resident in Canada to engage directly in commerce and industry, something that, with a few notable exceptions such as the manufacture of glass and paper, was not permitted in France, and the presence of a large corps of regular troops in the colony in which Canadians could obtain commissions as officers.

It is rather ironic that when the king issued the edict of 1685 allowing nobles in Canada to engage in trade, he intended merely to stimulate the colonial economy.[29] It quickly came, however, to function in a way not anticipated by Louis XIV, for if those who were of noble status could engage in trade, there was nothing to prevent merchants and entrepreneurs who were not noble from aspiring to become so, provided they fulfilled the other requirements. Thus a Canadian of humble origin could make his fortune in the fur trade, acquire a seigneury, have his sons, if not himself, commissioned in the Troupes de la Marine, and hope that one day he, or his sons, would be ennobled for valiant service. Enough Canadians

accomplished this feat to encourage a much larger number to govern their lives accordingly. It was the old story, few are chosen but many hear the call.

To be a seigneur, the first rung up the social ladder, was a distinct mark of social superiority, made manifest in a variety of ways; hence there was never any lack of applicants,[30] but it necessitated accepting rather onerous responsibilities and in the seventeenth century most seigneurs had a hard time making ends meet. Yet so eager were the Canadians to attach the coveted particle *de* to their names that by 1760 there were nearly 250 seigneuries in the colony. Even more significant, it is estimated that there were some 200 *arrière fiefs*, or sub-seigneuries, that is, small seigneuries granted by a seigneur within his own seigneury to a friend or relative whom he wished to see get on in the world. Another significant point is that many seigneurs, the majority of whom lived in the towns and not on their lands, did not bother to collect the stipulated dues, *the cens et rentes*, from their *censitaires*. Clearly, many seigneurs were not interested in the economic aspect of land holding. The only other motive would appear to be the social prestige attached to the title. In other words, Joseph Blondeau was undoutedly a good name, but Joseph Blondeau de Grandarpents, or even de Petitarpents, was much better.

There were some who sought to gain entry into the *noblesse* through the back door, by simply assuming a title and claiming its privileges. In 1684 a royal edict was enacted levying a fine of 500 *livres* on any Canadian who falsely claimed noble status. A few years later the intendant Champigny stated that there were many such in the colony, but in time of war he thought it unwise to initiate an enquiry lest it cool their ardor for military campaigns. He also declared that several officers had requested to be ennobled, and although some of them merited it, he could not support their requests because they lacked the means to live as members of the *noblesse* should.[31] Although gaining entry into the ranks of the nobility was by no means easy, it was remarked in the mid-eighteenth century that there was a greater number of nobles in New France than in all the other French colonies combined. It was not the actual number of nobles that was important; rather it was the scale of values that they imparted to the whole of society, the tone that was set, and the influence it had on the way of life of the Canadian people.

Inextricably mingled with, and greatly strengthening, this aristocratic ethos was the military tradition of New France. In Europe wars were fought by professional armies, and civilians were not directly involved unless they happened to get in the way while a battle was being fought. This was more true of France and Britain than of other countries, since they both had sense enough to wage their wars on other nations' territory. In Canada when war came, all the settled areas were a battlefield and everyone was obliged to be a combatant. The administration of the colony was organized along military lines. The entire male population was formed into militia companies, given military training, and employed in campaigns. In 1665 the Carignan Salières regiments arrived in the colony to quell the Iroquois; it comprised over a thousand officers and men, and many of them stayed on as settlers. This greatly enhanced the influence of the military, for at that time the total population was less than 3000. Twenty years later the Troupes de la Marine were permanently stationed in the colony, some 1300 men and 400 officers by the end of the century among a total population of 15 000.

In the campaigns against the Iroquois and the English colonies it was quickly discovered that Canadians made better officers in forest warfare than did regulars from France. Consequently this career was opened to the seigneurs and their sons. They seized on it eagerly. Youths in their teens were enrolled as cadets and served on campaigns with their fathers or elder brothers to gain experience, then were sent out in command of scouting and small raiding parties to capture prisoners for intelligence purposes. The minister, however, thought they were being enrolled at far too early an age, while still mere children, and suspected the practice was merely a means for their families to draw military pay and allowances. Mme. de Vaudreuil, wife of the governor general, declared, "It would be advantageous for the well-being of the colony to accept youths of good families as cadets in the troops at fifteen or sixteen; that would form their characters early, render them capable of serving well and becoming good officers." The minister and Louis XIV were not convinced; they ordered that cadets had to be seventeen before they could be enrolled.[32] The dominant values of Canadian society were clearly those of the soldier and the noble, the military virtues those held in highest regard.

