

Feudal Society and Colonisation  
A Critique and Re-interpretation  
of the  
Historiography of New France

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Abstract

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This thesis develops a critique and reinterpretation of the historiography of New France. It argues that this historiography has been flawed by the absence of a sustained theoretical perspective, by the privileging of eventuation over long-term processes of class formation and consolidation, by its failure both to explore sufficiently the metropolitan context and to take account of the relevant debates in European historiography, and by its unreflected ideological assumptions linking capitalism and progress.

This thesis seeks to redress these problems in several ways. It draws upon the approaches of historical sociology and comparative historical analysis to explain why New France did develop as an integral part of the Ancien Régime, and why it differed from England's American colonies to the south. It explores the social relations of production, and the relations of state and capital in France and explains how these networks were extended to the colony. It compares Ancien Régime France with the developing capitalist society in England in order to situate the differences between their colonies in a broad

socio-economic context.

The critique of the existing historiography, and the analysis of France and the comparisons with England are all used to develop a re-interpretation of the colony. This analysis focuses upon the re-creation of feudal society in America through exploring the role of the State, Company, Church and the immigrants who were recruited to come to New France and who chose to stay there. The thesis concludes that when New France was ceded to the English it was an integrated province of France, and that the implications of this for the history of the French in the post Conquest period need to be explored.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the seventeenth century England and France both engaged in colonising ventures in America. For 150 years their respective colonies competed for land and trade on the eastern side of the continent. The historical consensus has been that the development of these colonies represented parallel endeavours, albeit with dramatically different outcomes. Certainly the appearance of similarity is easily discerned.

The beginnings of North American history are to be found in the almost frenetic adventuring of renaissance Europe--adventuring which broke through the customary frontiers of politics, science, religion and economies.

Both England and France expanded their activities from this "adventuring"--what another writer has called "this scarcely veiled plunder"<sup>2</sup>--of North America to territorial expansion, settlement and colonisation. More recent scholarship has affirmed that the whole North-American project formed part of the joint outreach program of merchant traders and their emerging nation-states.

The dynamic potential of overseas enterprises had been recognised in most West European countries before the end of the 16th century. The specific north-west European contribution to the organisation of European expansion became the companies, a unique form of cooperation between merchant entrepreneurs and government interest.

In America the lure of the fur trade attracted merchant-traders from both countries who competed ferociously with each other, drawing both Indians and their own governments into the struggles. Only the Conquest and its aftermath would finally and irrevocably provide the English with the political and economic prerequisites for victory,<sup>4</sup> in this most lucrative Canadian trade.<sup>5</sup>

The parallels continue. Men and women from both countries came to transform the wilderness into a society for themselves and their children. These pioneers have been mythologised for their heroic efforts and indomitable will and castigated for hounding the Amerindians off their land. The new settlers cultivated land in the European manner, built towns and villages, churches and schools. In the historiography of both societies the arguments about the existence, or extent, of metropolitan exploitation of the colony continue to this day. Historians of New France have argued that such exploitation--the enrichment of the 'mother country' at the colony's expense--contributed to its eventual defeat while historians of the American colonies link metropolitan economic and political control with the causes of the American Revolution.<sup>6</sup> Ouellet has made this point about their parallel histories.

In England as in France the mercantilist system was predominant. In their colonies the two countries followed similar objectives. Above all it was essential that the colonies contribute to the enrichment of the mother country and increase its political and military strength.

While Ouellet described this shared history as mercantalist, others have situated this period in French and English history within the context of commercial capitalism. In Pentland's words,

European exploitation of Canada was begun, and the greater part of it proceeded in the period when "commercial capitalism" was the dominant type of arrangement in Western Europe.

Ryerson also notes that,

... [t]he great "Age of Discovery" came when rising capitalism, in the 15th and 16th centuries, shattered the "long winter sleep" of the feudal Middle Ages. The opening up of America and the birth of colonialism were integrally part of the revolutionary process whereby the capitalist mode of production replaced that of feudalism.

Dechêne has asserted that Canada, both before and after the Conquest was "une création du capitalisme marchand, une région satellite subordonnée à la métropole dans un vaste ensemble d'interdépendance,"<sup>10</sup> while Monière wrote that "the French colonial expeditions to North America would act out mercantilist ideas that expressed in ideological terms the economic requirements of a young capitalism."<sup>11</sup> In general, the historiography of New France has tended to rest on the assumption that France and England were similar countries in economic terms and that they shared similar objectives in the New World.

But this assumption of parallel development has proved problematic for the historiography of New France, for, if England and France pursued similar objectives for

similar reasons in the colonisation of America, why were their respective colonies so different? The differences in the rate of population growth,<sup>12</sup> the system of land tenure,<sup>13</sup> the expansion of settlement,<sup>14</sup> the degree of economic diversity<sup>15</sup>, political institutions,<sup>16</sup> cultural development,<sup>17</sup> religion and values, as well as the final military outcome and its aftermath, all announce that two very different societies were in the making. These contrasting colonial histories have provided analysts of New France with one of their more perplexing problems: why were the parallel histories of their respective metropolises not reflected in the development of their colonies? Why was New France so different from New England?<sup>18</sup>

This thesis will argue that compelling answers to these questions have proved elusive precisely because of the assumption of parallel metropolitan development. Such an assumption directed attention away from the most promising location in which to search for answers --namely in the differences between France and England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This failure, by many historians, to attend sufficiently to the differences between England and France is surprising. While seventeenth century colonists had good reason to feel cut-off and isolated from their old homes the historians of New France have surely had less cause for experiencing comparable isolation from European historiography. Yet in many respects they have written

the history of the colony with little attention--and sometimes with calculated inattention--to the metropolitan context. As a result the significant debates in European historiography about the transition from feudalism to capitalism, its differential timing in France and England,<sup>19</sup> and the consequences this must have had for colonisation have not informed the historiography of New France.

But vacuums in social and historical analysis need to be filled. In this case, answers have tended to rely upon climatic and geographical differences, or have come in the form of an imposing array of value-judgements and prescriptions. These interpretations have been founded upon the belief that the process of development in the American colonies was capitalistic and progressive<sup>20</sup> and, therefore, normal--and desirable. This assumption has often produced judgemental and patronising discussions of those aspects of the history of New France that deviated from the more admirable trajectory to the south. These deviations have elicited expressions of regret and dismay; they have provided the occasions for taking everyone involved in the French colonising venture in America to task--from the mighty kings, through the merchants, to the lowly peasants--for their lack of foresight, ambition, scruples and capital.<sup>21</sup> These judgements continue to be articulated--with feeling--some three hundred years after the death of the protagonists and a quarter of a century after the bicentenary of the fall of the colony to the

English. Why they retain their salience deserves an explanation--if only for their longevity. But these arguments also need to be abandoned in favour of a theoretically informed historical and sociological analysis. Not only do they fail to take account of the particular socioeconomic climate in France and New France, but they are also predicated upon tacit and incorrect assumptions about the nature of the relationship between capitalism and progress, and feudalism and reaction. Such assumptions have repeated and enlivened time-worn prejudices about Quebec and French Canadians.

That has been especially true of historians like Creighton and Ouellet--who have been influenced by Parkman,--and of the Catholic nationalists.<sup>22</sup> But even the thoughtful and highly influential work of Cole Harris, work that explicitly challenged the prejudices of earlier schools, included this statement.

Although Canadian rural society was loosely structured, it would be wrong to conclude that the people who shaped the landscape of the lower St. Lawrence were the frontiersmen of American legend. The machinery of control had come to Canada, and if its authority could rarely be imposed, it could always be turned to and frequently was. Moreover, the Canadians were extremely fond of convivial pursuits--they were not found striking out into the wilderness to establish a farm miles ahead of the vanguard of settlement. They often left as young men for the wilderness for the profit and excitement of the fur trade--but most of them returned to their cotes along the St. Lawrence. Finally, the



drive for material success was less than in the English colonies. Most habitants lived well enough... The habitants were not forced into the interminable round of work that many French peasants undertook merely to stay alive or that many New Englanders followed out of the compulsion of the Puritan ethic.<sup>23</sup>

What is at issue here is not his descriptive comparisons-- which can themselves be questioned<sup>24</sup>--but the types of explanations he provides for the differences between the colonies. For him the answers are to be found in comparing geography, forms of government and especially in describing different lifestyles and values--none of which, it should be said, can be disregarded. But identifying these kinds of differences are not enough. They need to be contextualised within an understanding of the political economy of each society. Otherwise we are left suspended in an abstracted world of national characters, psychological inferences and free-floating mentalités.<sup>25</sup>

In this thesis I will develop a critique of the historiography of New France and a re-interpretation that focuses upon the predominant economic and social relations linking France and its colony. This approach promises to cast doubts on some of the old assumptions about the colony, illuminate some of the unanswered questions in its historiography and develop the framework for a more comprehensive understanding of New France and its evolution.

But it is also important to situate this study in a wider context, for it provides more than an additional

study of the historiography of an interesting colony. The questions, approach, and methodology locate it as a contribution to historical sociology.<sup>26</sup> The thesis' central focus is neither upon the narrative chronological style of traditional history-writing nor upon the synchronic structural approach of main-stream sociology. The emphasis is rather upon the historical development of patterned networks of relationships between social classes and between state and society. Those relationships are often accepted as pre-given both by the people by whom they are continuously reproduced, and by social analysts.<sup>27</sup>

For many historians or sociologists they provide the background, the sets-of-assumptions, upon which the more rapidly moving historical events are played out. When they constitute the object of analysis they are often apprehended as structures, seemingly without a history. To take an example, Louis XIV's policy decisions--their motivations, implementation and effects--are commonly perceived as historical events. But the development of the network of class and state relations in which they were embedded, and to which they contributed, were also historical processes, even if change was so imperceptible that it may appear as if time had stopped,<sup>28</sup> and even if the causes of change were so complex that they are difficult to specify and explain. Historical sociology seeks to grasp that intersection between event and social structure within an understanding that both are

historically constituted. In Abrams' words,

Historical sociology ... is the attempt to understand the relationship of personal activity and experience on the one hand, and social organisation on the other, as something that is continuously constructed in time. It makes the continuous process of construction the focal concern of social analysis.

The historiography of New France has often been written with great respect for the unfolding of specific events. That approach, in which close attention is paid to the particular events--or more precisely put, to the evidence that has been left of particular events--through which history is most immediately 'made', is essential for a rigorous and comprehensive understanding of the past. But similar care needs to be taken to delineate and explain the slower moving structured relationships of power and inequality which provide the deeper--yet dynamic--context for explaining eventuation. This thesis contributes both to an appreciation of that deeper context, and to an approach that grapples with the difficult conceptual problem of explicating the intersection between structure and event.

In order to deal with the implicit and explicit comparisons in the historiography between New France and the American colonies, it has also been necessary to engage in comparative historical analysis. This thesis demonstrates the importance that such analysis can play in probing assumptions, in penetrating apparent

similarities to reveal underlying differences and in exploding shibboleths about human motivation. This focus provided one important route to formulating answers to perplexing historical problems. Without a comparative approach it would have been difficult to understand why colonists flocked to New England but had to be bribed and cajoled to go to New France, why merchant investment behaviour was so different and why the state played such contrasting roles in the two colonies. Explanations that have tended to rely upon mentalités were called into question through an historical approach that compared the underlying broad networks of socio-economic relations in the two countries.

My work also makes a contribution to the long-standing debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism. This debate, heralded by Maurice Dobb's Studies in the Development of Capitalism has sought to analyse the underlying processes involved in this transformation.<sup>30</sup> The most recent contributions have centred upon the importance of the processes and outcomes of class struggle in altering fundamental agrarian relationships.<sup>31</sup> Through this debate some of the causes and consequences of the differential timing of this transition in England and France have been drawn out. This thesis expands that debate by exploring the differing implications of feudal and capitalist social relations for colonisation. In

England the agrarian upheaval had produced both surplus capital and labour for export. But in France the entire colonisation venture took place on very different social and economic terrain with distinct implications for New France.

This thesis also draws upon, and contributes to, the debate on the nature of the absolutist state.<sup>32</sup> This debate provided the theoretical and historical questions for examining the role of the state in the colonisation of New France. The interpretations of the monarchs in that historiography have tended to rest upon descriptive expressions: the kings were paternalistic, despotic, negligent or beneficent. By interrogating this historiography with the questions and issues raised by the debate on absolutism, it became possible to develop a more rigorous interpretative framework. This interpretation supports and amplifies the argument that the networks of state relations were implicated within, and confirmed, the class relations of feudal society.

The recent studies on the active role played by the peasantry in creating their social world have been explored in this thesis. The new interpretations have stressed the role of peasant resistance in defining their most immediate economic and social circumstances. But they have also explored how the struggles between peasants, nobility and a centralising state shaped long-term historical processes that bear upon the survival or

disappearance of the peasantry as a class. This thesis demonstrates that these recent approaches to the peasantry in European historiography, which attend to the central relations of power animating peasant life, are equally appropriate to an interpretation of the New World 'habitant'.

Finally, this thesis begins an exploration of the processes of class formation in feudal society. While the literature on the 'making' of the working class has flourished in the last twenty years there has been little attention paid to the processes through which a peasantry might be created, and create itself, in a new geographical setting. The state could not legislate a peasantry into existence. But it could mobilise its resources to induce people to come to America, to take up parcels of land, and to establish the institutional structure in which that would take place. The various aspects of this problem are considered: how people were recruited and then landed, how they acquired--or failed to acquire--the appropriate work-discipline, and how the struggles between them, the church, the state and seigneurs determined how much of their production they would forfeit. At the same time, the processes through which some of the privileged people of France came to consider the colony as another site in which to consolidate their position and secure social advancement are explored.

These approaches--of historical sociology and

comparative historical analysis--and these debates--on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, on the state, and on class relations and formation--have provided the means for a particular kind of encounter with the historiography of New France. Together they permitted a critique of that historiography for its insufficient attention to the colony's metropolitan context and for the explanations that it has offered for the differences between New France and the American colonies. The debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism served notice that the place to start looking for colonial differences was in the diverse economic and political histories of metropolitan France and England. Once the assumption of parallel development was found wanting, I was convinced that the inadequacy of the ideological and pseudo-psychological answers to the questions about the differences between New France and New England, and the potential of an interpretation located in an analysis of the divergent political economies of France and England would be clear. Such a re-interpretation involved a study of France and its predominant social relations of production, and a comparative analysis of England.

The basic argument upon which this thesis rests was derived from this analysis: namely, that France was a feudal society during the one hundred and fifty years that it was colonising America. More precisely, France was a society predominantly shaped by the relationship

between peasant and noble, peasant and church, peasant and state, over land, its production and who had the rights to that production. In this set of arrangements peasants had access to their land and tools--to what was needed for, what Marx called, the realisation of their labour.<sup>33</sup> This situation assumes full significance when compared with the dilemma of 'free' wage labourers in capitalist society who can only work for their living if they succeed in selling their labour power on the marketplace. People need a job. But there was a catch for peasants too. They did not own their land outright. They owed a certain percentage of their production to seigneur, church and state. This production was not ceded without resistance and struggle. Indeed it was in the struggles over how much they retained, and how much they had to give up--(and ultimately in the outcomes of the struggles to retain land at all)--that we can locate the central contradiction in feudal society, as well as the differential timing of the transition to capitalism in France and England. This feudal relationship meant that the wealth of the society rested upon peasant production. Not only did peasants support themselves, but the lifestyle of the nobility, the wealth of the Church, and the expenditures of the monarch, depended ultimately upon what they were able to wrest from the land. This relationship between peasants and land, and peasants and the privileged, had far-reaching implications



for the nature of the state, the central features of trade and finance, and hence for the colonisation of New France.

Through approaching New France as a colony of a feudal society it became possible to offer credible interpretations for its rate of population growth, its system of land tenure, the behaviour of its privileged elites, the role of the state, the economic initiatives of the Church, the nature of its trading system, and of its oft-repeated 'failure' to diversify its economy.

What must be emphasised is that when New France fell in 1760, England inherited an integral and integrated Royal Province of France, part of a feudal society of the Ancien Régime, and not, as most would have it, simply a pale imitation, or a less successful version, of New England. For while France was a feudal society during the period when it was colonising America, England was engaged in the long, complex and uneven transition from feudalism to capitalism. Indeed, by the early seventeenth century that country had shifted predominantly and irrevocably to capitalist social relations.<sup>34</sup> This was a transformation that would only occur in France--and then in its own distinctive fashion--some 150 years later with the French Revolution.<sup>35</sup>

This interval between the transition from feudalism to capitalism in France and England is centrally important to understanding the differences in their respective colonies. For just as this transition affected all other

aspects of society, so it elaborated and changed England's relations with America. The process of capitalisation meant the 'freeing' of the peasants from the land, the transformation of human labour power into a commodity to be bought and sold in the marketplace, the possibility of infinitely expanding mobile capital, surplus people and capital for export, the creation of new and ever-expanding internal and external markets--indeed the birth pangs of the "first of the world's consumer societies."<sup>36</sup> The potential of America as an extension of that consumer society was evident as early as the first decades of the seventeenth century, and as a result, some "London merchants, who joined wholeheartedly in the privateering drive after 1585, followed this up, two decades later, by becoming backers of sustained colonisation".<sup>37</sup>

The appearance, then, that the colonisation ventures of England and France were similar is quite deceptive. Clearly there was overlap. Merchant traders from each country sought to plunder the New World to order to make fortunes in the Old. But we are obliged to go beyond this to explore the predominantly different underlying class relations, interests, and struggles in which they operated. The American colonies, were developed as part of the emerging capitalist world; indeed by the third quarter of the eighteenth century they would have an indigenous bourgeoisie ready to launch its own revolution. In New France, on the other hand, the feudal world of the

Ancien Régime was recreated, a society based upon peasant production, with a privileged elite that was thoroughly integrated with the metropolis. Understanding the underlying social relations of production in France in the seventeenth century is essential for evolving a comprehensive re-interpretation of the development of its American colony. Such an analysis has the potential to undercut many of the assumptions and resolve many of the controversies in the historiography: why did so 'few' people come? was the seigneurial system relevant to understanding the colony's economic life? did the state's policies stifle economic development in the colony? was the fur trade a drain on potential economic diversity?

This development of a re-interpretation of New France was predicated upon a critique of its existing historiography. That critique was forged through confronting its premises and the main lines of its arguments with some of the major debates in European historiography using the approaches of historical sociology and comparative historical analysis. That interrogation revealed many of the implicit assumptions in the historiography, prised out some of the contradictions, and pointed the way to their resolution. In Chapter 1 I discuss this process through unravelling and, critically examining the major interpretative themes in the historiography.

There are, I will argue, four established and conflicting interpretations of New France. They are that New France was a feudal society, a promised land, an embryonic bourgeois society and a new society shaped by the exigencies of America. There is also a fledgling but important Marxist perspective. While each of these interpretations has made useful contributions to an understanding of New France--which shall be discussed --they have also encompassed unreflected assumptions that could not be sustained in the light of this inquiry:

While this thematic approach to the literature can be largely defended on substantive grounds, it is also employed as a heuristic device. For this literature on New France is nothing if not eclectic, full of variations and nuances which a thematic approach inevitably slights. The point is neither to insist that the work of every historian can be appropriately packaged within my categories, nor to assert that all the issues which others might find important are included. Rather it is a means of bringing order out of chaos, of providing a way of evaluating a highly diverse literature in terms of the underlying assumptions in which it has been grounded.

The old argument that France was a feudal society has not rested primarily upon an analysis of the social relations of production--of the peasant-seigneur-church-state relationship that was outlined above. Rather, in this literature--which includes the work of Parkman,

Creighton, Ouellet and Hamelin--feudalism has more the meaning of the Middle Ages--or even the Dark Ages. The people of the colony are equally bedevilled by an authoritarian government, a dogmatic Church and their own superstitions and servile habits. Feudalism is a code word for reaction. The 'promised land' theme is, perhaps, self-explanatory. It refers to the work of the Catholic nationalists and theologians who saw in New France an opportunity for the rebirth of the Catholic civilization that was going awry in France. The argument that New France was an embryonic bourgeois society was developed by Frégault, Brunet and Séguin<sup>38</sup> although its influence is much wider. Their work sought to prove that New France had had a bourgeoisie--like New England's--which was decapitated with the Conquest. The new society thesis is a Canadian version of the frontier thesis, inevitably watered down, yet still insisting upon the impossibility of planting the inegalitarian societies of Europe in the New World--at least in their unredeemed form. If Harris is the most extreme proponent of this view, strong elements are also found in writers as diverse as Eccles, Wallot, Diamond, Dechêne and Monière.<sup>39</sup> The new society perspective emphasises how the indigenous conditions of America--climate, geography, availability of land, contact with indigenous people and the fur trade--shaped life in America. The Marxist perspective owes its genesis and most of its development, until recently, to

Ryerson. His analysis that "feudal tenure of land, merchant-capitalist commerce, a feudal-absolutist monarchy: these were the institutions transplanted to America"<sup>40</sup> is the most nearly consonant to the argument that I will make. The more recent work of Macdonald, Bourque, and Dechêne has extended the Marxist critique.<sup>41</sup>

This interrogation of the historiography revealed that many of the absences and assumptions stemmed from its inadequate contextualisation within an analysis of metropolitan society, from its failure to attend to the underlying historical processes through which class and state relations develop, from comparisons between New France and the American colonies that seldom penetrated below appearances, and from unreflected ideological assumptions. These conclusions motivated the analysis in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 on the relations of class, state and capital predominating in France during the period that it was colonising America. These chapters elaborate the necessary context for a comprehensive re-interpretation of New France. Through this analysis we can explain why colonisation was such a different process in France and in England, who stood to gain from colonising the New World--and who did not--, where the capital for colonisation was derived from, and why more was not forthcoming. As answers based upon broad considerations of political economy are formulated, some of the ideologically motivated responses that have penetrated the

historiography can be happily declared redundant.

This analysis of French society provides the basis for the re-encounter with the historiography of New France in Chapter 5. The theme is the re-creation of French feudal society in America. The emphasis is upon the processes of class formation and the intersecting roles played by state, church, trading interests and colonists. This chapter claims only to offer an interpretative framework for approaching the historiography. It is no substitute for, and indeed relies upon, the impressive historical research that has already been produced on the colony. But I do argue that this research should be re-thought and re-cast in the light of this re-interpretation, and that its implications and relevance would be enhanced by such a process.

## CHAPTER ONE

### A DISCUSSION AND CRITIQUE OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF NEW FRANCE

This chapter will outline and critically examine the major themes in the historiography of New France. The approach to this analysis and the criteria for the interrogation have already been specified. My argument has been that a comprehensive interpretation of New France must move in certain directions. First, it must incorporate an analysis of the deeply embedded relations of class and state that explicates how they shaped and intersected with the more easily perceived historical events. Second, the colony has to be situated within its metropolitan context in order to fully apprehend the nature of the social relations that initiated and continued to inform its development. Third, the implications of the debates on economic transitions and class and state relations for an understanding of the colonisation of New France must be explored.

The four major themes--that New France was a feudal society, a promised land, an embryonic bourgeois society and a new society--were first developed in roughly that chronological order. Like the argument in this thesis each comprised an attempt both to formulate a new



interpretation and to take on those that had been previously enunciated. In this sense there is a compensatory aspect to each argument as each new interpretation seeks to fill the gaps, respond to the overstatements and correct the misconceptions in the existing literature. In order to draw out this aspect of the historiography, this discussion will proceed along these general chronological lines. But it should be clear that elements of each interpretation continue to be restated and elaborated in the ongoing production of this literature.

#### A Feudal Society

It has been argued for a long time that New France was a feudal society. But in this historiography feudalism was primarily perceived as a particular set of values. These values were not analysed in the context of the social relations in which most people had to labour in order to survive themselves, and to fulfil their obligations to those with the legal right to prey upon their production. Nor was an understanding of capitalism grounded in relations of economic exploitation but, rather, in a set of characteristics that Horatio Alger could well have endorsed--ambition, enterprise, risk-taking--and in political values of liberty and democracy. This subordination of economic relations to descriptions of values and mentalité has

provided fertile ground for spurious comparisons between New England and New France, and unfavourable descriptions of New France, its government and people.

Consider this excerpt from Parkman's Pioneers of France in the New World.


Root, stem and branch (New France) was the nursling of authority. Deadly absolutism blighted her early and her later growth. Friar and Jesuit, a Ventadour and a Richelieu, shaped her destinies. All that conflicted against advancing liberty--the centralised power of the Crown and the tiara, the ultramontane in religion, the despotic in policy--found their fullest expression and most fatal exercise. Her records shine with glorious deeds, the self-devotion of heroes and martyrs; and the result of all is disorder, imbecility and ruin.<sup>1</sup>

This kind of interpretation has been intrinsically linked with the view that the Conquest had been of little consequence, or even beneficial to, the Canadians. Thwaites, a disciple of Parkman and English-language editor of the Jesuit Relations wrote that

... the Canadian peasantry, and such of the regulars as chose Canada for their home, settled down under their new political masters and in time became happier and more prosperous under the new flag, than they had even been under the old.<sup>2</sup>

For Ouellet, the "tragic and destructive nature" of the Conquest came not from the event itself, but proceeded "rather from the consciousness of several generations of historians".<sup>3</sup>

In this interpretation the responsibility for the



plight of this unfortunate people was laid partly at their own doorstep. Ouellet has castigated both habitants and merchants. The habitant was

... rooted to the soil for the security it provided, but he disliked the routine of farm work. Without discipline himself, he nevertheless had an innate propensity for authoritarian attitudes. (my underline)

And did not the merchants, he asked rhetorically, "prefer cheap prestige and lavish spending to more rational economic pursuits? Did they not choose the exhilarating bondage of geography over a creative effort"?<sup>5</sup> But a major part of the blame was reserved for the metropolis and its despotic, reactionary and static social system, as well as its outstanding success in transplanting itself in the New World.

[L]a France a exporté dans sa colonie, l'ensemble de ses institutions afin d'y aménager avec le temps une société dépendante, erigée sur son propre modèle. Il faut dire que le projet a réussi au delà de toute espérance.<sup>6</sup>

It is important to emphasise that he was referring, above all, to the exportation of a value system not to a system of class relations. For in his account New France was not only more archaic than the metropolis but, extraordinarily enough, the Ancien Régime also survived in Quebec for two hundred years after the Conquest.

L'Ancien Régime social, liquidé dans la métropole par la révolution de 1789, s'est non seulement enraciné dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent, y a acquis une coloration

spéciale, mais y a survécu dans la plupart de ses éléments essentiels jusqu'au milieu du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Such a statement can be dismissed as nonsense if the "éléments essentiels" include the form of economic exploitation peculiar to feudal society. The feudal system of land tenure was legally abolished in 1854, and long before that the political and economic changes wrought by the Conquest had marginalised and profoundly altered it. But, of course, Ouellet was not writing nonsense. He was not talking about land tenure and class relations; he was referring to a society in which, in his opinion, people clung to old ways of life, preferred authority to freedom, poverty to risk-taking, and ignorance to knowledge. For him, feudalism is primarily a set of values, not an economic mode of production: those values are "monarchiques, absolutistes, aristocratiques, et cléricales"<sup>8</sup> a striking contrast with the progressive, dynamic, enlightened values that constitute capitalism. This provided the modern sequel to Parkman's comparison between the monarchical despotism and stiff-handed authority of New France and the democratic and enterprising spirit of New England.<sup>9</sup>

Parkman, Ouellet and their disciples can be taken to task for circulating their own commitment to capitalist ideology and progress, and their own disdain for feudalism and reaction, in the guise of historiographical interpretation. But more than that, by hinging their interpretation of feudal society on a set of loosely-defined

values, they also failed to appreciate the underlying contradiction animating feudal society that is rooted in the struggle over surplus production. What is, therefore, delivered in their analysis is a static and conflict-free social system.

Aussi longtemps que l'agriculture ne fut pas commercialisée, les paysans et leurs fils se plièrent sans peine à ces différents types de demandes de la part des marchands et de l'état.<sup>10</sup>

Yet although Ouellet's account confirmed Parkman's judgement of "an ignorant population trained to subjection and dependence",<sup>11</sup> he has recently criticised his adversaries for depicting New France as an harmonious society. Armed with a formal salute to the importance of social class, he has insisted that nationalist historians paint New France as a community, rather than as a class-divided society in order to justify the primacy of nation over class in their analysis. But the "société d'ordres" that he described which "allait...devenir...par un processus normal...une société de classes"<sup>12</sup> is also conflict-free. Why does he take on his opponents for what he fails to demonstrate himself?

His belated appreciation of class formation in New France appears more as ammunition against the nationalists than as a serious interest in understanding the underlying dynamic of feudal social relations. What he remains committed to is his Parkman inheritance. The economic inferiority of the French in Canada, both before and after,

the Conquest, resulted from a mentalité nurtured in feudal society and (inexplicably) never abandoned. Even the merchant traders, whose activity was "de type capitaliste greffée sur le marché métropolitain"<sup>13</sup> were flawed in this way: "when we consider the lavish expenditures of Canadian businessmen and their aristocratic aspirations, we can grasp the chronic weakness of this petty bourgeoisie."<sup>14</sup> This was echoed by Hamelin who speaks of the "mégalomanie" and the "aveugle cupidité" of the large merchant traders who failed to appreciate that their own interests were coincident with the prosperity of the colony.<sup>15</sup>

But we must ask why merchant-traders in New France behaved as they did? What kinds of investment opportunities were open to them, and why did they make the choices that they did? Indulgence in conspicuous consumption and blind cupidity will simply not suffice as historical explanations, although the moralist or theologian might find them convincing. Such explanations emerged from a failure to probe the central economic relationships in feudal society. Ouellet simply asserted that the fur trade is "de type capitaliste"<sup>16</sup> and then castigated its practitioners for not behaving as capitalists. This kind of trade, however,--as I shall argue in Chapter 4--dealt only with the circulation of commodities. In no sense did it influence or penetrate the process of production itself. Indeed, that kind of activity, which took advantage of national and regional price differences to secure a profit, had been an aspect

of feudal society for centuries. Ouellet's apparent equation of capitalism and profit-making led to a failure to distinguish between the economic systems of France and England as they were unfolding in the seventeenth century. Instead he asserted that

... in England as in France the mercantalist system was predominant. In their colonies, the two countries followed similar objectives. Above all it was essential that the colonies contribute to the enrichment of the mother country and increase its political and military strength.<sup>17</sup>

This claim forced--or freed--him to find extra-economic explanations for the differences in the behaviour of English and French merchants. Like his predecessors he resorted enthusiastically to social and psychological interpretations. They identified with the values of emerging capitalism, and saw feudal New France as a dark contrast. Eccles' comment on Parkman's work, that it was "marked by strong anti-clerical prejudice and an inability to see in New France much more than the reverse of the vices and virtues of New England in his own day,"<sup>18</sup> could, without great injustice, be applied to Ouellet's interpretative framework. For although his research has been very important for the study of the history of Quebec, it calls out for a more comprehensive historiographical perspective. While he has provided a harsh critique of the racism of Groulx and the nationalists, with their allusions to special, seemingly innate characteristics,<sup>19</sup> he, nonetheless,

threatens us with a similar scenario: that the French were destined for economic inferiority in America because the people lacked the necessary psychological attributes to develop a dynamic capitalist class.

His collapsing of progress and capitalism (which, as we shall see, he shares with Brunet and the secular nationalists) rests on the assumption that no one in his right mind would resist either. But this begs a fundamental question: for whom, in fact, did capitalist development mean progress? For the peasants, who everywhere put up a tenacious struggle to retain their land? for merchant traders whose interests and privileges were bound up with the patronage of the monarch and the feudal state? for a seigneurial class which profited from the surplus extracted from peasants? or for the Church that would never regain its former influence, wealth and power after the collapse of feudal society? Furthermore, Ouellet's static society of orders gives us no clue about from where the impetus for capitalist development will come.<sup>20</sup> From the mind, presumably.

Despite these criticisms, the Parkman-Ouellet argument that the differences between New England and New France must be attributed, in large part, to differences in their metropolises, is, I think, correct. Those differences require a more comprehensive economic interpretation than that suggested by 'democratic England' and 'autocratic France'. But at least they



pointed in the right geographical direction--across the ocean--instead of into the North American wilderness, as have some of their critics. Furthermore, they targeted some important differences that some historians have laboured to deny, understandably repelled by the racist, anti-Catholic, and francophobic tone in which they have been elaborated. The rising Quebec nationalists of the 1950's could hardly have countenanced Parkman's conclusion that "a happier calamity never befell a people than the Conquest of Canada by the British arms".<sup>21</sup>

Some of their questions, then, divested of prejudice, and reformulated, still require answers. Why did the English colonies attract immigrants by the thousands while New France had to beg, lure and cajole for the few thousand that trickled over? Did the seigneurial system restrict and retard the kind of expansion of settlements that proliferated to the south? Why did New England develop a thriving and diverse economy, while New France remained close to its origins in fur trading and subsistence agriculture? Jean Lunn's magisterial thesis on economic development in New France confirmed its failures. On the St. Maurice Forges, often presented as an example of economic diversity in New France, she wrote that they were "a miserable failure as a private enterprise and not a brilliant success as a government industry".<sup>22</sup> More generally, she concluded that "in many respects France

had the colony which it deserved. "Lacking men and money, it neither needed nor could afford New France".<sup>23</sup>

If that is so, how can we explain the funding and development of this colony? The answers in the Parkman-Ouellet tradition have offered unsystematic discussions of mentalité, values and lifestyle that have both seduced and enraged generations of scholars. We can acknowledge that they perceived real differences between New England and New France while eschewing their explanations. New interpretations need to be sought in the comparative economic histories of England and France.

#### The Promised Land

The 'Promised Land' thesis is not a serious contemporary contender for the 'Best Interpretation of New France' award. This historiography was grounded in the belief that the founding of New France was divinely inspired,<sup>24</sup> calculated to give a second chance to a Catholic, God-fearing people who would have been faced first with the corruption and then with the revolution, of the Old World. For nearly a century this perspective enjoyed virtual hegemony within Quebec, reaching its apogee with Lionel Groulx in the 1940s.<sup>25</sup> However, this kind of work--the legitimate scion of clerico-nationalists--fell on the same difficult and numbered days as did its proponents. The rise of secular nationalism in the 1950s

forecast its imminent and dizzying descent from grace-- at least in the eyes of most historians. In an argument that became the new orthodoxy in the intellectual and political milieu, Burnet cited "l'agriculturisme, l'anti-étatisme et le messianisme"<sup>26</sup> permeating the work as a cause of Quebec underdevelopment.

Il est urgent de nous en débarrasser, si nous voulons élaborer une politique économique et sociale qui réponde aux besoins de l'heure et qui soit véritablement au service de la collectivité. Le Canada français n'a jamais manqué d'âmes généreuses, capables de tous les dévouements et de toutes les abnégations. L'expérience démontre que cela n'a pas été suffisant. Il lui faut une pensée claire et réaliste, délivrée des anciennes illusions<sup>27</sup> qui ont paralysé son action collective.

But neither the political considerations of its opponents, nor the hagiography and tales of miracles of its perpetrators should detract us from looking again at this interpretation, if only because so many believed it for so long.

The clerico-nationalists' interpretation of New France converged in its essentials with that of the Parkman school: the colony was hierarchical, monarchical and church-dominated. But their evaluation of these characteristics for the quality of human life was sharply divergent. As they saw it, power in New France was not only divinely inspired but also benignly deployed. And appropriately enough the proper execution of this power was matched by thoughtful obedience from those whom it

was intended to benefit. For Groulx, "l'abbé historien", "c'est une société unanime où le-pouvoir civil vit en bonnes relations avec les clercs, ceux-ci s'occupant avec zèle d'une masse paysanne soumise à ses chefs."<sup>28</sup>

If he and his many progenitors were correct New France was an historical anomaly. It was a society with a feudal structure, including the seigneurial system and the Catholic Church, yet informed by egalitarian sentiments and humanitarian considerations. The colony was, as a result, a harmonious society. Sociologists like Falardeau have given this perspective on the colony ethnographic life, noting the role of Church, parish and priest in this achievement.

Thanks to his role as spiritual minister, the curé is also the supreme arbitrator of his homogeneous flock. He is called the "pastor" and it is he who actually presides over and controls their social life... Within a few decades (the Canadian parish) would approximate still more closely the ideal which the Catholic clergy has set for the parish everywhere, throughout the centuries: a true community of families, a large family itself.<sup>29</sup>

The perception of social harmony rested in part on the belief that New France was a purified version of the metropolis--a kind of 'born again' colony. This point-of-view also had wide currency outside the clerico-nationalist circle.<sup>30</sup> Munro put forward this case:

The development of feudalism in its later stages was ... more uniform and consistent in New France than in Old,

its workings were less obscured by the clouds of privilege, and as a system it had much more symmetry. On the whole, Canadian feudalism had all the merits of the system which formed its background at home, while it lacked many of the odious incidents that had served to make the latter a heavy burden upon the agricultural classes of France.<sup>31</sup>

We need to be clear about precisely what is being maintained in this perspective. It is accepted that there were groups with differential access to power and resources in New France. The Church's control over one-quarter of the seigneurial land is not in dispute; neither is the seigneur's right to (modest) dues, the Church's to a tithe, and the state's to labour, military and civil; nor is the hierarchy of administrative power reaching to the monarch himself. But the resulting social relationships are, surprisingly enough, neither oppressive nor exploitative.

"Il y a des classes dans la colonie de l'abbé Groulx. Mais il n'y a pas de luttes de classes, parce que les classes supérieures sont 'rapprochées de celles d'en bas'."<sup>32</sup>

Underlying such a claim is the assumption--in the words of Erik Olin Wright--that "concepts of domination and power do not necessarily imply conflict."<sup>33</sup>

Such a proposition cannot be supported from the historical evidence on New France. Indeed, it is this assumption of social harmony that poses the central problem in this interpretation, not the value placed on the rural life nor the periodic intrusion of the divine hand. As Crowley has argued recently in his pioneering article "Thunder Gusts: Popular Disturbances in Early French

Canada,"<sup>34</sup> "New France was far from being a pastoral paradise inhabited only by prosperous farmers and freedom loving coureur-de-bois."<sup>35</sup> Despite the difficulty of researching a new area<sup>36</sup> that by its nature has left little documentation, he found evidence for manifestations of popular discontent, and collective and individual protest. Although "assemblies were unlawful,"<sup>37</sup>

... on at least a dozen occasions, people in New France took to the streets, paraded to the walls of towns, or otherwise assembled<sup>38</sup> for direct action in defiance of the law,

primarily to protest food shortages and commodity prices. Furthermore, "demands placed on the people, especially by means of the three tributes of seigneurial dues, corvées, and militia service ... did produce discontent ..."<sup>39</sup> the tithe or payments of any kind to the Church were frequently the object of popular contention."<sup>40</sup>

In the clerico-nationalist interpretation, New France was conflict-free not by accident but by design. The Canadian historian, according to Father Alexis de Barbezieux, "will keep from insisting on the conflicts which arose in New France between various authorities" for such tales will delight the Protestants "the enemies of our race."<sup>41</sup>

Conflicts between the peasantry and the privileged were absent for a different reason. As Gagnon observed,

... dans l'ensemble, le peuple est absent de l'historiographie traditionnelle du Canada français. A l'exception, peut-être, des travaux de Sulte, le peuple est une abstraction. Il est

vigoureux, intrépide, sobre, continent,  
fidèle à suivre la consigne des  
dirigeants. Il vit heureux à l'ombre  
d'une autorité paternaliste.

Like the reactionary peasant of the Ouellet account, the happy peasant caused little or no trouble and could be dealt with expeditiously in the historiography.

The clerico-nationalists also bought the Parkman-Ouellet equations of capitalism and progress and feudalism and reaction; but, unlike them, Groulx and Company opt for the latter. It is through toiling on the land to produce what is needed for his family that man finds peace with his neighbours, himself, and God. Yet without buying their idealisation of peasant life, we should realize that they were on to something about the relationship between people and land, which the Ouellet school and its commitment to progress--(that is to the development of a capitalist economy)--missed. It is quite simple. Peasants everywhere cling tenaciously to their land, the surest means to survival, and clearly not matched in its promise of security by wage labour.

Unlike the Parkman-Ouellet interpretation, this was a nationalist thesis. Constituted around the trilogy of race, language and faith is the theme of the survival of a people in the face of many external dangers: anglicisation, protestantism, feminism and, in this century, the greatest threats, urbanisation and industrialisation. For its proponents the key to survival was not primarily political, but moral and religious, and would be realised

through isolation from the English milieu, and through a defense of Church and family. Instead of the denigration of the French values and lifestyle characteristic of the Ouellet position, we are offered their idealisation. It is a particular aspect of this idealisation--the unwillingness or inability to perceive and analyse the exploitative relationships between seigneur and peasant, state and peasant, and church and peasant--that deeply flaws this historiography.

#### An Embryonic Bourgeois Society

The Brunet offensive against the tenets of the Catholic nationalists was part of a general re-interpretation of the past that took on the racism and francophobia of the Parkman view, the historical myths of Canadian unity propagated primarily by English historians and politicians, and the whole historiographical interpretation of New France as an agricultural and trading backwater administered by an autocratic monarch. The Séguin-Frégault-Brunet thesis which drew part of its lineage from Garneau and Salone and was later confirmed by Nish was a tour-de-force in both historiographical and political terms. They developed a convincing interpretation of the society of New France that conflicted on every major point with the Parkman and Groulx presentations.