The social circles of Montreal and Quebec, comprising the senior officials, the army officers, and seigneurs, were undoubtedly very urbane, reflecting the polish and social graces of the French *noblesse*. Certainly Peter Kalm found this society much more civilized than that which he encountered in the English colonies where few people thought of anything but making money and not spending it.[33] Some of the senior officials who came from France in the eighteenth century, men like the intendant Claude Thomas Dupuy and the Comte de la Galissonière, took a keen interest in natural science, as had earlier the doctor and surgeon Michel Sarrazan who was a corresponding member of the Académie Royale des Sciences, but few Canadians showed much interest in intellectual pursuits.

The parish schools provided a basic education for those who wished it, and the Jesuit college at Quebec offered facilities as good as those in the larger French provincial cities. The letters and dispatches of Canadian-born officers and merchant traders in the mid-eighteenth century demonstrate that, with the rare exception of an officer such as Claude-Pierre Pécaudy de Contrecoeur who although a competent commandant had obviously had little schooling, they were all well-educated men. They expressed themselves succinctly and quite often felicitously: their syntax was good, the subjunctive employed where required; the literary style as well as the contents of their letters make them a pleasure to read. In fact,

these men appear to have been as well educated as their counterparts in the French and British armies.

Yet the colony did not develop a literary tradition; the published journals depicting life in the colony were written by men from France and were intended for a metropolitan audience. But then, Canadians would see little merit in describing what was familiar to all their compatriots. Several Canadians had large private libraries, but there was no public library. Nor was there a printing press in the colony, hence no newspaper, not because of any sinister repression of thought by the clergy, but because there was no great need therefore no demand for one. In these realms of activity Canada lagged far behind the English colonies. In short, New France was the Sparta, not the Athens of North America.