For them, the agricultural fate of the people had been



a post-Conquest phenomenon, born out of political realities and despair. In Séguin's succinct statement, "[c]'est après 1760 et non avant qu'il est bien plus juste de dire du Canadien: paysan d'abord."<sup>43</sup> While ninety per cent of the population of Quebec would be rural by 1825, the rural-urban split at the end of the French Régime had been three to one.<sup>44</sup> More fundamentally, although the colony had begun as a trading outpost with an agricultural support system New France had been clearly evolving towards a "normal" society, that is self-sufficient, diversified, dynamic and ultimately independent.<sup>45</sup> Far from being a contrast to the American colonies, its development had been parallel, a process only aborted by its military defeat in 1760.

Their analysis of the affluent and powerful men in New France revealed an embryonic but developing bourgeoisie with a wide range of investments and activities: "une équipe imposante d'entrepreneurs capitalistes qui avait été très prospères de 1745 à 1760."<sup>46</sup> In Brunet's words,

[d]e 1632 à 1760, une société canadienne, harmonieusement et solidement organisée, avait pris forme dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent. Pendant la période coloniale française, la pensée canadienne fut celle de toute société normale de l'époque en Amérique du Nord. La Nouvelle-France et ses habitants participaient intégralement à la vie politique et économique du continent américain. Explorateurs, géographes, marins, militaires, ingénieurs, commerçants, diplomates, administrateurs, les Canadiens jouaient un rôle de premier

plan. Ils tenaient tête aux Espagnols et aux Anglais. En plusieurs domaines, ils étaient même à l'avant-garde... La société canadienne de la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle était dynamique et progressiste. C'était une société du Nouveau-Monde qui jouissait pleinement de sa liberté collective.

Indeed as Frégault pointed out, Salome had already demonstrated that the people of new France had "exploré un monde, pratiqué surtout le commerce, exploité des mines, lancé des entreprises, construit des navires et bâti des villes."<sup>48</sup> These activities have been described in Lunn's thesis which included detailed chapters on agriculture, the fur trade, shipbuilding, the St. Maurice Forges and many other occupations, including craftsmen of all kinds. Nor were her own pessimistic conclusions about their success shared by Brunet and the others.

Nish's research confirmed this revisionist perspective on New France.

Il était possible de conclure à partir de la preuve fournie par les statistiques et la comparaison des statistiques, que la Nouvelle-France restait à l'intérieur des schémas normaux du développement colonial. Si on limite la comparaison à la Nouvelle-York et à la Pennsylvanie, on peut affirmer, sans crainte de se tromper, que le commerce de la colonie française était aussi important que celui de ces deux colonies anglo-américaines.<sup>49</sup>

Nish went on to argue that

Si l'un des critères de l'existence d'une classe bourgeoise suppose une marge suffisante de profits, et l'autre l'existence d'un groupe engagé dans l'entreprise, le groupe des commerçants de la Nouvelle-France était donc bourgeois.<sup>50</sup>

Having countered the Parkman view that the colony lacked the enterprising and diverse economic activity of the American colonies, they moved on to confront the comparison between democratic New England and autocratic New France. The absence of democratic institutions in the latter could have been a thorny one for those arguing the thesis of parallel colonial development. However, they focused upon the function of democratic institutions rather than just upon the particular forms extant in the American colonies. They concluded that other structures had developed in New France which permitted the consultation and participation of the population on relevant issues. While Frégault allowed that only the merchants formed an "organised" class during the French Régime, he observed that their representatives spoke to the authorities "in the name of the whole community."<sup>51</sup> Eccles has confirmed some of these claims in his discussions of the public assemblies that were convened "to discover the views of the people on specific issues before important legislation was enacted." But he pointed out that "these meetings resembled a latter-day university faculty meeting chaired by a strong-minded dean more than they did a New England town meeting."<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, they were "imposed from above, as a means to aid the royal officials in their administration of the colony."<sup>53</sup> Even so, he concluded that the "adequate consultation between governors and governed explains the failure of the Canadians to

manifest the Anglo-Saxon proclivity to exercise control over those who enacted legislation,"<sup>54</sup> not their innately submissive nature. Finally, while Frégault et. al. agreed that the land tenure system was formally feudal, "it was only as legal forms which for some centuries had been practically void of substance."<sup>55</sup> The seigneurial system

... n'y a pas été établi pour permettre à une classe privilégiée de vivre du travail d'une classe inférieure, mais en vue de doter le pays de l'organisation économique et sociale qui lui convient.<sup>56</sup>

Not only did this thesis provide an alternative historiography of New France, it also laid the historical basis for the claims to an independent nation-state of Quebec. As a society New France would have continued to parallel the history of the American colonies, freeing itself from its metropolis<sup>57</sup> and becoming an autonomous country in America. But the Conquest had intervened, not as a liberation, not as a blessing, but as a tragedy. Brunet restated his position recently in a rebuttal to Ouellet.

Il est évident que l'auteur n'a pas encore compris le rôle essentiel de toute métropole-nourricière dans un empire familial. Les relations des Français-Canadiens avec leur mère patrie, La France, de 1608-1763 sont semblables à celles des British Americans avec la Grande-Bretagne. Les coloniaux, membres d'un empire familial, ont besoin de leur métropole pour se développer normalement comme collectivité autonome... [Les] Canadiens français, privés de leur métropole-nourricière... et d'une bourgeoisie.

autochtone ... furent abandonnés à leurs seules ressources, qui étaient devenues des immigrants dans leur ancienne patrie.<sup>58</sup>

The Conquest had produced a premature rupture from the political and economic support of its metropolis, and provoked the decapitation of the society, with its most successful, aggressive and enterprising members returning to France. For not surprisingly, these people, those with "royal pensions, access to public office, business relations with the capitalists of the metropolis, official protection, contacts with the government and so on"<sup>59</sup> had realised that they could not expect the patronage, economic or political, from the new regime which would have its own favourites to support. Indeed, those who did remain in New France gradually found themselves cut off from the range of activities once open to them and withdrew to the countryside and their agricultural 'vocation'.

This perspective turned previous historiographical interpretations on their head. New France was not a rigid hierarchical society lacking economic dynamism and diversity, and crushed under the weight of an autocratic monarch and a medieval land tenure system. It was a normal bourgeois society developing, as were the American colonies, towards national independence.

It is not difficult to understand, at least retrospectively, why the secular nationalists produced this particular thesis on New France. With the Parkman school they shared a belief in the convergence of capitalism and

progress, more especially a belief in the alliance between progress and "la bourgeoisie capitaliste qui a fait le monde atlantique."<sup>60</sup> For them the contemporary economic underdevelopment of Quebec and the lack of political autonomy were a package deal. Both resulted from the British takeover because the consequent decapitation of the bourgeoisie had derailed the opportunities for capitalist development and political independence. This analysis underscored the importance of the political demand in Quebec for rattrapage with the rest of North America and explained why and how the Conquest was responsible for having produced the unequal development. This interpretation hoped to make a contribution to a newly awakened national consciousness through which the present population of Quebec could move towards a second, and more successful, rendez-vous with history.

But, I will argue, the historical legitimation for Quebec independence cannot rest on these shakey historiographical grounds for the evidence will not sustain its major assumptions. New France was not developing along parallel lines with the English colonies for, contrary to Frégault's opinion, society in France and England was not assuming "at approximately the same time a definitely capitalistic character."<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the evidence for a developing indigenous bourgeoisie rests much more comfortably, in fact, in quite a different interpretation. To make this case we can start with the

most striking difference between New England and New France, namely the differences in population. In La Colonisation de la Nouvelle-France (1905), which Frégault described in the 1960s as "toujours la meilleure synthèse de l'histoire du Canada sous le régime français,"<sup>62</sup> Salone emphasised this issue.

Soixante-dix mille Français au Canada! Après cent-cinquante ans de domination effective, c'est, pour la nation qui fut au dix-septième et au dix-huitième siècle souvent la plus puissante et toujours la plus civilisée et la plus nombreuse de l'Europe, [twenty-three million French to six and one half million English] un résultat dérisoire. Et dans le même espace de temps, de l'Acadie à la Floride, les Anglais établissent plus d'un million d'hommes.<sup>63</sup>

Why the French migration was so low has been explained in many ways: the cold winters, the iced-in St. Lawrence, the negligent French court, the banning of the Huguenots, the guerilla warfare of the Iroquis, the disinterested and even greedy merchant-traders, and the attractions of the fur trade over sedentary pursuits. None of these explanations appears implausible.

But the real question is surely a different one: was the French figure ridiculously low, as Salone and most others would have it, or rather, were the English figures amazingly high? This is not merely a semantic issue: in the seventeenth century England was the exceptional country in Europe with its massive emigration: between 1620 and 1642 80,000 Englishmen left their country. That was a

staggering two per cent of the whole population.<sup>64</sup> That the France of Louis XIV was not an "exportatrice d'hommes,"<sup>65</sup> as Dechêne put it, is only a matter of note because of the comparisons with England. What then was happening in England that caused all those people to leave home?

It had to be something important, and it was. It was the transformation from feudalism to capitalism, often described as the most dramatic economic, social and political transformation in the history of human society.<sup>66</sup> Changing almost everything, the processes also unleashed the preconditions for massive emigration and full-scale colonisation: surplus people and surplus capital. For the capitalisation of the English countryside from the last quarter of the sixteenth century produced both, separating peasants from their land through the enclosure movement and through the gradual erosion of feudal tenure. Their former land was consolidated and the new methods of agriculture, together with an expanding population of dispossessed peasants, now wage-labourers, enabled its new owners to rise above subsistence and begin to accumulate capital. During this transition, and in particular in the half century after 1590, "close to a majority of the population found themselves perilously near the level of bare subsistence."<sup>67</sup> It was in this context that the idea of sending the country's surplus population overseas gained currency. Men of capital began to find it lucrative to export emigrants across the Atlantic, and once established



in America, the settlers became the most promising markets for the growing array of British manufactured goods.<sup>68</sup>

In most accounts of the historiography of New France there has been an assumption that France was also engaged in this process. But was this true? If it was, why did France not have the surplus population and surplus capital for export? Talon, for example, saw the possibilities of colonisation in New France and wished to see them realised. But he was forced to accept, despite his disappointment that "il n'y a pas dans l'ancienne France assez de supernuméraires et de sujets inutiles pour peupler la nouvelle."<sup>69</sup> Such a reality can be lamented--and it has been, often--or it can be judged,--and such judgements permeate the literature--or it can simply be explained. And when we direct our attention to France we discover that there was no "agricultural revolution or indeed any real improvement in French production during the eighteenth century."<sup>70</sup> Unlike English peasants the French had managed to hang onto their land and retain their subsistence living.<sup>71</sup> That is a story in itself, but its import for the colonisation of New France is clear. As long as the majority of the population still eked its living from the land, the conditions for investment in agricultural productivity or manufacturing for mass markets could hardly be seductive. Nor could potential mass consumer markets develop in New France where the re-created seigneurial system provided most people with land. That such

investment in agriculture and commodity production was not forthcoming has often been discussed, regretted and deplored. But those who did not make these kinds of investments have seldom been acknowledged as rational economic actors with better places to put their money.

This argument will be drawn out in the next three chapters. But, to put it succinctly, France was not in the midst of the transition from feudalism to capitalism during the period that it was colonising New France: two new classes--the wage labourers and the bourgeoisie--were not developing apace as they were in England. That being so, what is to be done about Brunet's "équipe imposante d'entrepreneurs capitalistes"?<sup>72</sup> Now that doubt has set in, we can see that there is something unusual about them, and their range of interests--from royal pensions to office holding. Except for one activity--"business relations with the capitalists of the metropolis"--all these interests link this group with the patronage of the state: a state which, in a feudal society, we will assume for the moment, primarily represented the interests of the nobility. This serves to raise the question: who were the capitalists of the metropolis?

In the Brunet-Nish thesis, it is clear that capitalist activity and profit-making are synonymous. But merging these two deprives us of important historical and theoretical distinctions. Profit-making is an old and venerable activity. Certainly it was given its most potent

shot-in-the-arm with the rise of capitalism, but just as surely capitalism did not 'invent' it. To be more specific: the merchant-traders of France and England made their profits primarily through taking advantage of price differences between areas where goods were plentiful and cheap and places where they were scarce and dear. Usually that involved acquiring, transporting and selling luxuries --like furs--to the privileged. But with the transformation of the underlying agrarian relations in England new and far greater opportunities for profit-making were quickly developing. The spiralling growth of a class of dispossessed peasants--cum wage labourers--was producing new opportunities for their more fortunate neighbours to accumulate capital. For the availability of wage labour, and the potential markets of those now obliged to purchase life's necessities, made it possible and profitable for these new men of capital--and for all those with capital--to begin to bring the productive process itself under control.

This development was long, drawn-out and multi-faceted. But it greatly expanded and altered the nature of investment and profit, on the one hand, while it reduced some of the old risks involved in trade based solely on circulation of goods, on the other. The English fur-trade profited from the production of cheaper and more attractive commodities for trade with the Indians,<sup>73</sup> and from the superior English navy and military power,

now unabashedly developed for, and placed at the service of, the country's commercial interests.<sup>74</sup> But at the same time, the fur trade became subordinated to a much wider network of activities centred upon the control of production itself: investments in colonisation, in the creation of new internal and external markets, and in the production of commodities for those markets.<sup>75</sup>

The French merchant-traders, in contrast, continued to operate in a substantially familiar milieu. Their fortunes were still made--and lost--primarily through the circulation of goods destined for the reasonably finite markets of the privileged. Without the expanding markets of the developing English society, profits in trade had limits, and it was accompanied, as always, by great risks. The world's greatest navy did not protect its cargo. Money made in trade was, therefore, seldom left in trade; nor would it have made much economic sense to channel capital in any significant way into agriculture or manufacturing. Rather it continued to be invested with two major goals in mind; security of investment and social mobility: In Ancien Régime France that meant office, rentes, land and noble title. A successful and prescient trader put his son or grandson on the road to the lower nobility.

All this points in one direction. Like cars that are not roadworthy, the designation 'capitalist' that Brunet gave to the wealthy and influential men he found in New

France needs to be recalled. Just how these men made their fortunes, the routes they took to social mobility, and their relationship to the state, the nobility, and the peasantry will be drawn out in Chapter Four. Clearly they were a privileged group, and undoubtedly they decided to return to France after the Conquest for sensible economic and social reasons. In fact, most of them had always been equally comfortable on both sides of the Atlantic and owed their success, in part, to a discriminating sense of when it was better to be where. Still, the Conquest did put an end to this traffic, and, therefore, did provoke a decapitation. We need to look more closely at its nature, however, for those who left were not a group of capitalist entrepreneurs.

The political relevance of this historiographical interpretation rested not only upon the rejection of the racism and quietism of the first two perspectives. It was also grounded in the ideological belief that 'normal' development was capitalist development. To be a normal colony New France had to be the northern twin of the English colonies to the south. A comparative historical analysis of England and France makes it clear that they simply could not have produced look-alikes. But we are not, therefore, obliged to declare one of the colonies peculiar. Instead their differences provide an opportunity to compare the colonisation activities of a feudal society with those of a capitalist. Furthermore,

the link between capitalism and progress that underpins this interpretation, needs to be uncoupled through posing specific historical questions that clarify just for whom, and under what circumstances, capitalism brings progress in its wake.

### A New Society

A counterpoint to the three previous perspectives has been developed by those who have taken seriously the particular realities of life in the New World. For Ouellet France had simply cloned itself in America. The clerico-nationalists pointed to God and the Church as the prime movers of colonial development while Brunet and the others insisted upon the importance of the "métropole-nourricière" for the normal development of the colony. But the emphasis here is upon the founding of a new society. The underlying assumption of this position is that New France was a society whose development turned primarily upon indigenous conditions. The constraints of geography, the rigor of the climate, the centrality of the fur trade, the availability of land, the contact with the Amerindians, the distance from France, and the absence of continuous large-scale immigration from the metropolis to sustain Old World patterns, had created the conditions for a new society and a distinct people. While the French state had provided a necessary starter-kit particularly during

Colbert's impressive decade, as well as resources-- military, economic, and administrative--throughout the colony's history, it had not created a Royal Province like the others in the New World. Quite fundamentally the Monarch had been unable, and perhaps even lacked the will, to lay the groundwork for the development of political absolutism and the institutions of feudal society, including the seigneurial system, in America.

The three main conclusions of this perspective have been that the fur trade not only posed an alternative to life on the land but, in fact, transformed the life of the sedentary folk as well,<sup>76</sup> that the seigneurial system was transformed in the colony into a system of virtually independent land ownership,<sup>77</sup> and that a new social type --the habitant--had evolved in New France.<sup>78</sup> Central to this interpretation has been the privileged place accorded to the fur trade. While its effects on the development of the colony were certainly acknowledged within the first two perspectives, it was perceived primarily as a drain on the colony's more legitimate aspirations. Diamond went so far as to claim that "deviance [i.e. fur trade activity] became the only means of survival."<sup>79</sup> For Groulx the *coureurs-de-bois* were "un gaspillagé de la plus virile jeunesse, de celles des champs et de celles des manoirs."<sup>80</sup> Frégault was not moralistic on this score. The prosperity of the colony depended upon furs, with both the governing class and the peasants benefitting

from their participation.<sup>81</sup>

But the new society perspective went further. The fur trade opened the door to a viable and exciting alternative to a routine existence on the land. It carried with it the potential for an entirely new way of life modelled upon, and even shared with, the Amerindians. Not only did this possibility effect those who actually chose such a lifestyle but, also, the very presence of such an option produced an entire population with little fear of its betters, who could be persuaded but not forced into co-operation. Even many of those who stayed at home were involved in those aspects of the trade that had to be managed from within the colony including the large-scale smuggling activities. The estimates of the proportion of furs garnered by Canadians that was smuggled to Albany reach as high as half.<sup>82</sup> However, "so unanimously was the law opposed by public opinion" Lunn argued, "that an attempt to enforce it by offering increasingly attractive rewards to informers was an almost total failure."<sup>83</sup> She was however, phlegmatic about the illegality of smuggling.

... [I]t is true that smuggling always encourages contempt for law, but the social consequences of the contraband trade were probably negligible in a colony permeated with the lawlessness of all frontier communities.<sup>84</sup>

Yet we clearly cannot attribute the popular support for smuggling to a frontier mentality. Lunn herself noted



that salt smuggling was so pervasive and socially acceptable in France that some of the offenders were shipped off to Canada as reasonable prospects for rehabilitation!

The involvement in the trade also implicated the colony in the internecine Indian wars, and exacerbated them.<sup>85</sup> As a result the people became as proficient militarily, especially in the art of guerilla warfare, as they were on the land. But their skill in this area was partly undone by their independent spirit, according to Eccles.

Unfortunately, their virtues as irregular guerilla fighters were offset by their lack of discipline, their dislike for orders,<sup>86</sup> their insistence on pleasing themselves.

We are a long way from Parkman's subservient population of Groulx' people with a holy mission. But the behaviour and background of the French soldiers on the continent was similar. Between 1610 and 1630 the strength of the army had grown from 20,000 to 150,000, and "from the last decades of the seventeenth century to the end of the Ancien Régime, the state had at least a quarter of a million soldiers on its books--and sometimes double that number in time of war."<sup>87</sup> The army included foreign mercenaries and peasants;<sup>88</sup> the desertion rate was high, the conditions abysmal and "by far the greatest incentive to recruitment was the opportunity for plunder, which warfare then permitted."<sup>89</sup>

More generally, the exclusive emphasis on the special

nature of the fur trade, and its effects, overlooks the large networks of trade in luxury goods that crisscrossed France and reached out to all known parts of the world. It drew thousands of people into its web--people who, therefore, made a living through circulating rather than producing goods and commodities. It is in this context that the fur trade must be understood: the extent of its peculiarity cannot simply be assumed.

The argument that this kind of trade shaped and changed society has been pushed furthest in a particular and influential version of the new society interpretation, the staple thesis. Innis developed the position that Canada's political economy had been structured and shaped by the particular exigencies of successive staple products.<sup>90</sup> Society in New France, therefore, developed as it did because of the imperatives of the fur trade. In his description of the colony's institutional structure Innis sounded like Parkman and Ouellet.

Trade, agricultural development as in the seigniorial tenure, and even religious activities, as shown in the exclusion of the Huguenots and later control of the Jesuits, reflected the influence of centralised control.<sup>91</sup>

But for him, the development of this centralised control in the colony, though consonant with the predilections of a paternalistic France, was primarily rooted in the conditions and demands of the fur trade.

To offset the effects of competition from the English colonies in the south and the Hudson's Bay Company in the

north, a military policy involving Indian alliances, expenditure on strategic posts, expensive campaigns and constant direct and indirect drains on the economic life of New France and old France was essential. As a result of these developments control of political activities in New France was centralised and the paternalism of old France was strengthened by the furtrade.<sup>92</sup>

However, while the central control was maintained in the Colony's external trading relations, it was fractured and destroyed in its internal trading activities. For without a more flexible and decentralised approach in the far-flung trading posts, the trade could not have continued and prospered. In both cases the demands of the trade shaped the nature of the colony.

On the trade was based the life of the colony. The intense activity of the missionaries among the Indians, the violent disputes over the brandy question, the marked interest of the governmental authorities, the break-up of paternalism in the internal trade and its continuation in the external trade, the notorious lack of control over the traders and the colony's lack of development were essential characteristics of a community dependent on furs.<sup>93</sup>

Innis saw the colony from the vantage point of the fur trade, and he did so in an original and interesting way. But it is not an exaggeration to conclude that his resulting analysis--at least that part pertaining to New France--was, indeed, in McNally's words, "commodity fetishism writ large..(with)... [t]he role of social relations of production in shaping and reproducing society ... systematically ignored."<sup>94</sup> We must recall that this trade in luxury goods was grounded in particular

relations between social classes. Without the wealth of the privileged that was amassed through expropriating peasant production, there would have been no trade and no profits. The fur trade did not alter these class relations, though it did provide one way for some men to alter their class position. Nor was the colony dependent on furs, as he asserted; far more of its people relied upon subsistence agriculture. But Innis went even further and claimed that "the economic and institutional life of France undoubtedly suffered material disarrangement through the importation of furs on a large-scale from New France."<sup>95</sup> Eccles has recently called this opinion "a figment of [Innis'] imagination."<sup>96</sup> Given the "volume and value of the fur trade relative to the kingdom's total trade,"<sup>97</sup> the constitutive nature of trade in luxury goods in French feudal society and its failure to penetrate the productive process, Eccles' bluntness should probably be forgiven.

The new society perspective insisted with Innis that the fur trade played an important role in shaping a distinctive society along the shores of the St. Lawrence. But, for an historical geographer like Harris, the transformation of the seigneurial system was even more decisive. He asked a very important question: how could this system function in the vast unoccupied territory of America as it did in France? In the colony land begged for occupancy; older sons and younger sons alike could

receive land grants. In France, on the other hand, the small parcels of land had been subdivided so often that peasants there would resort en masse to coitus interruptus by 1300.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, why would peasants in New France bend to the demands of seigneurs, church and state when the possibility of moving elsewhere presented itself so easily?

His geographical treatment of the seigneurial system seemed to sound the death knell of all previous interpretations.<sup>99</sup> His research demonstrated that the censitaires benefitted from the availability of land and the scarcity of population. As a result, he argued, seigneurial dues dropped so low that the seigneurs, not the habitants, could be considered penurious. What remained of the French seigneurial system was only a legal form which itself would have been swept away if there had been sufficient population to make land speculation profitable. That possibility was waylaid by the absence of continuous large-scale immigration from France; the colony therefore had only to contend with its own natural increase. Harris concluded that the seigneurial system "was largely irrelevant to the general social and economic development of the colony."<sup>100</sup> This thesis has been compatibly reformulated in a Marxist framework by Monière who argued that what had emerged in New France was peasant ownership of land. The seigneurial system constituted "no more than a feudal crust over the

'petty producers' mode of production."<sup>101</sup> This, then, is an important anchor of a new society thesis: the oppressive system of seigneurial dues owed by a peasant to his lord in France, whether in money, goods or labour had been impossible to mobilise in the colony; to all intents and purposes the peasant not only was in possession of his land, as in France, but owned it. As a result, to be a seigneur in the colony was no prize; the position required neither nobility or wealth, nor guaranteed either. In short, the class system of France had simply broken down in the colony because of New World conditions.

The spirit of Harris' conclusions have been incorporated within much of the historiography of New France. But many cautionary notes have also been sounded. Dechêne has pointed out that we should not "exagérer l'insignifiance" of the charges against the peasant.<sup>102</sup> Wallot warned that although "certains (seigneurs) sont necessiteux, il ne faut cependant pas exagérer."<sup>103</sup> More importantly, Harris' method of historical geography, in his own words, "sheds no light"<sup>104</sup> upon the more general societal context in which seigneurs and censitaires related. While seigneurial income may have been, on the average, far less in New France, seigneurs and their sons had access to a range of remunerative possibilities-- merchant-activity, administration, military, rights to trading posts, pensions of various sorts--from which censitaires were excluded. All these possibilities implicated

the seigneurs in the patronage of the French state. Moreover, destitution is relative. The poverty of the lower nobility was considered a social problem in France also, but not, we can be sure, by peasants and vagrants.

The differences between France and New France have been explored even further. For out of the different material conditions had emerged a new social type: the habitant, the peasant who refused to be called a peasant. Paralleling the independent and resourceful coureur-de-bois, the habitant was also disdainful of authority, impervious to the status claims of his betters, reluctant to pay his dues to the seigneur or his tithes to the Church, and litigious in defence of his rights. Wallot has summarised this evidence:

Modifié par l'environnement, le régime seigneurial a engendré un nouveau type social dont il consolide les intérêts: l'habitant indépendant, exempt d'impôt personnel, propriétaire de sa terre, très mobile à cause de la traite et de l'abondance des terres, libéré des corvées seigneuriales et sur le même pied que le seigneur vis à vis les pratiques communautaires. 105

From their Marxist perspective Bourque and Legaré drew similar conclusions about the peasantry. Criticising those who saw the main themes of the colony in terms of the absence or presence of a bourgeoisie they argued that

[c]'est plutôt dans la paysannerie qu'il faut chercher les premières traces d'une originalité propre à l'histoire du peuple québécois... La facilité de l'accès à la terre et l'abondance de

la nature ont permis à la paysannerie coloniale d'acquérir traits sociaux et culturels qui la différencièrent de façon très significative de la paysannerie de la métropole. 106

These comparisons between the peasants of New France and France do not get us very far. They wrest both peasantries from the social and economic context in which they were involved in a struggle for survival with those above them, and proceed to deliver descriptive, comparative statements. It is true that, given the whole new society perspective--lots of land and alternative lifestyles--, there is a kind of logic to the historiographical production of a new social type. The early French Canadian experience appears in this literature as a seventeenth-century precursor to the 1950s drop-out generation, with the forest instead of Greenwich Village as the magnet. But were the peasants of New France more independent, more litigious, less respectful of those above them than the peasants of France, many of whom had risked life and limb fighting the exactions demanded of them? Certainly the evidence on peasant resistance in France indicates that this question requires serious historical consideration, not a decontextualised romanticisation.

There is something curiously adrift with the new society thesis. The problematic of the Parkman perspective--why was New France so different from New England--has been laid to rest primarily by ignoring it. In Duchêne's words,



... [o]n n'y trouvera pas non plus de réflexions sur les facteurs qui ont empêché une croissance parallèle à celle des établissements anglais. Les ressorts sont ailleurs: dans le choix d'une localisation malencontreuse, dans la France de Louis XIV qui n'est pas exportatrice d'hommes. Seule m'importe la vie économique qui a été et non pas celle qui aurait pu être en d'autres lieux et circonstances.<sup>107</sup> (my underline)

But can the fact that France and England embarked upon these colonising ventures at about the same time, and yet met with such very different outcomes, really be pushed aside as a serious historiographical question? The Parkman answers may be uncongenial, but surely the questions bear repetition. After all, before 1640 58,000 people left England for America; by that time the population of New France was 356. When Harris and others explain the availability of land and the lack of land speculation through reference to a small population they do not go on to draw us back to consider the reasons for the staggering demographic differences with the colony to the south.

If land was so much more available in New France, why did the over-crowded thousands not seek to emigrate as did the English? Even the climate of New France was often painted in glowing terms in the Jesuit Rélations. In Salone's words, "les rédacteurs des Relations ne cessent pas de célébrer les bienfaits de l'hiver."<sup>108</sup> It is perhaps hard for those of us who endure the winters in a technologically supportive age to imagine that anyone could be hoodwinked by propaganda about its beneficial qualities. Still, the French who did come made an

impressive adaptation to the climate and it is hard to believe that, other things being equal, fear of winter would have kept the landless hordes away. But what about the hostility of the Indians? This was a fear, however, not absent from English colonies either. And as Salone lamented, if only the French had sent out the six hundred and twenty men that Champlain had requested in 1634 the Indian raids could have been eliminated.<sup>109</sup> What is at issue again is the absence of manpower.

If such indigenous kinds of explanation are discounted as the main causes of population differences, historians must seek deeper causes within French and English society in the seventeenth century. Dechêne's casual remark that Louis XIV's France was not an exporter of men requires exploration. But if we must return to France and England to account for the crucial question of population differences a major crack in the new society thesis appears. How much are these new societies shaped by the old? If it is accepted that New France would have had a very different history if its population had been even half that of New England's in 1640, clearly some crucial explanations for the kind of societies that did develop in America lie embedded in the comparative histories of England and France. This indicates that we must return across the ocean for solutions to other mysteries as well.

But, again, Dechêne asserted that she was not going to deal with colony-metropolis relations because the

primary dynamic for development is internal.

L'histoire politique de Montréal est intimement liée aux destinées de l'empire français, mais c'est précisément une dimension qui je n'aborde pas... car dans une perspective de longue durée ce ne sont pas les compagnies métropolitaines qui comptent, mais l'organisation locale, qui engendre une société nouvelle. 110

Any particular historian can quite legitimately decide, as Dechêne did, not to engage in these questions. But, in general, we court the risk of de-historicising our accounts of the colonies by not encountering their metropolitan background. For the differences between New England and New France are just accepted, while the development within the colonies is explained only with reference to itself. Just as sociologists working within the postulates of functionalism believed societies could be understood without reference to the past, the new society perspective on New France threatens to be history without a history. Dechêne herself explained this dilemma in her succinct critique of Turner's frontier thesis. Arguing that movement westward across the country, whether from New England or from New France, did not produce a new society she wrote that

[L]es colons reproduisent sur ces nouvelles marges de défrichement les traits des côtes qu'ils viennent de quitter ... Confondant le cadre et la source du changement, la thèse de Turner continue de rallier des adhérents qui, ou bien évitent cet exemple particulier

irréconciliable avec les postulats du déterminisme géographique, ou bien l'expliquent en des termes culturels. Dans les deux cas, ils escamotent l'analyse des rapports de production entre la 'frontière' et les métropoles locales et lointaines.<sup>111</sup>

This is surely the most telling criticism of the new society thesis on New France: the relations between metropolis and colony do not constitute the starting point of an analysis, and the proposition that New France was home-grown is assumed rather than proven.

What happens, for example, from this perspective, to a major difference between New France and New England, the difference between the seigneurial system and free land and socage? Marshall Harris has argued that in the American colonies free land and socage had important implications for the development of land speculation: "Speculation on a grandiose scale began with the introduction of selling land as the chief method of disposal."<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, the presence of unimproved land in the west did not prevent the development of land speculation.

Settlers except for some squatters had little desire to push beyond the frontiers... (and) throughout the Colonial period improved land that escheated or otherwise fell into the hands of the proprietors was sold at a higher price.<sup>113</sup>

Richard Cole Harris admitted that the seigneurial system did provide a brake on the alienation of land in New France: that is, there were laws governing the conditions

under which it could be sold. He asserted, however, that with a larger population, the competition for land would have swept the system away making possible the land speculation schemes common in the English colonies.<sup>114</sup> Now there are some problems with this: first, the population differences are accepted not explained. Second, although there was not a lot of unoccupied land in France, and there was a growing landless population, the feudal system of land tenure was not abolished until the Revolution. Systems of property distribution are firmly embedded within the class relations of a society. In France, as we know, sweeping them away involved guillotines as well as brooms. And in England the abolition of feudal tenures, legally confirmed in 1646, has been described as "the terrible tale of the freeing of British workers for the benefit of the new social system."<sup>115</sup>

Clearly we must take some distance from a new society perspective, particularly as a starting point for a study of New France. So much of the evidence about a new society rests upon what appear to be casual assumptions about France in the seventeenth century rather than upon the daunting amount of historical evidence available. A comparative study would force us to call into question many of the assumed differences between France and New France. Were the patterns of relations in the fur trade really so different or were they part of a long-standing network of trade in luxury items? Were the seigneurial dues and tithes

so much lower or did they fall within the normal--and very wide range--existing within continental France? Were the possibilities of social mobility qualitatively different in New France or were they part of a movement from the merchant to the seigneurial and office holding class that France was witnessing? These questions, though posed somewhat rhetorically, require serious consideration. They indicate that an alternative perspective which situates the history of New France in a more global setting is required.

Towards a Re-Interpretation of the  
Historiography of New France

The historiography of New France has been written in the shadow of the more acclaimed developments in the English colonies. Yet the comparisons between the two seldom penetrate through political, social and cultural distinctions to the underlying differences in mode of production prevailing in their metropolises and reaching out to the colonies. In fact, the unreflected assumption has been to the contrary: that England and France were similar countries in economic terms and that their colonising ventures were forged through similar circumstances. This theme of parallel development is woven through the historiography of New France, shaping interpretations, influencing judgements and provoking partial and distorted comparisons with New England. For

a more fundamental comparison between the colonies, beginning with their dramatic demographic differences, we must reach back to Europe for a comparative analysis of the feudal social relations of France and the capitalist social relations that were transforming every facet of English society. It is with capitalisation that the processes that gave rise to full-scale colonisation were unleashed, and, therefore, the colonisation ventures of England and France were only superficially the same. By penetrating beneath the surface for an analysis of the different class relations of England and France we should be able to evolve a comprehensive explanation to substitute for the moral indignation, the regret, the prescriptive asides, the racist remarks, the pseudo-psychological explanations, the apologies, the geographical determinism and the mentalité arguments that have permeated the historiography.

What can we anticipate from an interpretation that insists that New France, no less than any of the other provinces of France requires its own historical investigations, but that these must be situated in the context of that mode of production prevailing in France from early settlement to the Conquest: namely, feudalism, understood as a dynamic and particular set of social relations in which the rights to the surplus production were continually contested by the primary producers themselves, by the nobility, by the Church and by the

state? At this point three different claims can be made.

First, the role of the seigneurial system in structuring the disposition and alienation of land and the allocation of surplus production can be analysed in the context of the range of prevailing agrarian relations in seventeenth century France. Assumptions that the system in New France was more pristine, more archaic, more flexible or totally transformed need to be reformulated: what were the particular conditions that determined the changing outcome of the struggle between peasant and seigneur, peasant and Church, peasant and state for control over peasant surplus? This analysis will also provide the occasion for re-examining the myths about the peasants in New France. It will substitute portraits of them as a new social type, or as reactionary and submissive, with a class analysis: namely, that the peasants in New France, like their counterparts in France, were rational actors who struggled within the parameters of the seemingly available options for those outcomes that suited them best.

Second, it will provide a context for evaluating the French state and its role in New France in terms of the contemporary debate on the nature of the state in feudal society. Judgements about the monarch's negligence, corruption, paternalism or despotism in New France can be situated within this kind of analysis: with whose interest was the Absolute Monarchy's implicated? the aristocracy's?



that of a nascent bourgeoisie's? with the peasants? And what were the grounds, if any, for its autonomy from any of these classes? To answer these questions the fiscal underpinnings of the state and, therefore, the sources of its revenue for colonisation require investigation.

Third, it will provide an opportunity to re-examine the fur trade, not as a sign of embryonic capitalist development, but as an intrinsic part of feudal society. As such the merchant traders of New France can be studied in terms of their own economic interests, and that involved a particular relationship with the state that blended parasitism, privilege and protection. The comparisons between them and English capitalists can be made on these grounds rather than on the basis of personal characteristics or mentalité. The debate about the decapitation of New France can be reconsidered: who were Brunet's entrepreneurial capitalists? Nish's bourgeois gentilshommes? The privileged groups in New France can be studied in the context of the network of privileges and obligations that permeated and informed the social structure of France in the seventeenth century.

In short through an understanding of feudal social relations, their specific evolution in France, and how they were re-produced in the colony, together with an analysis of the transition to capitalism in England, a re-interpretation of the colonisation and history of New France can be developed. In this process some of the

gaps in the historiography can be filled, some of the flaws perceived, some of the 'mysteries' understood, some of the contradictions unravelled and some of the debates resolved. The result should be a more systematic and comprehensive framework for interpreting Quebec's early history.

The focus in the next three chapters will be upon the social relations of metropolitan France. Such a perspective--which Miquelon has called approvingly a "surrender" to the "imperialism of the metropolis" through accepting that "the most important thing in the history of an empire is the history of its mother country"<sup>116</sup> is not without its difficulties. Not only are the histories of New France far from replete with references to the metropolis, but also the major histories of France seldom have a place, however small, for its North American colony. That is not, I think, primarily a result of metropolitan arrogance or even of neglect, either calculated or unthinking, for a colony that slipped from France's control thirty years before the Revolution. For the writing of the history of the Ancien Régime has been an elusive task. In many ways it is not the writing of the history of a country at all, but rather the piecing together of provincial and local histories that differ widely from each other, a history of regions, provinces and towns that were pulled together at different times, that were often conquered, lost and

re-conquered. In the words of one historian,

[u]nlike their Anglo-Norman cousins, the medieval kings of France had built up their power slowly. The highly structured feudalism of England resulted from the exceptional circumstances which followed the [Norman] conquest, allowing the imposition of a uniform system over a wide area. The French monarchs, in contrast, assembled their kingdom piecemeal, layer on layer. They accreted different customs, legal systems, and privileges, with little more to tie them together than the personal authority of the king. Under such conditions there was always a threat that the peripheral areas might break away, either to become independent or to attach themselves to neighbouring states.<sup>117</sup>

Faced with this disparity the tendency among historians in recent years has been to write detailed regional monographs. While these are often seen as building blocks for an overall history of France, forging the links between them has not been a priority. At times, monographs "have emphasised to the point of caricature the long-standing, fundamental disparity in local conditions."<sup>118</sup> This concentration on provincial and regional histories, became so great that Isser Woloch could write approvingly of Braudel and Labrousse's massive work Histoire économique et sociale de la France that, "above all, they allow us once again to talk confidently about France as a whole."<sup>119</sup> It is hardly surprising that under these conditions the equally 'special' case of New France is seldom included.

In order to explore the metropolitan background of New France both tendencies--one that reaches and pulls

out overall patterns, and one that appreciates regional differences--need to be utilised. On the one hand, an appreciation of the regional and provincial differences will permit an assessment about whether the various aspects of the history of New France fall within the range of metropolitan experience. It will permit answers to those historians who argue that 'New France was different because'--the rate of tithing was 1/26, or seigneurial dues were low, or the peasants were rebellious (or docile), or the alternative of the fur trade permitted an escape from agriculture, or non-nobles could be seigneurs. But responses to these kinds of statements could result in little more than a collection of discrete comparisons on a variety of issues: here New France resembles Provence, here Brittany and so on. What is more important is to be able to situate the colonisation of New France within a history of France that delineates the economic, social and political relations of an epoch. An "epochal analysis" in Raymond Williams words, permits an emphasis upon the "dominant and definitive lineaments and features"<sup>120</sup> of a society. That is to say, France in the seventeenth century was not an industrial society, nor a capitalist society, nor a society based on slave labour. It was not a constitutional monarchy, a bourgeois democracy, a socialist state or a fascist dictatorship. During the period when France was colonising America, it comprised many different feudal

societies that were increasingly linked and unified through the institutionalised and overlapping networks of Church, state and trade. Such an analysis permits a re-interpretation of New France that takes account of the overall parameters of the predominant social relationships of seventeenth century France.

The next three chapters will discuss the relevant aspects of French society for understanding the colony. They will provide an analysis of the relationships between peasantry and nobility, the relations of state and the relations of capital. This will provide the context for an exploration of the colonisation and development of New France.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FEUDAL RELATIONS AND THE PEASANTRY

Seventeenth century France was a collection of provinces that had slowly been knit together through the centralising policies of the monarch. It was a trying business to be king. Looking back on his ascension to the throne Louis XIV wrote: "at home chaos reigned."<sup>1</sup> The process of consolidating the different regions of France into a single kingdom had been far from simple. Frontier areas had to be guarded against attack or secession; provincial traditions and practices had to be respected or, failing that encroached upon with finesse; and the army--one-third mercenary, buttressed by volunteer provincial militia and dependent upon looting its own civilian population for its upkeep--could not always be counted on.<sup>2</sup> Internally there were problems too: downwardly mobile nobles had to be appeased; new men had to be both incorporated and kept in their place. Fresh in Louis' mind was the memory of the Civil War of mid-century when as a young king-in-trust he had been forced to flee Paris with his court--small comfort if latter-day historians "have repeatedly stressed the strangely negative and futile character of the Fronde."<sup>3</sup>

But above all, the peasants, the vast majority of his subjects, had to be prevented from mobilising either to address their own grievances, or to serve the interests of the privileged but disaffected.<sup>4</sup>

Louis XIV was not especially interested in the circumstances of the peasants.<sup>5</sup> Yet it was upon them "the most numerous, dependent and eminently productive section of the community" that "society, like the State and the economy, rested."<sup>6</sup> In this chapter the circumstances of the French peasantry will be explored, and in particular, its relationship with the nobility. The discussion is organised around four basic issues that emerged from the critique of the historiography of New France. First the historical and theoretical grounds for arguing that France was a feudal society require elaboration. Second the range in seigneurial dues throughout the country will be examined to determine if, in this respect, New France departed significantly from the continental practices. Third the literature on peasant resignation and resistance will be discussed to provide a context for evaluating the argument that the habitant of New France was a 'new social type'. Finally we will look more closely at the explanation for why the France of Louis XIV, unlike its competitor across the channel, was not an "exportatrice d'hommes."