Notes

1. *Chronological List of Canadian Censuses*, Bureau of Statistics, Demography Branch, Ottawa.
2. Adolph B. Benson (ed.), *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, 2 vols. (New York, 1966), vol. II, pp. 416–417.
3. Le Roi à Vaudreuil et Raudot, Versailles, 6 juillet 1709, *Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec*, 1942–1943 (hereafter cited as *RAPQ*), p. 408.
4. E. B. O'Callaghan and J. R. Brodhead, *Documents Relating to the Colonial History of New York*, 15 vols. (Albany, 1856–1883), vol. IV, p. 693.
5. Benson (ed.), *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, vol. II, p. 600.
6. Papiers La Pause. *RAPQ, 1931–1932*, pp. 66–67.
7. Denonville au Ministre, Que., 13 nov. 1685, Archives Nationales, Colonies, Series C11A, vol. 7, pp. 89–95.
8. Memoire instructif sur le Canada, 10 may 1691, *ibid.*, vol. 11, pp. 262–268.
9. Benson (ed.), *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, vol. II, pp. 522, 563.
10. Etienne de Carheil, S.J. à Champigny, Michilimackinac, 30 d'auest 1702, Public Archives of Canada, Series M, vol. 204, part 1, pp. 177–179; Fr. J.-F. St. Cosme, Michilimackinac, 13 sept. 1689, *RAPQ, 1965*, p. 37.
11. In a dispatch to the minister, Vaudreuil stated, "tous les françois qui ont épousé des sauvagesses sont devenus libertins feneans, et d'une independence insuportable, et que les enfans qu'ils ont esté d'une feneantise aussy grande que les sauvages mesmes, doit empescher qu'on ne permette ces sortes de mariages." Vaudreuil et Raudot au Ministre, Que., 14 nov. 1709, *RAPQ*, 1942–1943, p. 420.
12. Charlevoix, *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, vol. II: *Journal d'un voyage fait par order du Roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale addressé à Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiguières* (Paris, 1744), pp. 247–249.
13. Papiers La Pause, *RAPQ, 1931–1932*, p. 67. See also Fernand Ouellet, "La mentalité et l'outillage économique de l'habitant canadien 1760. . . ." *Bulletin des Recherches Historiques* (1956), pp. 131–136.
14. Memoire sur les affaires au Canada, Avril 1689, *RAPQ, 1922–1923*, p. 7.
15. *The American Gazetteer*, 3 vols. (London, 1762), vol. II, entry under Montreal.
16. Relation d'un voyage de Paris à Montréal en Canadas en 1737. *RAPQ, 1947–1948*, pp. 16–17.
17. See Benson (ed.), *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, vol. II, pp. 446–447, 558; H. R. Casgrain (ed.), *Voyage au Canada dans le nord de l'Amérique septentrionale fait depuis l'an 1751 à 1761 par J.C.B.* (Quebec, 1887), p. 169.
18. Benson (ed.), *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, vol. II, pp. 558, 626.
19. Richard Colebrook Harris, *The Seigneurial System in Early Canada* (Madison, Wis., 1966), p. 81.
20. Robert Mandrou, *Introduction à la France moderne. Essai de psychologie historique 1500–1640* (Paris, 1961), pp. 17–39.
21. Mme Bégon à son gendre, Rochefort, 8 déc. 1750. *RAPQ 1934–1935*, p. 129.
22. Champigny au Ministre, Que., 20 oct. 1699. Archives Nationales, Colonies, Series CllA, vol. 17, pp. 106–110.
23. Benson (ed.), *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, vol. II, p. 536.
24. For a revealing account of one such protestation, which could have become dangerous, and the cool way it was subdued without the *habitants* concerned being treated at all harshly, see Vaudreuil au Conseil de la Marine, Que., 17 oct. 1717, Archives Nationales, Colonies, Series CllA, vol. 38, pp. 123–124. It is interesting to note that in this dispatch Vaudreuil is justifying his having had the ten ringleaders summarily arrested and kept in cells for nearly two months without trial. He considered that the circumstances had warranted the use of his exceptional powers, which permitted arrest and imprisonment without trial only in cases of sedition and treason. The Council of Marine subsequently approved his action in this instance. The common sense attitude of the government toward the governed is illustrated in another incident, which at first appeared to be a seditious assembly but was treated as being much less serious. See Raudot au Ministre, Que, 11 nov. 1707, *ibid.*, vol. 26, pp. 202–203.
25. Mandement de Jean éveque de Québec, 26 avril 1719 ("Trivia," Cameron Nish), *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Series, vol. XXIII (July, 1966), pp. 477–478.
26. See Les Mariages à la Gaumine, *RAPQ, 1920–1921*, pp. 366–407.
27. Mme de Contrecoeur à son Mari, Montreal, 23 mai 1755. Fernand Grenier (ed.), *Papiers Contrecoeur et autres documents concernant le conflit Anglo-Français sur l'Ohio de 1745 à 1756* (Quebec, 1952), p. 349. The context in which the proverb is cited is quite revealing.
28. Pierre-François-Xavier de Charlevoix, S. J. *Histoire de la Nouvelle France*, vol. III: *Journal d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale addressé à Madame la Duchesse de Lesdiguières* (Paris, 1744), p. 79.
29. Arrest du Conseil d'Estat qui permet aux Gentilshommes de Canada de faire Commerce, du 10 mars 1685, Archives Nationales, Colonies, Series F3, vol. 7, p. 214; Le Roy au Sr. de Meulles, Versailles, 10 mars 1685, *ibid.*, *Series B*, vol. 11, p. 99.
30. Roland Mousnier, "L'évolution des institutions monarchiques en France et ses relations avec l'état social," *XVIIe Siècle*, 1963, nos. 58–59.
31. Extrait des Registres du Conseil d'Estat, 10 avril 1684, Bibliothèque Nationale, Collection Clairambault, vol. 448, p. 369; Champigny au Ministre, Que., 10 mai 1691. Archives Nationales, Colonies, Series CllA, vol. 11, p. 255; Memoire Instructif sur le Canada, *ibid.*, pp. 265–267.
32. Le Ministre à M. de Vaudreuil, Versailles, 30 juin 1707, *RAPQ, 1939–1940*, p. 375; Résumé d'une lettre de Mme de Vaudreuil au Ministre, Paris, 1709. *RAPQ, 1942–1943*, p. 416; Mémoire du Roy à MM de Vaudreuil et Raudot, à Marly, 10 May 1710, *RAPQ, 1946–1947*, p. 376; Archives du Seminaire de Quebec, Fonds Verreau, carton 5, no. 62.
33. Benson (ed.), *Peter Kalm's Travels in North America*, vol. I, 343–346, 375–376, 392–393, vol. II, pp. 446–447, 558, 626, 628.

"Thunder Gusts": Popular Disturbances in Early French Canada*

TERENCE CROWLEY

Popular disturbances in the form of crowds, mobs, and armed uprisings were an intrinsic part of society and government in the Western world during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Although the word "revolt" was often used by those in authority to describe these momentary but frequently violent upheavals, such a term is generally inappropriate at least before the 1760s when revolutionary ideas became more widespread. Popular disturbances were essentially defensive and reactionary: people reacted against what was perceived as a departure from traditional ways, especially in the form of new taxes or seigneurial obligations, or to prompt authorities to relieve situations such as food shortages. Seldom did they involve petitions or any general ideas other than those surrounding the specific grievance at issue. In France, the period from 1620 to 1650 was particularly rife with peasant uprisings. The imposition of new taxes provided the fuel that ignited the wrath of the peasants in the uprisings of the *croquants* of Saintonge, Angoumois, Poitou, and Périgord as well as the

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