### A Feudal Society

The theoretical and historical distinctions between feudalism and capitalism are, as I have argued, very important for understanding the different colonisation experiences of France and England in America. These concepts direct attention to the predominant networks of social relations in a society. They refer to different systems of property relationships, different kinds of relationships between people, different class systems. Marx explained why these relationships--which identify different means by which surplus production or value is garnered by the few from the many--are central to comparative historical analysis.

The specific economic form in which unpaid surplus is pumped out of the direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows immediately out of production itself and reacts upon it as a determining element ... it is always the direct relation of the owners of production to the direct producers which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden foundation of the entire construction and with it the political form of the relations between sovereignty and dependence.

Although this formulation has a strongly deterministic ring, it has motivated research that has explored how such relationships develop, are reproduced, and consolidated in in all their historical complexity and specificity. This



research has, in Abrams words, moved "readily between a theoretical sense of what had to happen and an empirical discussion of what actually did happen."<sup>8</sup> But this theoretical sense of what "had to happen" is not ahistorical. What it means is that these structured relationships of exploitation or "social property systems once established, tend to set limits and impose certain overall patterns upon the course of economic evolution."<sup>9</sup> They can be conceptualized as setting the parameters within which forms of domination and subordination take shape and are played out; they tend to make possible the development of certain kinds of institutional arrangements for their consolidation and perpetuation; they also provide the terrain for particular forms of resistance and not for others.<sup>10</sup>

So these class relationships are themselves apprehended as dynamic and historically constituted. Nor does a dominant pattern of class relations preclude its coexistence with other forms. There were, for example, wage labourers in feudal society while independent commodity producers continue to exist, in however-an-encroached-upon-fashion, in capitalist society. But more important for this study is the particular relationship between feudalism and capitalism. For historically capitalist social relations developed both within feudal society and from the carnage left from its disintegration. But not all the time and not everywhere.

The problem of explaining the rise of capitalism has thus become steadily more sharply specified—a matter of one particular solution in one particular area to one particular version of the crisis of feudalism. But within that narrowing of the problem, that increasingly precise understanding of its context, has gone an increasingly confident ability to demonstrate that the making of capitalism was indeed a matter of the creating of a particular solution to the problems of feudalism by particular human beings in a particular historically structured situation.

In England the key location for change was the countryside. From the last quarter of the sixteenth century the capitalisation of agriculture was transforming a country of peasants and lords, independent craftsmen and traders, into a nation of wage labourers and capitalists.<sup>12</sup> With this transformation the producing class and the process of production gradually became directly subordinate to the capitalist class: "the severing of the wage worker from control of the means of production places him/her in a situation of necessary economic dependence upon the employer."<sup>13</sup> John Pym captured this dilemma in the language of the times. He warned the lords of the "great multitudes who are set on work, who live for the most part on their daily gettings and will in a very short time be brought to great extremity if not employed."<sup>14</sup> (underline mine) In capitalist society the control over workers is economic; to live one must eat; to eat one must sell one's labour power in the marketplace.

In feudal society the coercive power upon the

producer is legal, jurisdiction backed ultimately by legitimate forms of force. Following Marx, Giddens elaborates this important distinction in his comparison between what he calls class-divided societies and class societies.

In class-divided societies the extraction of surplus production is normally backed in a direct way by the threat or the use of force. Class division rests less on control of allocative than of authoritative resources, usually backed by the potential or actual use of violence... This is above all the case with class relations involving agrarian production, which of course has been in all non-capitalist societies the pre-eminent basis of economic life. In capitalism, by contrast, the dominant class acquires its position by virtue of the economic power yielded by the ownership of private property. As the fundamental axis of the capitalist mode of production, the capitalist labour contract has no counterpart in class-divided societies.<sup>15</sup>

The peasant has access to the means of production--his land and tools--that he needs to produce some sort of subsistence living.<sup>16</sup> As such he also controls the productive process itself; no clocks, efficiency experts or foremen chart his day. But still all was not roses: legally he had to turn over his surplus<sup>17</sup> to his lord, to the Church, and by the seventeenth century, especially to the state as well.

Whatever the form of income transfer (labour, goods or money) it was legitimated and guaranteed by jurisdiction. Jurisdiction was the principal expression of power in

feudal society more so than mere armed force, though armed force was always there, as it were in the wings, but visible.<sup>18</sup>

How peasants actually fared in this system depended upon many factors. By most accounts their lot was not a happy one: barely able to scratch a living from the land in good years, their ranks were decimated during the all-too-frequent famines by starvation and disease. The explanation for their poverty and misery has often been placed at their own doorstep. In these accounts, the soil-destroying consequences of their archaic rotation system, their reactionary stance towards potentially more productive methods, and their sheer lack of imagination prevented any amelioration in their condition. Such an analysis permits its perpetuators to welcome the progressive and enlightened capitalist system with little even perfunctory regret for the 'temporary' dislocation of a people, and the permanent destruction of a class and a way of life.

In contrast Goubert has argued that this system of peasant proprietorship did not call forth inevitably insufficient harvests. In his detailed monograph of seventeenth century Beauvais he showed that peasant production was sufficient to feed the population. What was responsible for the "demi-misère des paysans beauvaisin" was not their agricultural methods but "la cascade des prélèvements, dans l'accumulation des parties prenantes qui s'abattaient sur leurs revenus bruts."<sup>19</sup> While the exactions of church, state, and nobility varied

greatly throughout France and through time, in Beauvais a peasant kept on average only forty-eight per cent of his harvest.<sup>20</sup> Not only did the weight of these exactions often threaten life itself, it prevented the possibility of capital accumulation within the ranks of the peasantry. As Forster noted appropriately in his book on the Depont family of La Rochelle

... alternative investment opportunity has a very modern ring about it, suggesting that such decisions can be reduced to comparative cost analysis. Depont's tenants [and this was the 1780's] had neither the information, the capital nor indeed the opportunity to circumvent the obstacles presented.<sup>21</sup>

The demographic argument--"that fatal tendency of a peasant household economy to enter into a self-destructive cycle of demographic expansion and impoverishment"--<sup>22</sup> has also been used to explain why the system of peasant production for family use had to give way to capitalist agriculture. But Hilton has provided a rejoinder to this position. He pointed out that "[t]he peasant economy did not exist in a social vacuum." There was unoccupied land; it was simply not available.

Given the enormous forest areas in most European countries which existed at the height of population growth, it might seem that the lateral extension of the peasant economy need not have resulted in any deterioration in conditions.<sup>23</sup>

But what was decisive were "the institutional restraints such as forest law on the natural growth of this economy."<sup>24</sup>

Marc Bloch also demonstrated the socially constructed aspect to availability and scarcity of land. After the serious depopulation crisis brought about by the Hundred Years War and the plagues that followed, labour was scarce and land once again plentiful. The peasants benefited from this disaster. In order to attract them demands were lowered, and the heritability of tenures assured, "since this was now an accustomed right, not to be surrendered without a struggle."<sup>25</sup> Over time, however, the lords recouped their losses and when similar conditions occurred in some provinces in the seventeenth century "the seigneurial class rejuvenated and enriched... [evolved]...far more sophisticated methods of exploitation than any used in the past."<sup>26</sup>

This is an important argument to bear in mind in an analysis of the relationship between people and land in New France. The idea that new kinds of societies had been created in America through the possibilities opened up by free land, in uncharted territory, received its most systematic and convincing exposition from Turner. The impact of his frontier thesis on the historiography of New France is most clearly seen in Harris' work which concluded that in the application of the frontier thesis to New France, "Turner was closer to the truth than were his critics."<sup>27</sup> But, as Hilton and Bloch both demonstrated, availability of land does not present itself as some unmediated 'fact of life'. And in New France land was

also available through a particular system of land tenure which emerged from, and itself reproduced, distinctions of class and power, with concomitant sets of rights and obligations. Even Harris conceded that the retention of the seigneurial system carried with it a series of restrictions on land alienation: lods and ventes, retrait roturier, retrait lignager, and the legitimé.<sup>28</sup>

The theoretical availability of land clearly does not guarantee that everyone shall have land. A comparison with New England shows that the question of who shall, and who shall not, have land, and under what conditions, was structured through a particular system of land disposition. Sakolski noted that "the New England practice of creating towns as a method of land settlement, was by no means a plan to give every inhabitant an allotment of land."<sup>29</sup> The Massachusetts Bay Company, for example, was controlled and governed by a group of shareholders in the company who claimed pre-emption of the land while "their followers or retinues, such as indentured servants, received no land and were deprived of the privilege of a voice in local government."<sup>30</sup> In New France it was the nature of the feudal tenure system itself, not its absence, that provided most men with eventual access to land.

The argument that New France was not feudal has not only rested upon this assumed significance of available land. For in the Canadian historiography, feudalism has been equated with the medieval military system that bonded

vassal and lord, and, therefore, ensured that the latter could raise armies among his own retinue of retainers. Now that was indeed a particular aspect of feudal society that had gradually atrophied in France itself, in the presence of a growing centralised state with its own army. Its demise had not, however, ushered in a new system of class relations. The absence of this bond in New France does not prove, in Trudel's words, that "the seigneurial system was not feudal".<sup>31</sup> As Dobb argued,

... [b]asically the mode of production under feudalism was the petty mode of production--production by small producers attached to the land and to their instruments of production. The basic social relation rested on the extraction of the surplus product of this petty mode of production by the feudal ruling class--an exploitation-relationship that was buttressed by various methods of 'extra-economic compulsion'.<sup>32</sup>

This was the source of "the essential conflict generated by a feudal mode of production."<sup>33</sup> Peasants possessed their land and, therefore, had direct access to production. But this production had to be shared with the small percentage of the population that had thrown off the yoke of manual labour for finer things. The privileged classes used their share of the fruits of peasant labour in many ways: to build all the wonderful churches and castles that continue to draw admiration; to withdraw into Christian contemplation; to purchase the exotic luxuries that arrived from all over the world; to pay armies and wage war; and to colonise America.



It hardly needs emphasising that it was the product of this peasant economy, or rather that part of the product which the peasant household was not able to retain within the holding (whether in labour, kind, or cash), which provided the necessary support for the whole social and political superstructure of nobles, clergy, towns and state.<sup>34</sup>

This was the system of land tenure that the state sought to reproduce in New France. As early as the sixteenth century "those who wished to direct great colonisation schemes" foresaw the use in America of the seigneurial system.<sup>35</sup> The actual introduction of seigneurs and censitaires by the Compagnie de cent associés was, however reluctantly and sporadically, undertaken only in the 1630's. In the course of the French Régime approximately two hundred and fifty seigneuries were granted by the Company, --"le grand seigneur"--and then after 1674 by the king. My argument is that New France became a colony primarily organised through the seigneurial system in the important sense that this system defined the central relationships between people and set the parameters for the kind of economic life that prevailed until the end of the French regime.<sup>36</sup> The subsistence farming of the majority, together with their legal obligation to hand over surplus production to seigneurs and church, extended the French system into the New World. There was no opportunity to amass surplus capital as with freeholders in England and in the American colonies, and only limited markets since

most people had access to land.<sup>37</sup>

### Seigneurial Dues

Even if it were conceded that the seigneurial system did structure the relationship between classes and between people and land in New France, the argument that the low rate of seigneurial dues took the teeth out of the system still remains. Wallot argued that

[e]n France, un large fossé économique départage les seigneurs des censitaires, des privilèges politiques et sociaux, les nobles des roturiers. Ces disparités marquées s'estompent au Canada et se situent davantage au plan honorifique, d'où les nombreuses querelles de préséance. La plupart des seigneurs ne sont pas riches. Plusieurs ne vivent pas mieux que les habitants à l'aise ou sont réduits à labourer eux-mêmes leur domaine.<sup>38</sup>

Monière asserted that "the farmer owned his plot of land and he was sole master of his work and production."<sup>39</sup> To substantiate this claim he pointed out that

... virtually no production was expropriated in New France. The tithe represented 4 per cent of production, and the seigniorial rent--when it was collected--11 per cent, whereas for the French peasantry these extortions totalled 30 per cent.<sup>40</sup>

But the evidence is that the habitants were not so cavalier about the fruits of their labour as Monière: is 15 per

cent of all production the same as "virtually" none? This question needs to be evaluated in the French context.

To begin, it is important to note the economic distinctions within the peasantry itself.<sup>41</sup> It is true that the circumstances in France were not giving rise to the well-off strata of English peasants--the romanticised yeomanry--who were able to accumulate the capital necessary to transform the nature of agricultural production.<sup>42</sup> But, nonetheless, some peasants were poorer--a lot poorer--than others. In Beauvais, an unmerciful region for peasants, about one in ten had the sixty-five acres necessary to survive bad years comfortably.<sup>43</sup> Throughout France there were peasants who accumulated land, animals, social prestige and even capital to lend to their less fortunate neighbours. They tended to merge into the "world of the rentiers,"<sup>44</sup> and from these people the celebrated "cock of the village" was drawn.<sup>45</sup> At the bottom end of the peasant hierarchy were those scarcely entitled to the name. What separated them from the vagrants below was a residence--of sorts--a bit of land and perhaps a chicken or two. The range between was continuous. In some places métayage (sharecropping) permitted a degree of stability; in others it was a prelude to dropping into the landless mass below:<sup>46</sup> the 200,000 strong feudal version of capitalism's 'lumpen proletariat'.<sup>47</sup>

The distribution of peasants in terms of their economic situation was not even throughout France, and

this is not surprising. Not only were there big differences in climate and soil, but each region had different rates of seigneurial dues. To further complicate the situation these proportions did not necessarily correspond to similar positions on the scales of tithes and taxes. The entire complex of exactions, "the bewildering variety"<sup>48</sup> as one historian lamented, is beyond the scope or capacity of this paper to sort out. But it is worth noting the major difference between north and south, differences handed down through centuries of custom and tradition. In the north the presumption was always against the peasant: "no land without a lord,"<sup>49</sup> and consequently "Brittany and Burgundy have disclosed extremely harsh types of seigneurial rule."<sup>50</sup> But in the Midi, the saying "no lord without a title" reflected both the fragility of the seigneurial tie and the low seigneurial revenue.<sup>51</sup>

The range in seigneurial exactions, then, was great. They could be almost inconsequential in terms of their effect upon peasant livelihood or onerous enough to threaten the very ability to retain land.

S'il ne s'agissait que de cens en argent, le prélèvement était presque négligeable. Tout changeait si le seigneur avait conservé le droit de champart. Celui-ci pouvait monter à 15% de la récolte brute, le double de la dîme. Dans la région parisienne, le cas était heureusement assez rare, mais d'autres provinces étaient beaucoup moins favorisées. En Bourgogne, en Anjou, en Champagne, le champart, l'agrier, la tierce étaient une réalité quotidienne.<sup>52</sup>

Tithes and taxes also varied enormously. Around 1730 in Basse-Provence alone tithes ranged from 1/3 (in one community) through 1/16 (in thirty-six) to 1/24-1/50 (in eight).<sup>53</sup> It is little wonder that comparisons with New France vary so greatly; one can simply choose the numbers that accord with one's argument!

State taxation also varied throughout the country. While the "pays d'Etat"--provinces still possessing their own estates--were taxed at a lower rate,<sup>54</sup> the average rate was perhaps "1/8 or 12.5% of the gross yield of the first course." Again, however there is "bewildering variety."

The general distribution and uniformity of royal taxation was at odds with the institutions and customs of each province, 'country' (pays) and town absorbed by the realm, as well as with the astonishing tangle of personal and collective 'privileges' which were much more than the prerogative of the two ancient<sup>55</sup> 'orders' of priests and warriors.

The direct tax--the taille--functioned very differently in different parts of the country. In some places it was a tax on individuals, in other places, on land. Also "the more peripheral pays d'état, ... not long incorporated into the kingdom, like Brittany and Provence voted an annual sum" through their Estates.<sup>57</sup> Weaving its way through all this was the arbitrary method of tax assessment which "reposait sur des impressions plutôt que sur les statistiques."<sup>57</sup>

How much of peasant production then was garnered in one way or another by others? Pierre Goubert has offered

a most educated guess:

The inroads made into gross peasant production by this spate of rents, very unevenly distributed, can never be assessed at less than one fifth and must often have reached twice and in local instances three times that amount (some historians have suggested even higher rates, but these are rarely admissible, in the long run at any rate.

The situation of the peasants of New France has to be assessed in the context of this complex, highly variable, and often quite unknown, (at least in any precise sense), metropolitan background. Most French peasants were forced to hand over at least 20 per cent of their production while those in New France averaged 15 per cent. These differences hardly point to a transformation of the feudal social relations of production. Both in France and in New France, relinquishing this amount of surplus prevented the accumulation of capital by any significant proportion of the peasantry. But it does suggest that the peasants of New France appear to have been able to resist the demands placed upon them more successfully than most of their French counterparts. Exploring why and how that was so leads us to the next discussion on peasant resistance and class conflict in feudal society.

#### Resignation and Resistance

There are two competing assumptions about the peasantry in the historiography of New France. The Ouellet school

insisted that peasants in France and its colony were essentially passive, and submitted to the demands of their overlords without quarrel. In that sense the peasants were both authors of their own fate and served to retard the economic development of the whole society. The new society thesis basically accepted this description of French peasants but argued that the indigenous conditions of America had shaped a new 'social type': feisty, independent and resistant towards the presumptions of the privileged. The recent studies of French peasants call these assumptions into question. It suggests that the rebellious behaviour of the habitants of New France was not conceived in the New World, but rather had a long and distinguished history in the Old, and was, in fact, endemic to the very relationships between peasants and the nobility, the Church, and the state.

This 'new' historiography forms part of the literature that has rescued the uncommon common people from obscurity.<sup>59</sup> In the history recounting the glamorous tales of lords and ladies, the political intrigues of kings and their courts, and the stories of battles, won and lost, peasants had appeared as they did to their own masters: "not at all as an end ... but simply as an instrument" of policy."<sup>60</sup> The perspective that individually, and more especially collectively, they played a part in creating their own social world and, therefore, in making history has constituted a major challenge to the discipline. In

these new accounts peasant passivity does not disappear. The conditions that created it were real enough. But the emphasis is upon the almost tangible tension between that peasant resignation, on the one hand, and their active and fierce resistance, on the other. For there seems little doubt that much of the time, for most of the peasantry, the task was simply to get by.

Uncertainty and dependence do not necessarily involve rebellion or continual misery; adaptability, habit, and a kind of stupefaction caused by a non-existent, even positively damaging cultural life, more often result in the listless acceptance of dull, fitful mediocrity.<sup>61</sup>

Certainly the weight of political, military, legal, economic, and cultural pressures militated against any expectations that success would crown their efforts to resist. Nonetheless, there was struggle: "malgré l'appareil répressif de la seigneurie et de l'Etat monarchique la paysannerie a tenté de lutter contre l'inévitable."<sup>62</sup>

Subterfuge, fraud, flight, bribery and stalling were individual and family tactics that helped ensure that the French peasantry, though often endangered, did not face extinction. Payments of seigneurial dues were put off;<sup>63</sup> tithe collectors were evaded; produce was hidden. When all else failed, peasants fled into nearby forests to outwait and outwit tax collectors.<sup>64</sup> Flight was also a frequent response to the arrival of soldiers, their right



to a billet, and their ability to demand even more.

"Redoutée en temps de paix, la soldatesque l'était encore plus en période d'opérations."<sup>65</sup> But such resistance was tough: "la fuite désordonnée, meubles entassés sur la charrette, bêtes poussées par les enfants et les chiens."<sup>66</sup> Only the poorest had less to lose by flight; others stayed, hoping to survive the unwelcome visitation. At times seigneurs offered protection within their walls--whether out of pity, the desire to ensure that sufficient produce remained for their own dues to be paid, or to enlist the peasants in struggles against the fiscal demands of the state.<sup>67</sup>

These acts of evasion were woven into everyday experience; they must have been as much a part of peasant life as the very processes involved in labour itself. Their very nature--above all the need for secrecy--ensured that the amount of evidence for them is hardly commensurate with their occurrence. But there is enough to prevent us from sharing the view of many of their social betters that they were little more than animals,<sup>68</sup> or scholars who would see them as blind perpetrators of a static social system.

Beyond individual and family resistance were the collective remonstrances, rebellions, acts of sabotage and murder. The major debate about peasant resistance--to what extent it amounted to 'class war' and to what extent it was far more local, spontaneous, or, even prompted by

clashes within the ruling class--is not settled.<sup>69</sup> What does seem clear is that it could run the whole continuum. On one end were "full-scale peasant wars or revolts, (which) unlike mere riots or terrorism, tended to be the product of a whole range of grievances, triggered off by crises which added unbearable aggravation."<sup>70</sup> Ladurie writes of the rural unrest in the whole of the Midi from 1525-1560 that "was born of fiscal discontent and the struggle against the tithe."

It later blossomed into the revolutionary praxis of the years 1560-94 at which time it mounted an assault on the whole established order becoming by degrees--without system and with varying intensity--anti-tax, anti-tithe and anti-manorial all at the same time.<sup>71</sup>

At certain moments "entre 1630 et la Fronde, [for example] on peut dire qu'un tiers du pays est en état de semi-rébellion."<sup>72</sup>

Such generalised insurrection primarily occurred in the provinces of the West and South, provinces with a recent history of their own estates et "celles où les réformés avaient été et demeuraient nombreux."<sup>73</sup>

The more continuously and uniformly oppressed provinces of the north were calmer. Therefore, while it is true that "poverty and hunger are an essential element in any discussion of causal priorities"<sup>74</sup> they are a necessary but not sufficient condition for widespread resistance. It seems that a memory contributes: a memory both of past resistance, and a memory of better times.<sup>75</sup> This helps explain why collective resistance was mounted primarily

in defense of established custom and rights, and to prevent further encroachments, rather than as part of an ongoing assault on the system itself.

Au vrai, comme on peut le voir, les droits seigneuriaux et la dîme étaient acceptés, parce qu'ils faisaient depuis toujours partie de l'univers paysan. On refusait les changements, on défendait la coutume, mais la force de l'habitude jouait.<sup>76</sup>

In Chapter 5 I shall argue that the habitants of New France also had a particular status quo to defend. When they were first allotted their land there could be no exactions because there was no surplus; indeed until land could be cleared, planted, and harvested there was no subsistence either, and credit or grants had to be extended. But as the land was developed, Church, state and seigneurs started coming by for their cut. Like French peasants, these habitants defended established custom--they would keep everything! In this context the 15 per cent of production--only a round figure and subject to many time and place variations--hardly represented "virtually" nothing. But it was not what those above had in mind either. As in France, these percentages were negotiated--not around a bargaining table--but through individual and collective struggle between the peasants and the privileged.

#### Peasant Struggle and Colonisation

There was also a long-term--a centuries long--and deeply contextualised historical dimension to these

struggles. Their outcomes in England and France were very different, and these differences ultimately had great significance for the colonisation of America.

In France these struggles contributed to and were shaped by inter-class rivalry within the nobility. This nobility had emerged from the medieval period weakened by declining seigneurial revenues due to earlier "peasant conquests."<sup>77</sup> The rise of a strong centralised state--(in part a response to the nobility's need for collective defense)<sup>78</sup>--had further eroded its wealth and power. For the state, with its own claims upon peasant production and its own system of justice, had the will and the means to guarantee peasant land tenure. What is significant for our immediate purposes was the seventeenth century result. By then the peasant right to inherit the land of his father was both judicially sanctioned<sup>79</sup> and accepted in popular wisdom.<sup>80</sup> In Bloch's words, "crushed by taxation, ill-nourished and ill-clad, quite indifferent indeed to his creature comforts, the French villager, nevertheless, held his land by inheritance."<sup>81</sup> A pyrrhic victory perhaps: for the state which had supported his claims against those of the nobility steadily advanced its own demands. This "monstrueux gonflement de la fiscalité royale"<sup>82</sup> fed primarily off the peasantry as the major source of wealth in feudal society.

Davis summarised the situation of the peasantry in seventeenth century France.

The poor peasant producing his main crop for the subsistence of his own family, remained the typical occupier of the soil, not easily removed from his land unless he got into debt, yet overburdened by a collection of charges among which national taxation might be the heaviest. He was not able to accumulate capital in order to change his practices, and could not be forced to make the attempt.<sup>83</sup>

The outcome of these struggles was very different for the English peasant. In the evolution of English justice the lords' courts had retained jurisdiction over matters relating to peasant tenure; decisions about land, not surprisingly, went against the peasant. That margin of protection that had opened up between seigneurial and monarchical justice for French peasants did not materialise for their English counterparts. As long as it suited the lords to retain old copyholds, life went on as usual. But when more lucrative alternatives to land use began to open up peasants found themselves in a weak position.

Many tenants who thought that they were copyholders of inheritance at customary rents and with fixed fines, and who had been treated as such for generations by the stewards of their manors, and who had documents to prove it, suddenly found that in the eyes of the law they had no such estates at all. ... Many hoped against hope, clung to worthless copies, and forced trials that could only go against them.<sup>84</sup>

In England "peasant security of tenure was broken down and a means of pressure to greater flexibility in land use was created."<sup>85</sup> There was a close fit between such progress in agriculture and the decline of the small peasant. As Hill pointed out, "the century of agricultural prosperity

which followed the Civil War victories of Cromwell's yeoman cavalry was also the century of the disappearance of the small landowner."<sup>86</sup> In particular the right to enclose common lands which deprived the peasantry of the source of many different ways to supplement their subsistence was sought and won by the Crown and the nobility.<sup>87</sup>

The argument that the differential timing of the transition from feudalism to capitalism in England and France rested upon the outcome of centuries of class conflict, and, in particular, upon whether peasants were able to retain their land has been ably presented by Brenner.

In sum, fully to comprehend long-term economic development, growth and/or retrogression in the late medieval and early modern period, it is critical to analyse the relatively autonomous processes by which particular class structures, especially property or surplus-extraction relations, are established and in particular the class conflicts to which they do or do not give rise. For it is in the outcome of such class conflicts--the reaffirmation of the old property relations or their destruction and the consequent establishment of a new structure--that is to be found perhaps the key to the problem of long-term economic development in late medieval and early modern Europe and more generally of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. [my underline]

These processes in both England and France were vastly more complicated than this brief summary suggests. After all, the history of some four centuries is at stake here! But for present purposes there are two important

issues that emerge from this argument.

First, in both England and France peasants fought to retain their land and their right to common land. The French peasants of the seventeenth century had won this struggle, though hardly on their own terms. In England, as Manning has argued, this conflict over "whether the landlords and big farmers or the mass of the peasantry were to control and develop the wastes and commons ... was the central agrarian issue of the 1630s and 1640s and of the English Revolution."<sup>89</sup> This emphasises that however burdensome and precarious their way-of-life--and it was clearly both--peasants struggled for its preservation. Certainly it looked better than the alternative--and for most people, at least in the short term (say two hundred years), it probably was. For them their lifeline was their land. English peasants did not willingly 'free' themselves from the soil. They were forced off and found themselves free to sell their labour power in the open marketplace. Particularly before capitalist production had developed sufficiently to require anything like the potential wage labour available, this was a dubious privilege at best. Tawney's words, put in the mouth of the 'freed' peasantry illustrates this.

True, our system is wasteful, and fruitful of many small disputes. True, a large estate can be managed more economically than a small one. True, pasture-farming yields higher profits than tillage. Nevertheless, master

steward, our wasteful husbandry feeds many households where your economical methods would feed few. In our ill-arranged fields and scrubby commons most families hold a share, though it be but a few roods. In our unenclosed village there are few rich but there are few destitute, save when God sends a bad harvest, and we all starve together. 90

Labels--like progressive, reactionary, enlightened and superstitious--need to be held in abeyance. For them to be meaningful outside of the fantasies of those who apply them, they must be predicated upon an analysis that takes account of the real-life alternatives of the people involved. Otherwise it is philosophy or undiluted ideology, not history, that is being written. What is the point of castigating Irolean peasants for not easing their destitution by going to work in the shoe factory, if there is no shoe factory in Irolea?

The second point is to notice the implications of the different outcomes in the struggle over peasant land tenure for the history of French and English colonisation in America, for why "la France de Louis XIV [unlike England] n'était pas un exportatrice d'hommes." As England's displaced people took to the roads, and more threatened to follow, the idea of sending the nation's surplus men and women overseas gained currency. Implementing this idea was made possible through the capital accumulated by those profiting from the displacement of others including the better-off peasants. They had helped to create the new circumstances; they had the chance to increase their holdings, improve techniques and production, hire wage



labourers and become themselves part of the new rising class.<sup>91</sup> The enclosure movements, the retracking, the undermining of feudal tenures, all permitted the consolidation of holdings, more 'productive' use of land and specialised farming. Increased commodity production became not only possible but profitable. It met the new needs that had developed in the wake of the demise of subsistence farming. These growing markets expanded to include the new men of capital--whether landed or in trade or industry--with their growing purchasing power.

In the excitement of this expansion the dream of new markets abroad began to take hold. The promotion tract developed by the Virginia Company was the first in a storm of diverse propaganda from ballads, sermons, broadsides, and exhortation by word of mouth to extoll the better life to be found in America. British shipping men awoke to the lucrative profits to be made from transporting emigrants across the Atlantic as cargo. A version of the indenture system was developed to finance those too poor to pay for their own trip. Profiteering, forced detention of prospective passengers until ships were ready to leave port, and other methods of 'persuading' people to emigrate were by-products of this process where most had nothing to lose and some had much to gain. When it became clear that the urban poor lacked the skills of husbandry and the right attitudes for frontier farming the merchants used the networks of the putting out system

to recruit from the countryside.<sup>92</sup> Swollen from the ranks of the dispossessed, those literally shoved and pushed out of England, those with a little capital and no land, as well as those leaving for religious and political reasons, they soon became the most promising markets for British manufactured goods.<sup>93</sup> What England brought, then, to its colonisation experience that France did not was a surplus population, surplus capital accumulated through capitalist agriculture, rapidly expanding internal markets and the potential for the development of external markets.

This chapter has explored the significance of the agrarian relations in France for the colonisation of New France. The maintenance of peasant production and subsistence agriculture meant people continued to produce for their own use and were neither obliged, nor had the opportunity, to constitute the mass markets typical of capitalist societies. It is now clearer why the population of New England grew so much more rapidly than that of its northern neighbour. A wage labourer is 'free' to sell his labour power anywhere; he is, and has to be mobile. And those that are newly freed will dream of having land again, and the opportunity for that existed in America. Land, itself, however, is not transportable, so the French peasantry remained sedentary.

But this chapter has also shown that if sedentary, peasants did not lie down as those above them trampled over them. On the contrary, the historiography that has

argued that a 'new social type' emerged in the New World requires a re-examination in the light of this history of the French peasants and the enormous variation in the rates of economic exploitation that attended their lives. By failing to explore "the essential conflict generated by a feudal mode of production" peasant behaviour in France and New France has been decontextualised rather than apprehended as the ongoing result of weighing and acting upon possibilities and opportunities, on the one hand, and assessing obstacles and the weight of retaliatory measures, on the other. When peasants were granted land in New France, there was, at first, no surplus for others to garner. But this experience of retaining all their produce was perceived quite differently by them than by those with legal claims to some of that produce. As peasants began to produce a surplus, others began to insist on a share. As in France, peasant reaction to those demands was to defend the status quo and resist new exactions.

The rise of the centralising state in France had, as we saw, a profound effect on the outcome of these agrarian relations and therefore, upon the subsequent colonisation of America. But the state also played a direct and central role in the colonisation of New France although the nature of that role has been contested. An evaluation of that literature and a re-interpretation requires an analysis of the French state during that period. That is the subject of the next chapter.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### THE STATE IN FEUDAL SOCIETY

The last few French monarchs have not enjoyed a very good press. That the last of them literally lost his head while the regime that he symbolised was conscientiously dismembered has seemed unremarkable, if not just. How they conducted the nation's business has often been presented as 'an awful example' of how not to run a country. Conversely, that "sixteenth century England, emerging from feudalism, hesitated on the brink of royal absolutism, and turned away"<sup>1</sup> has been applauded, received as evidence that there was indeed another way. Two adjectives that sum up many of the accounts of the French Absolutist Monarchy are unwieldy and despotic. Yet it was the first--the cumbersome, enormous, contradictory nature of the state's system for implementing policy, collecting taxation and enforcing edicts that acted as a significant brake on any aspirations that the monarch might have had for the second:

... no ruler, however fierce his attachment to strong government, could ever contemplate the sort of authority over his subjects which it has become commonplace for all governments of our own generation to exert.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly a French king had to balance the interests and sensibilities of his nobles, aspiring nobles, office-holders, intendants and governors, financiers and backers, and cardinals and bishops.<sup>3</sup> Beyond that, raising money among a population that did not even accede the legitimacy of regular taxation, without a modern bureaucracy to carry out the task, was an all consuming nightmare that militated against the aspirations and possibilities for omnipotence. These unwieldy networks invite us to look behind the description "absolutist" to explore the relations encompassed in the development of this state.

The particular questions in this chapter are motivated by those raised in the discussions of the state in the historiography of New France. There are two tendencies in this literature: the state has either been reified and presented as static, autocratic, and despotic or personalised through reducing it to the particular characteristics of the reigning monarch. Historians who equate the state and the reigning monarch often share the assumptions of those people who raised the battle cry--'Vive le roi sans taille!' The king was good, paternalistic and concerned about his subjects but his policies and administrators were bad, or incompetent.<sup>4</sup> These attitudes have also shaped the debate on the consequences of state intervention in New France: was the state responsible for the vitality, however limited, of the colony or did it serve to stifle and crush indigenous economic development?<sup>5</sup>

Parallelling this question has been a further tendency to attribute blame to the monarchs for not engaging themselves more thoroughly with the colony, for not expending more resources upon it, and for failing to attend more systematically to its concerns. At the same time their periodic forays into colonial affairs are greatly appreciated. Wade seemed grateful.

At this crucial moment the rulers of France came to the rescue of the colony which they had so long neglected. Under Louis XIV and his great minister Colbert, the French colonial empire was given strong support by a paternalistic government under a mercantalist policy... The old order was swept away and New France was made over in the image of Louis XIV's France.<sup>6</sup>

Eccle was also impressed.

Louis XIV poured capital, manpower, military force and administrative talent into the colony with a lavish hand. It was during this period ... that the institutions of New France were firmly established.

This assumption, that the state should have devoted more of its resources to colonisation requires some reflection.<sup>8</sup> Once the source of state wealth is demystified--it was after all the peasantry, 'the goose that laid the golden eggs.'<sup>9</sup> --questions can be raised about the political efficacy of colonial investment. For by colonising America it can hardly be claimed that the state was acting in the interests of the vast majority of its subjects who were forced to bankroll the operation, one way or another. This raises an important question: in whose interests were the state's colonisation

policies pursued?<sup>10</sup>

In this chapter these questions will be explored through a theoretically-informed analysis of the historical development and structural contradictions of the French Absolutist State. There are several aspects to this discussion that will permit us to situate the assumptions and attitudes about the state in the historiography of New France in a broader context, and to reformulate the terms of the debate. The growth of the state's fiscal base, the sources of its revenue, and its system for collecting taxes and making expenditures will be considered first. An understanding of its role in New France requires that the complexity and specificity of these developing relations be grasped.

Second the intimate connection between the growth of the state's fiscal system, its insatiable need for revenue and the role of war will be discussed. In the historiography of New France, the wars are lamented because they diverted resources from the colony. But this is to misunderstand the centrality of war for the "state-builders" of early modern Europe. As Tilly put it,

...taxation was the chief means by which the builders of states in the sixteenth century and later supported their expanding armies, which were in turn their principal instrument in establishing control of their frontiers, pushing them out, defending them against external incursions, and assuring their own priority in the use of force within those frontiers. Conversely, military needs were in those first centuries the main incentive

for the imposition of new taxes and the regularization of old ones. The need fed itself; furthermore; the overcoming of resistance to taxation required the maintenance of a military force. So turned the tight circle connecting state-making, military institutions and the extraction of scarce resources from a reluctant population.<sup>11</sup>

In this context colonisation was perceived as an alternative method of territorial expansion. But given the socio-economic system of France, this was a poor consolation prize indeed--and it too would involve the expenses and defeats of war.

Finally, these discussions will form the basis for an exploration of the relations between the monarch and his subjects, that is, of the relations between state and society. The argument in the historiography of New France about the monarch's 'paternalism' or 'despotism' needs to be situated in a broader context that addresses the question of the nature of the state in pre-revolutionary France. There has been a long debate on this subject. Was the Absolutist State a form of class rule in feudal society, a transitional regime between feudalism and capitalism, or did it represent and encourage a nascent capitalist bourgeoisie in its struggle with the aristocracy?<sup>12</sup> My approach to a resolution of these questions will be through asking the question: in whose interests did this state rule? What did Absolutism do for different social classes?<sup>13</sup> Abrams has described this kind of approach:

The task of the historical sociologist in this sort of enterprise is to demonstrate



functions... at its best this sort of 'soft' functionalism, a functionalism stripped of teleology and recast as a properly historical mode of analysis is really rather formidable; a serious basis for a serious historical sociology.<sup>14</sup>

### The Development and Contradictions of Absolutism

The rise of a French state resided centrally in the development of financial relations between monarch and subjects, relations which provided him with growing but always problematic control over the mobilisation and deployment of resources. This state cannot be viewed, embodied as it was in the Absolutist Monarchy, as 'something finished' but rather as a constantly developing network of relations that reached out, in different ways at different times, to all parts of French society. In that process it generated both support for its claims to legitimacy, and opposition that could result in general or local insurrection--before it was finally swept away by revolution, along with the rest of what was retroactively called the 'Ancien Régime.'<sup>15</sup>

Its origins can be located deep in the Middle Ages, beyond the Capetians, with their Carolingian origins and the great Charlemagne. Shennan notes the remarkable fact that the law of hereditary succession held from 987 until the French Revolution. During that period, "no French king was deposed or executed, nor did any succeed to the throne in defiance of that law."<sup>16</sup> This monarchy was no

pushover, and as the guarantor of both temporal and spiritual justice enjoyed "abiding prestige."<sup>17</sup> It owed its development to sporadic agreements among nobles to pool some resources for common defense. As these centralised relations developed they helped ensure the survival of noble fortunes through consolidation of power against external enemies and peasant resistance, and at the same time created deep fissures within the ruling class as state and nobility entered into competition for scarce resources. An account of the development of this state is the story of its increasing ability to mobilise the monies needed to wage war, assert its internal control and purchase loyalty and obedience. But while fantasies of power preceded, and always exceeded, the actual power, no master plan was unfolded. Like Topsy this state had 'just growed' mushrooming out to absorb potential competitors, neutralising others, and leaving the disenchanted with no alternative power to rule the country. It is important first, then, to explore the growth and nature of the state's fiscal claims on society.

1. The Taille: At first the king only had the income from his own domains with which to run the kingdom.

The traditions of French kingship had never allowed the monarch to tax his subjects without their consent. He was expected to live off the resources of his domain and when the needs of the state outgrew these resources he had to seek approval before exacting a general levy.

For a long time it was the accepted wisdom that the expenses of ruling should be drawn exclusively from his own resources. This was an idea that died hard, if it ever really did. It continued to fuel the active resistance to taxation throughout the centuries,<sup>19</sup> even though by the fifteenth century only a fifth of the crown's total revenue was drawn from the king's domaine.<sup>20</sup> For gradually monies were solicited for "extra-ordinary purposes" (war and the military) and the provincial estates willingly or unwillingly acceded.<sup>21</sup> These extraordinary grants had a way of becoming regular, creating the need for more revenue for yet new extraordinary measures. As Dent put it: "[t]hings were called extra-ordinary until they had become so generally accepted by law and custom that they had become ordinary."<sup>22</sup>

By the mid fifteenth century, "the fiscal forms by which the French monarchy essentially supported itself down to the Revolution of 1789 were laid down."<sup>23</sup> Each kind of tax had a long and troubled history; the returns were not just revenue, but resentment and resistance. The taille was the "greatest single source of revenue for the Crown."<sup>24</sup> It "corresponded to modern taxes on land, on the individual (income tax) and on movable effects."<sup>25</sup> Local and provincial differences and a "highly arbitrary" method of assessing how much would come from each region contributed to "its lack of coherence and system."<sup>26</sup> But its most striking feature was that it was paid only by

those without the wealth, status or power, to avoid it. For a revenue-hungry monarchy, this does seem extraordinary. To be noble however, meant to be free from the king's taxes, at least most of the time. "Taxpaying was seen as ignoble. Deduction of a tax from the income of a head of family was considered a spoliation, a violation of the right of property, an infringement of man's natural freedom."<sup>27</sup>

Indeed, the *taille personnelle* "was exacted only from unprivileged individuals."

[T]his meant not merely that the nobility and the clergy did not pay but also that a large number of members of the third estate were also immune. Exemption from the *taille personnelle* was accorded to the king's household servants, to a variety of royal officials, members of the sovereign courts, royal secretaries, *élus*, members of universities including the students, barristers, notaries, mayors and aldermen, whole towns even--Normandy alone included<sup>28</sup> nine such privileged communities.

The *taille réelle* which prevailed in the Midi and the south-west was a land tax, and although 'noble' land was exempted, it did include more people in its net. Still, throughout France, the burden of the *taille* fell directly and almost exclusively upon the peasantry.

This tax was never instituted in New France. Its absence has been used to argue that peasants in the colony were not only better-off than those on the continent but also freer and more independent.<sup>29</sup> But before such

interpretations are accepted several cautionary notes should be raised. First, land could not bear such a tax until it was in production. Exemptions from the taille, under these circumstances, had to occur in France also.<sup>30</sup> Second, the state officials in France did suggest implementing a tax in the colony but were deterred by the costs of collection--Tilly's point linking taxation and military expenditures could be re-stated here. Third, it is clear that in France the existence and rate of taxation had emerged from many political struggles, and, as a result, variations and exemptions of many kinds prevailed. Finally this tax--A tax on production--was the same kind of exaction as seigneurial dues and tithes. That there was no taille meant that the state was not actively competing with church and seigneurs for a direct share in production. But its absence does not necessarily mean either that the peasant in New France was better-off or more independent.

2. Taxes on Trade and Commerce: While the major source of state monies came, as it did for the nobility, from the direct expropriation of surplus from the mass of peasant producers, there was another time-honoured way to raise revenue: through the regulation of trade and commerce. As early as the fourteenth century there were taxes that permitted the king to make levies on goods sold within the realm (aides), on salt (gabelles) and on

commodities moving in and out of the country, or in some cases interprovincially (traites). The gabelle was complicated, levied differently in regions of high productivity than in low, and not at all in others. This gave rise to an impressively large salt smuggling operation<sup>31</sup> with some ramifications for New France when some faux-sauniers were sent over as part of a small forced immigration to ease labour shortages. Although an excise tax, it fell most heavily on peasant consumers who were forced to purchase a certain minimum amount of salt annually.<sup>32</sup> The aides were excise taxes that had originated as grants to the sovereign. Once applicable to all goods sold in the north,<sup>33</sup> they were, by the seventeenth century, mainly limited to fish, meat, snuff, wood--and "most loathed of all," liquor.<sup>34</sup> The traites were "customs dues levied on goods entering or leaving the kingdom or moving across certain provincial boundaries."<sup>35</sup> This involved a formidable operation for "by the seventeenth century, hardly a commodity moved but a fee was levied against it."<sup>36</sup> An impressive and elastic source of funding was drawn, then, from the regulation of trade and commerce. These regulations permeated and informed the relationships between the state and merchant traders and provided, as we shall see in the next chapter, an important dimension for understanding the place of trade in the Ancien Régime.

### 3. The Fiscal Relationship between Church and State:

The Church was an integral part of the social relations of feudal society both in France and in the colony;

through the tithe it garnered its own share of peasant production. Some of this was transferred to the state-- but not through the 'ignoble' paying of taxes. For the Church had won its long battle with the state not to be taxed; this preserved the legal fiction that it was too worthy to be so humbled.<sup>37</sup> But a compromise had been negotiated: Each year the clergy voted an annual subsidy plus increasingly large dons gratuits to the king. This annual subsidy to the state left the Church with "a considerable measure of financial privilege."<sup>38</sup> In New France the Church was exempt from the tax on beaver pelts, a not insignificant privilege given that these pelts were used as a form of currency in the colony.<sup>39</sup>

4. Venality of Office: From the Middle Ages French kings had sold offices to provide direct revenue. Their holders were empowered to collect taxes and other levies from the population and to perform a great many different services. By the early seventeenth century France had become the "classical land of sale of offices"<sup>40</sup> as an ever-growing number were created by the monarchy to ease its financial difficulties. But what exactly was being sold? Boshier states that although the legal character was not altogether clear, "no one doubted that an office was a form of property, a kind of fief."<sup>41</sup> In 1604 the Crown, at least in part to increase its revenue, made such offices hereditary upon payment of an annual fee or paulette which "confirmed the

practice of treating offices not merely as the property of one man but as the patrimony of his family from generation to generation."<sup>42</sup>

Great ingenuity was displayed in the method of selling offices. If no vacancies in the existing offices were available, new offices were created. If this was not possible, the discharging of functions was divided among two, three or four incumbents (offices alternatifs, triennaux, quadriennaux). Moreover, new offices without any duties attached to them were created (offices imaginaires).<sup>43</sup>

King Louis XIV/himself realised that the practice was being pushed a little far. When he asked Pontchartrain how he always managed to find new people interested in buying offices, the minister's reply was, "Your Majesty forgets one of his most beautiful privileges; as soon as the king institutes an office, God creates a fool who will buy it."<sup>44</sup> Yet the king might well have asked. For one of the dubious privileges of holding venal office was the 'opportunity' to make "contributions to the royal treasury on all sorts of occasions."<sup>45</sup>

Secure in the knowledge that the officials as a group enjoyed little public sympathy, the crown was effectively in a position to blackmail them into further payments for the maintenance of their privileges.<sup>46</sup>

Clearly the revenue-producing function of venal offices is not to be under-estimated. Not only did their sale provide an income for the Crown, but also those offices for regulating trade and commerce--"measurers of grain,



sellers of seafood, pigs and fowl, gaugers of liquid and many more besides"--amounted to "an indirect tax on commodities and trade goods."<sup>47</sup>

Yet to stop there would be to seriously misunderstand a world where the government depended upon the collection of taxes but had no paid civil service to do its bidding. And, with no postal service, taxes actually did have to be collected! They had to be squeezed out of people all over the diverse and scattered kingdom, from people barely able to keep body and soul together, from people who found the king legitimate, but not his exactions. With the system of selling offices, additional taxes did not have to be levied to pay the officials; each could be counted upon to collect a little extra, and pay the king a little less.

In the historiography of New France this practice has been read as a sign of corruption by colonial officials, even an indication that France cared little for its colony.<sup>48</sup>

But Boshier has shown that this was part of an "ambiguity in the royal financial administration of New France" that permeated "the entire kingdom."<sup>49</sup> The "confusion" that this created between "public and private" is a confusion for us, not for contemporaries. As Hurstfield has pointed out,

[t]o meet its administrative bills and pay its official salaries, a government could do one of two things. It could seek to increase its taxes upon the nation; or it could in one way or another leave the officials to collect their own fees from the public.<sup>51</sup>

While this practice of "tax-farming" had once involved many "small-time businessmen operating locally throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the 'tax farms' became larger until they were in the hands of a few financiers."<sup>52</sup> The dynamics of the French state's 'fiscal machine' requires some elaboration.

### The Fiscal System

The development of these taxes is a powerful indicator of a continual, though uneven, process of encroachment of a centralising state upon provincial and local authorities. While they had begun by agreeing to temporary exactions for combined military adventures or defence, they found themselves forced to acquiesce to increasingly large annual 'requests' from the Crown.<sup>53</sup>

Yet there was an underside to the development of the network of state relations that calls for a reconsideration of the implicit meaning of the phrase 'Absolute Monarchy.' For its suggestion of complete and centralised control conjures up a false image that belied its nature. It serves to mask a complex, motley, far-reaching and amazingly unsystematic set of relations that was constantly proliferating, withdrawing, being superseded or undermined. While these relations reached from the various sites of the French court through and around the cities and towns to the remotest areas of the countryside

and back again, they did so unevenly, without direct lines of command, with detours and cul-de-sacs, and all of them abounding in internal conflicts. If, by analogy, this state has been represented as a great monster living parasitically off an increasingly beleaguered peasantry, it was redolent of the dinosaur after smaller, cleverer mammals had evolved to eat its eggs. But while the dinosaur's weakness was its puny brain, it was the French state's circulatory system that threatened its claim to absolutism: namely its network for raising and spending money.

The studies of the French state's financial networks have revealed that this was not a centralised system with all roads leading back to Versailles. We can start by picturing the fiscal system with two hands, with the right knowing little of what the left was doing. More specifically, the king and his ministers ordered the spending of money (ordonnance) but the responsibility for collection and payment (comptabilité) rested with those who farmed their own offices. No system of accountability existed either over the process of tax collection or over the disposition of funds between collection and payment. Such offices were not revocable, and could only be bought back during the periodic 'clean-ups' that took place through setting up the Chambers of Justice, "an integral part of the financial system."<sup>54</sup> The last specialised commission of this sort was struck in order to try François Bigot, New France's last Intendant, along with

other officers who had served in Canada.<sup>55</sup> Financial difficulties in this pre-bureaucratic age were endemic, but their causes were sought in the malversations-- usually present--of individuals. Attacking the systemic nature of the problem through setting up "a collective or organised system would [have required] a revolution, as John Law and Jacques Necker discovered to their cost."<sup>56</sup>

A great deal of the Crown's continuing financial problems has been attributed to this system: "tax farms were now regularly auctioned to large financiers, whose collecting systems might tap up to two thirds of fiscal receipts on their way to the state."<sup>57</sup> There was no systematic way of checking the accounts of those office-holders and their employees (who were quite simply employees of the office-holder, with no link to the state's network), and these accounts were their own personal property.<sup>58</sup>

The king and his ministers consequently had to be extremely inventive in finding new ways to raise money. Yet here too they had to tap the same system that was 'swindling' the state in the first place. It was very complicated, but, in essence, the Crown borrowed the money that would have accrued to it anyway, and at interest. Charging interest--usury--was, however, illegal, condemned by state and Church alike. A thinly-veiled substitute was in common practice, not just for the Crown, but for anyone with money to lend in France: the rente. The

terminology of the rente,

... made it possible for those who wished to borrow and lend to find ways of disguising loans at interest so as to circumvent the laws against usury ... One spoke of purchasing a rente: this modulated the smell of avarice and exploitation by making it seem that the lender, who bought the rente, had solicited it from the borrower, who sold it, and obtained it on the borrower's terms.

This is how it worked: the king would alienate a portion of his domaine or the right to collect a certain tax to a financier. Legally, then, the financier could collect and keep the dues or taxes that went with the property. Because he was 'depriving' the king of his property he had to pay a certain regular amount to the king to compensate him for this loss. The financier then would loan the king the money that he collected, but not without due compensation. This continued until the king wished, or was able, to buy back his property. Mousnier put it this way: "the king had to borrow ... his receivers lent him his own money at high interest."<sup>60</sup> At times the Crown had borrowed so much money "that it found even the paying of interest too great a burden ... and collapsed into bankruptcy--1559, 1661, 1715 and of course in the 1780's."<sup>61</sup>

Weaving their way through this system of office-holding and tax farms, whose occupants were only indirectly accountable to the king, were the king's 'own'

men. In the second quarter of the seventeenth century, the common practice of sending out commissaires to handle specific issues and report to the king, was expanded and consolidated into the system of provincial intendancies.<sup>62</sup> Intendants could be dismissed by the Crown for reasons of corruption, incompetence or lack of co-operation.<sup>63</sup> It has been argued that the intendancies represented an assault on the system of venal office-holding, as well as a conscious step towards absolutism: "the monarchy was simultaneously building two mutually hostile systems."<sup>64</sup> But, after the Fronde, which pitted local officials against the imported intendants, there was movement "towards the eventual assimilation of the intendancies within the general system."<sup>65</sup> This was accomplished through associating them "with local institutions and (providing) them with subordinates." The effect was paradoxical. This move increased their acceptability to local authorities and populations, but it also made them less effective representatives of the central government: "they began to represent the needs of their administrative localities to the king rather than vice-versa."<sup>66</sup>

Their power was also circumscribed by the nature of the fiscal system. They could authorize expenditures in the king's name, but could not deliver payment. That was in the hands of the trésorier-général. For taxes were collected and expenditures paid through those occupying what amounted to independent offices who were engaged in

a semi-independent process, authorised by the Crown, but supervised by no one. Under these circumstances as Boshier has announced, the celebrated "Royal Treasury never existed."

How could the Minister of Finance and his department manage the royal finances efficiently when nearly all the collecting and spending was in the hands of accountants who were independent of administrative control because they owned their offices? ... Several hundred venal accountants ... held practically all government funds and behaved more like private businessmen than public officials.

New France, as a Province of the metropolis was an integral part of this rather unintegrated system. In theory the government's institutional structure was hierarchical "with a clear-cut chain of command ... from the king down to the lowest colonial official."<sup>68</sup> In practice it contained overlapping and competing jurisdictions represented at the top by the Intendant and the Governor.<sup>69</sup> The system of venal office holders that helped produce one system for approving expenditures and another for meeting them was reproduced in the colony and also complicated direct lines of control. The Affaire du Canada serves to indicate both how this system of offices permitted the overlapping of private and public interests, and also the thorough integration of the affairs of New France with the political, economic and social life of the metropolis.

The Affaire du Canada centred around the government-appointed commission that was struck after the Seven Years

War to "investigate the corruption known [to have been] rampant in Canada and to punish those responsible for it." This was a somewhat watered down version of the show trials conducted periodically by the specially appointed Chambres de Justice. Boshier has argued that the real purpose of these trials was to provide both a scapegoat for the failures of domestic or foreign policy and the occasion for the government to reduce debts by "confiscating the wealth of condemned men" and to repudiate other government debts. The trial of the Canadian officials he insisted provides an exemplary case. Although there is no question that Bigot and his associates had "used their power of office to promote their private interests" in the time-honoured fashion, they were tried in order to convince an aroused public that their corruption was responsible both for the loss of the war and for its enormous cost. But the behaviour of these officials had served simply to aggravate the uncontrollable inflationary spiral. The fundamental causes were "spending on the troops, higher shipping costs and depreciating currency"--all spin-offs of the war itself.

This trial, and its aftermath, also demonstrates one of the ways in which a government that was in a constant state of financial embarrassment kept afloat.

In some respects, the Crown was then in the position of any hard-pressed business firm, but it was different from the private firm in that it could defend



itself with all the authority of a sovereign power, particularly the authority to suspend its payments by decree, to choose its own moment for doing so and to discredit its own creditors. (underline mine)

In the Canadian case, the government not only repudiated its debts but also converted those it finally acknowledged into bonds with an unattractive rate of interest. Until the end the colony was managed financially as an integral part of the metropolis; its officials were attracted by similar privileges and possibilities; they competed for patronage and favours in the same way and they had the same kinds of opportunities to integrate their public responsibilities and their private interests. Finally they ran the same risks of being taken to account by the monarch if his policies were discredited--although the justice of those consequences was questioned by at least some contemporaries, and (not surprisingly, perhaps) by Bigot himself. "[P]ourquoi l'accusait-on de faire du commerce et de s'enrichir, alors que c'était une pratique commune en France et dans les colonies?"<sup>71</sup>

Yet while the state's contradictory financial system contributed to its ongoing fiscal crises they were ultimately fed, as Boshier argued in his analysis of the Affaire du Canada, by more profound social and economic processes. First we can ask, why did the Crown need so much money? Mainly, it was to wage war, "its most serious and pleasant occupation."<sup>72</sup>

The State and its Expenditures:  
War and Colonisation.

The monarchs of Europe's feudal states had long sought to consolidate and increase their wealth and influence through both a careful preservation of old boundaries and also, when possible, through extending them.<sup>73</sup> Winning wars in Europe meant acquiring new, but settled populations who, with proper encouragement, would become good taxpayers, soldiers and subjects. Territorial expansion could, therefore, be very important. In feudal society wealth for nobles and kings came from the land, from the surplus extracted from peasants. Extending borders was, therefore, as Anderson has argued, sound economic policy: "... war was possibly the most rational and rapid single mode of expansion of surplus extraction available."

Comparing this situation to capitalism he continued,

[T]he feudal ruling class was thus essentially motile, in a way that a capitalist ruling class ... could never be. For capital itself is par excellence internationally mobile, thereby permitting its holders to be nationally fixed: land is nationally immobile, and nobles had to travel to take possession of it.

Yet clearly there was a fundamental contradiction in such 'rational' policy. For war consumed tax revenue far more quickly than it could be raised. "Your majesty," observed Colbert, "has never consulted the state of your finances before committing yourself to expenses."<sup>75</sup> It

is important, therefore, to add that while the kings of France may have seen war as a means to increase the wealth of their kingdom, the most immediate motivations appear to have been those of self-aggrandisement and dynastic considerations.<sup>76</sup> The conspicuous and ostentatious displays of wealth and precedence were the means by which they judged themselves, and expected to be judged by those that mattered.<sup>77</sup> More importantly, perhaps, the requirements of war, and the resulting prestige at home from victories, also provided the leverage through which the monarchy had fashioned a central fiscal system, and therefore, its internal power. But the outcome of war was uncertain, its costs were enormous, and it was also the underlying cause of state bankruptcies. Paradoxically, then, the very wars which were to increase the wealth of the kingdom, sucked it dry. Money had to be borrowed from all over Europe to pay for them and "credit of this kind is based, not on words or ideas but on substantial guarantees. The guarantee ... realised by dint of endless taxes pledged in advance to the financiers, was the wealth of France."<sup>78</sup>

The war policy of Louis XIV, the good king who saw to the colonisation of New France, has few admirers, and his successes were early and few.

The ultimate objection to Louis XIV's foreign policy is not just that it was immoral, nor that it brought death or misery to millions of people, but that

the potential gains were never worth the risks involved, let alone the eventual cost. There is a striking disparity between the enhanced power and organization of the French state, and the ends to which they were put, a motley combination of dynastic pride, outdated religious antagonisms,<sup>79</sup> and piecemeal frontier annexations.

It is in this context that the attractions for the French state of colonisation can be evaluated. How much easier to extend one's rule in uncontested parts of the New World where there were no matched armies to provide resistance, where vast new lands could be made French through a simple proclamation! But while the newly-acquired lands yielded valuable resources from staples like fish to luxuries like furs, there was no ready-made sedentary population to add taxes to the state's coffers, dues to a nobility or tithes to the church. And without settlement French access to even these resources would eventually be threatened by the expanding English colonies to the south.<sup>80</sup> The idea therefore of creating a province overseas was seductive, at least at certain times to some people. But the difficulties involved in such an undertaking compared to acquiring already settled provinces within Europe were enormous. It is not surprising that Louis XIV, the hero of the traditional historiography of New France, actually, in Goubert's critical words, "cared little for Canada or Louisiana."<sup>81</sup> It was one thing to raise a flag in the wilderness and barter with the Amerindians, quite another to re-create the social relations of feudal France in the New World.

This silver-lined cloud was at the source of the state's ongoing ambivalence towards the colonisation of New France: on the one hand, there were the potential long-term gains from both extending a peasant-producer tax-base on land not exhausted by centuries of use, and also from consolidating the rights to valuable resources. But countering these advantages were the immediate and enormous investments required from the capital-starved, non-existent French treasury<sup>82</sup> in order to realise them. This kind of analysis provides a broad approach to the political economy of colonisation in a feudal society.

#### State And Society

It is hardly surprising that the French monarchs flirted constantly with bankruptcy. The insatiable need for money to wage war and a fiscal system that siphoned off so much money while it was en route to its destination both contributed. But there is more to understanding the bankruptcies than this. The limitations of the state's peasant tax base and the competition from others with legal rights to a share in production meant that actual income fell far short of theoretical income. This draws us to an analysis of the broader relationships between state and society that were informed by these fiscal arrangements, to a consideration of the accompanying inter-class and intra-class alliances and conflicts, and

to the question of the nature of the ruling class in this society.

As the state developed there ensued a scramble between its centralising interests and the local nobility for their share of the peasants' surplus.<sup>83</sup> "The king's levies came into competition with those effected by the provinces and the towns and especially with those effected whether in money or in kind for the payment of seigniorial and feudal dues."<sup>84</sup> This struggle often reached violent proportions with each side supporting peasant resistance to the exactions of the other, or even engaging in the direct mobilisation of the peasantry. It is because "no holding could have met all its obligations"<sup>85</sup> that this competition over peasant production was so highly charged.

In the long sequence of peasant revolts which go to make up the history of rural France in the seventeenth century it is as common to find the peasants allied with the seigneur against the king--as for instance in Auvergne--as it is the opposite--notably in Brittany or Picardy.<sup>86</sup>

How it developed in any particular place or time depended upon a wide array of local conditions which determined whether the state or the local nobility was experienced as the most immediately oppressive. The agents of the state, usually through upholding customary rights, could behave as the protector of the peasants against unjust (that is more than customary) seigniorial exactions. On the other hand, the nobles would protect the peasants against the tax collectors of the state in a variety of

ways including sheltering them, their animals and possessions within the walls of their castles while the gableurs were in the region.<sup>87</sup>

Most historians agree that the "actual call to revolt was generally issued in response to the arrival of the agents of the central fiscality."<sup>88</sup> The opinion that state taxation was not legitimate permeated all classes of French society creating, therefore, the basis for powerful cross-class insurrectionary movements. But these links between peasant and noble could only be short-term and strategic. For despite the aspect of paternalism, noble protection of the peasantry and support for its resistance to the fiscal demands of the state, were underwritten by a profoundly self-serving motivation: to claim the peasant surplus before it vanished into the hands of the state tax collector.

That still leaves open, however, the important question about the nature of the conflict of interest between state and nobility. Just what was its significance? In the debate on the nature of the state in early modern Europe Sweezy argued that the state itself was the site of this conflict, a state which by then included several ruling classes, "based on different forms of property and engaged in more or less continuous struggle for preferment and ultimately supremacy."<sup>89</sup> The implications of this position are far-reaching: within

the relations of the state, the interests of other classes, besides the nobility, would already be represented and competing for hegemony. And this is a situation which presumably would have prevailed for some two hundred years. Sweezy drew upon Engels for theoretical confirmation of the validity of this interpretation.

Because the state arose from the need to hold class antagonisms in check, but because it arose, at the same time, in the midst of the conflict of these classes, it is, as a rule, the state of the most powerful, economically dominant class, which, through the medium of the state, becomes also the politically dominant class, and thus acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class.

However,

[b]y way of exception ... periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires, for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. Such was the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which held the balance between the nobility and the class of burghers.<sup>90</sup>

Most contenders in the debate agreed with Christopher Hill who argued both on the basis of Engel's other writings and on the historical evidence that,

... a ruling class must possess state power: otherwise how does it rule? Dual state power may exist for a very brief period during a Revolution, as in Russia for some months in 1917. But such a situation is inherently unstable, almost a condition of Civil War: it must lead to the victory of one class or the other.<sup>91</sup>



Some agree that there can only be one ruling class but argue that in the Absolutist State it was already the capitalist bourgeoisie. Monière drew upon Poulantzas to make this point.

... [T]he shift from the feudal to the capitalist state does not occur at the moment of the appearance of the state that reflects the consolidation of political dominance by the middle class, of which the state that emerged from the French Revolution would be the typical example, but in fact at the moment when we see the 'absolutist' state.<sup>92</sup>

In such an analysis, the rise of the Absolutist Monarchy represents a foreclosure upon feudalism. It is perceived both as the victory of a centralised state over a huge and uneven array of almost independently administered fiefs with their nobles, retainers and peasants and as the official notice of a change in class rule.

Skocpol has recently pointed out the problems with this analysis that links the Absolutist State with capitalist development in her critique of Wallerstein who has made a similar argument. She pointed out that England and The Netherlands were the two countries who had "governments uniquely responsive to commercial-capitalist interests."<sup>93</sup> But the Dutch government was "simply a federation of merchant oligarchies"<sup>94</sup> while "England's would-be absolutisms did not, in the final analysis consolidate themselves."<sup>95</sup>

In France, on the other hand, the rise of the Absolutist State involved the development of one

centralising kingship that cashed in on the same source of funding, and in the same way, as the nobility and the Church had always done. It is true that the state, in Brenner's words appears as almost an "independent class-like extractor" because of the novelty of the new form of centralised surplus extraction (tax/office) associated with the development of French absolutism and its conflict with the established decentralised form."<sup>96</sup> But that emphasis, as he later pointed out, required considerable qualification.

... [T]he aforementioned phrases can lead to a one-sided formulation: overemphasising the points of separation and conflict between the systems of surplus extraction and between the monarchy and the aristocracy, while passing over the points of interconnection and interpenetration--and the way the rise of the one helped to compensate for the decline of the other.<sup>97</sup>

This puts his position in line with Anderson who argued:

Absolutism was essentially just this: a redeployed and recharged apparatus of feudal domination, designed to clamp the peasant masses back into their traditional social position--despite and against the gains they had won by the widespread commutation of dues. In other words the Absolutist State was never an arbiter between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, still less an instrument of the nascent bourgeoisie, against the aristocracy; it was the new political carapace of a threatened nobility.<sup>98</sup>

This position needs to be explored through a closer analysis of the relationship between the state and the privileged, and of just who the privileged were. Given the terms of the debate we must begin with the question

of the bourgeoisie. Where was it, and what was it doing?

This question has been centrally important in French historiography. As Abrams has put it,

... [b]y the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the storming of the Bastille substantial agreement seemed to have been reached--and not just among Marxists--that the French revolution was to be explained as a triumphant bourgeois overthrow of feudal power.

The search for this bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary France --as a class with distinct preoccupations and goals from the nobility--has had, however, a recent and unanticipated outcome. For "in a sense," argued Lucas, a key figure in the revisionist historiography, "the antagonistic classes of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy were truly formed only in the course of the revolution."<sup>100</sup> The new interpretation was that the major social distinction in seventeenth and eighteenth century France was not between a nobility and a bourgeoisie, but between those who were privileged --and did not have to resort to manual labour to make a living--and everyone else. When the social and economic activities of the so-called bourgeois and those of the nobility were examined the revisionists discovered heavy traffic between them. In particular they noticed the role of trade in facilitating social mobility--the acquisition of land, rentes, office and noble title--by merchant-traders. As Guy Richard wrote, "[l]e commerce devenait ainsi une voie honorable pour accéder à la noblesse."<sup>101</sup> It is also true that a significant section

of the nobility, "la noblesse d'affaires" invested in trade and in the state-sponsored manufacturing and mining companies.<sup>102</sup>

Faced with this kind of an understanding of the privileged in metropolitan France, the 'special' situation of New France seems much less special indeed. Nish argued that while, "the differentiation of classes by exclusive function, that is noble, landed proprietor, administrator, merchant etc. ... may be partially valid for the study of European societies ... it is a useless concept for studies of colonial societies."<sup>103</sup> He went on to describe the overlapping sets of interests in which the influential men of New France engaged. He was impressed by their

... mobilité horizontale qui tendait à effacer les démarcations de classes entre les gens impliqués dans des fonctions purement économiques qui formaient généralement la classe appelée bourgeoisie, et ceux qui appartenaient à la noblesse ou à l'aristocratie.<sup>104</sup>

What seems clear, and this will be elaborated in the last chapter, is that New France was, in this sense, an integral part of the Ancien Régime, another site in which the privileged sought to consolidate their positions and advance their children's prospects.

This is not to suggest that there were not serious conflicts of interest and rivalries between local nobility and an encroaching state, between office-holders and intendants, between rich and poor nobles, and between merchants and financiers rising in the social structure

and nobles faced with declining incomes and prestige. Those antagonisms could even provide a catalyst for the mass of people below, whose hostility to those above made the intra-class conflict of the privileged look like a Sunday School picnic. Indeed one of the continuing problems in these 'family' disputes was to use the power of those below without losing control, a strategy that Manning has shown being consciously employed during the English Revolution.<sup>105</sup> Certainly when the French peasants, the craftsmen and the urban dispossessed, sought to exploit the conflicts of those above by addressing their grievances they were put down as quickly as possible by all parties to the original dispute.<sup>106</sup>

What is important to emphasise here is that the hostility among the privileged was not directed towards changing the system but rather towards finding a more satisfactory place within it for themselves. It would be fair to generalise Shennan's statement explaining why there was no active part played by financial officers in The Fronde despite their resentment at the Intendants for usurping their functions. "[I]t is one thing for an ambitious man to show signs of frustration at an unexpected setback in his career, but quite another for him to contemplate undermining the social order which gave that career relevance."<sup>107</sup>

There was a good deal of fluidity among the privileged layers of the Ancien Régime. The nobility was not a

caste, nor it has been argued should too much be made of the division within the nobility between the noblesse de robe and the noblesse d'epée.<sup>108</sup> "Wealth, rather than privilege, remained the key to social success before 1789."<sup>109</sup> Purchasing venal office and seigneuries--neither of which had noble entrance requirements--increased one's social status and could lead to even greater things. For "the pursuit of ennoblement remained a realistic enterprise for the bourgeoisie of the eighteenth century."<sup>110</sup> This was not a new situation. In Bayeux, in 1463, for example, there were 211 noble families. By 1663, 166 new families had entered that rank, drawn mainly from officials and lawyers which meant that over forty per cent of the noble families had been there less than two hundred years. At the same time nobility was no guarantee of wealth: in 1663 more than half of that Bayeux nobility was classified as poor, "homme de peu."<sup>111</sup> By then "the question of the poor nobility" was preoccupying political writers,<sup>112</sup> with the problem appearing even more acute in the next century.<sup>113</sup> Their plight created a great deal of resentment against new and wealthy men who rose in the system to places of power and influence. State policies to guarantee all places of rank in the army and the church to the nobility stemmed from recognition of the need to placate this poor nobility. These policies and recruitment practices of the Absolutist Monarchy--into the intendancies, church, army and offices--though

unsystematised, had an ingenious aspect and constituted an ongoing response to political and social imperatives. Through them the state retained its base within the nobility while ensuring that those with new wealth and talent could infiltrate, and would, therefore, lend their support to the Régime. The case of the intendants, "a governing elite in Eighteenth-Century France"<sup>114</sup> is an important case in point.

By their personal rank and family status, the intendants were of the nobility--some of ancient lineage, others of more recent vintage. Nobility, in short, was not an immutable state, an order fixed in number or quality determined only by birth. The intendants' ancestors had obtained their nobility through various means, especially through ennobling venal offices which made them sovereign-court magistrates or *secrétaires du roi*. These forebears had been landowners, merchants, minor local officers, before they became prestigious royal officers and privileged noblemen.<sup>115</sup>

The integration of personnel between state, nobility and church was also clear. By the eve of the colonisation of New France relations between Church and State, given their bloody and turbulent history which had torn the society apart in the last decades of the sixteenth century, were reasonably harmonious. The Wars of Religion had reverberated through the whole of the society from monarch to peasants, dividing families, bishops and dynasties. Those who had sought to submit the state to the Church and those who had insisted that the two be untangled had both lost.<sup>116</sup> The French Church remained a Gallican

Church, a national Church before there were nations. This did not mean a secular Church for the king himself, "le roi très chrétien" was, through tradition and practice "God's lieutenant on earth."<sup>117</sup> The Concordat of Bologna in 1516, not without opposition, had legalised the established practice whereby the king nominated and the Pope approved the appointments to all the major benefices. "In political terms the papacy had to be content with a largely honorific though honourable role for it had never been a tenet of Gallican doctrine to sever France's link with Rome."<sup>118</sup>

It has been argued that the Church in New France, especially under Bishop Laval was ultramontane in character.<sup>119</sup> In early Quebec the king's prerogative to nominate bishops responsible to him was evaded by the simple expedient of not having a bishop at all; rather an apostolic vicar was appointed by Rome through the Congregation for the Propaganda in 1659. As a result, the incumbent, Laval, communicated more often than most bishops with the Holy See, a fact that has made his biographers conclude that he was an ultramontane, seeking direction from the Pope rather than the king. But this situation was short-lived and he was appointed the first Bishop of Québec in 1674. After that, whatever his own predispositions might have been, his power, and the limits of his power, according to Campeau, were defined in France.



Le nouvel évêché communiquera désormais avec Rome par les canaux ordinaires et ses affaires, dont le plus grand nombre seront définitivement résolues en France, seront à Rome, lorsque nécessaire, attribuées aux diverses Congrégations selon les compétences particulières de celles-ci. 120

Hurtubise has argued that this situation was well-accepted and, in fact, suited French bishops, including Laval. He explains and sums up their behaviour when they had to take sides in disputes between king and pope:

In spite of their audacity and sensibilities, Gallican bishops showed the same respect and veneration for the two powers. The bishop of Rome was their spiritual ruler, the king their temporal ruler. The first was Vicar of Christ in spiritual matters; the other, Vicar of God in temporal matters... Inevitably, conflicts arose, hostilities erupted, which, momentarily at least, broke the harmony between the two powers. The prelates had to take sides and every time they did, it was usually in the king's favour. 121

This partiality for the king is hardly surprising; their own position in society was inextricably linked to his discretionary power. Bishops were selected--almost always--from the nobility. 122

How these noblemen-prelates perceived themselves and their rank was influenced by a pride they all shared in their family's history and present social status. They were very much aware that their ancestors governed counties and duchies and that their brothers and cousins commanded the king's regiments. 123

Parish priests on the other hand, were drawn from the less privileged sectors and, after ordination, continued to live in the same kind of economic circumstances into

which they had been born.<sup>124</sup> The tithe was supposed to support the local clergy but often monasteries and other ecclesiastical bodies impropriated them leaving the parish priest with only a fixed sum. Peasant resistance to the tithe was, in part, then, resistance to the exactions of the rich. "To the payer the impropriation of tithes by bodies already rich enough seemed scandalous, with tithes already a constant irritant between priest and parishioners."<sup>125</sup> Resistance to the tithe was clearly not fashioned in the New World, although as I shall argue in Chapter 5, the particular conditions in New France did foster a strong belief that there should be no tithe at all.

My conclusion from this analysis of the relationship between state and society has been simply stated by Vivian Gruder: "Royal government and nobility ... nourished each other in the last century of the ancien régime, increasingly so as the Bourbon monarchy and aristocratic society drew closer to their end."<sup>126</sup> Yet having said that, it is important to stress that the state was not, in some narrow sense, the political handmaiden for the aristocracy. The state had the power to arbitrate between different interests, to reward and punish those whom it chose, to intervene on behalf of peasant interests and to press its own case which was not congruent with any particular noble's, or section of the nobility's. The sources of its autonomy have already been touched upon.

First, and most important was the state's enormous fiscal base: its right to levy taxes and its ability to collect them. When this system periodically broke down through bankruptcy the monarch lost his initiative to govern even though the lack of an opposition able to take control won the day for the monarchy until 1789.<sup>127</sup> The importance of the taille to the state meant that the peasants' right both to land, and also to protection against seigneurial dues that would have interfered with their ability to pay taxes, had to be safeguarded. This is the economic source of the king's paternalism towards his subjects. There was also a political source, for the potential for full-scale peasant revolt posed the real threat to the established social order.

The second source of autonomy was the state's growing control over the army, as the attempt to forge a professional organisation loyal to the monarch from a collection of mercenaries and provincial militia proceeded.<sup>128</sup> Success here involved having continual access to funds to keep disgruntled soldiers from dying, deserting, being murdered by outraged peasants, or fighting for others. Nonetheless, it was a formidable weapon both for domestic control and for war.

Third was the impressive scope of royal patronage, including the system of offices.

The way in which Louis XIV set about silencing the great order of the nobility, which had also taken part in the Fronde,

is well-known... To the princes of the blood he distributed great offices of the crown: splendid sounding posts conferring no actual power. Countless posts were created, connected with the king's military and civil households, his table, lodging, stables and hunting and were distributed among the greatest names in the kingdom. 129

Venality of office also contributed to the important possibility of social mobility.

Had it not been for the practice of venality, the degree of mobility within the existing framework, which effectively prevented any dangerous hardening of the social arteries, would have been more difficult to achieve and the possibility of serious friction would have been that much greater. 130

This chapter has concluded that despite intra-class conflict the Absolutist Monarchy incorporated the political means for the consolidation and perpetuation of the economic/political rule of the nobility. At the same time while absolutism incorporated political sovereignty in the monarchy, it provided no guarantees for implementing even its crucially important fiscal policies. In a century that has seen dictatorships through bureaucracy it is important that the limitations of absolutism are correctly perceived. The Government of New France was indeed absolutist as Parkman and others have insisted. But its power was constrained by the limitations of its tax base, by its complex and unreliable system for gathering revenue, paying its accounts and generally implementing policy, by the inexhaustible financial demands of waging war, by the constant fear of bankruptcy,

and by the possibility of resistance from the population.

The next chapter will continue the analysis of French feudal society and its implications for understanding the colonisation and development of New France. In particular it will take up in more detail the argument that there was not a capitalist bourgeoisie of any consequence in France during this period through an analysis of the role of trade in feudal society. This will provide the context for examining the debates on the significance of the fur trade and the implications of the investment behaviour of the large merchant-traders for the economic development of the colony.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CAPITAL, MARKETS AND TRADE IN FEUDAL SOCIETY

In this chapter the argument that France was a feudal society will be extended through an analysis of money, markets, trade and merchant-traders. Through this discussion the ground will be laid to claim that the fur trade was neither "a capitalist activity grafted on to the metropolitan market" nor "a dissolvent eating away at the old fabric of seigneurial relationships."<sup>1</sup> Instead the fur trade was another example of the sort of trade that had existed for centuries within the parameters of feudal society itself. It will be argued that this kind of trade, in itself, did not present a significant challenge to the social relations of feudalism. This position will be supported through an analysis of the relations of privilege, protection and parasitism that bound the networks of trading relations with those of the Absolutist Monarchy. Finally, an examination of the career patterns of merchants and their investment behaviour will confirm that they should not be subsumed under a generic label of capitalist.

Such a discussion it must be admitted, courts the danger of being dismissed as merely semantic. Does it

really matter if we call them capitalists or not? The point is that the language has not only reflected but has also contributed to the confusion about the role of trade and money in feudal and capitalist society, and, therefore, to the failure to distinguish between activities and environments that were, in fact, quite different.

Certainly the historiography of New France has suffered from the indiscriminating use of labels like capitalist, and this has provoked some questionable judgements about merchants traders, what they did and what they did not do. The 'semantic' question, in fact, then, draws attention to some major theoretical and historiographical issues which require exploration.

#### Money, Markets and Trade in Feudal Society

The combined presence of money, markets and trade has often been identified as capitalist activity, not just in the historiography of New France, but rather generally in European history. This is not surprising. First of all, that kind of trade--in the circulation of commodities--continues to flourish and expand in capitalist society. The difference, as we noted earlier, is in the milieu in which it operates, in its growing subsumation to, and interrelationship with, commodity production. At the least, therefore, this kind of trade has appeared as the harbinger of the capitalism to come, the money economy

par excellence where everything, including labour power, is bought and sold as a commodity in the marketplace. Second the nature of feudal society has had different interpretations. Since its central relationship involves the garnering of a surplus of peasant production by a non-labouring class, some have insisted that trade and markets must have constituted an exogenous development. Following Pirenne, Sweezy argued that merchant capital liberated itself early from feudal restraints, and proceeded to exert a dissolving effect upon feudal structures: "the growth of trade was the decisive factor in bringing about the decline of western European feudalism."<sup>2</sup> It followed that because trade did not result from the internal contradictions and dynamics within feudal relationships themselves, as Dobb and others had insisted,<sup>3</sup> it must ipso facto be capitalist.

There has been a third factor exacerbating this tendency to identify the fur trade in particular as capitalist activity. The source of this confusion resides in the resemblance between merchant interests in New England and New France. In this case, appearances have not only been deceiving, as was argued in Chapter 1, but they also have prevented a comparison between the two that goes to the heart of their economic differences. As a result, some historians have resorted to psychological and cultural interpretations to explain the different behaviour of merchant 'capitalists' in New England and New France.<sup>4</sup>




In order to counter these positions the analysis of feudal society must be extended to explain the growth of markets in this kind of agrarian subsistence economy. To begin then: in feudal society the central contradiction was located in the conflict between peasant and lord for control over peasant production.<sup>5</sup> Over the centuries one of the important changes that occurred, though not in any even or linear fashion, was the commutation of dues paid in labour or kind for those paid in money. As a result, peasants were obliged to market some of their produce to obtain cash. To do this, and to supplement their subsistence from the land, they turned their hand to any number of by-employments--selling poultry, eggs, butter, straw--or to wage labour.<sup>6</sup> Their need for money was greatly increased by the rising demands of royal taxation. It was not the more flamboyant and adventurous long distance trade that was important in this quest for cash. Rather

... [i]t was the regional and local trade in the produce of the soil that brought about the biggest circulation of money, the means whereby the peasants acquired the cash they needed in order to pay the royal taxes.

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As Hilton has wryly observed, money and markets were indeed embedded within feudal society: "unfortunately for the advocates of the money-dissolvent theory, cash scutage is found as early as the beginning of the twelfth century, and money fiefs not much later."<sup>8</sup>



There was, of course, another kind of trade that also owed something to the growing cash flow, yet responded to different interests. That was the maritime and other long-distance trade that dealt primarily in luxuries: the fur trade was one example. This is the kind of trade, with its risks, on the one hand, and the potentiality for amassing large fortunes, on the other, that has often been termed "capitalist". But let us again identify how money became available for the purchase of these commodities: "[t]he urban and commercial sectors of the economy largely and directly depended on the purchasing power of the aristocracy whose income was more or less directly derived from peasant production."<sup>9</sup> Merchants went to all corners of the world for goods and treasures to serve this privileged market. But in doing so they remained external to the production process; they simply removed goods from one place where they were worth little to another where they could be sold for more. Their involvement was almost exclusively with the circulation, not the production of goods. This is very important: "[the] question to ask as to a given social structure," wrote Takahashi, "is not whether commodities and money are present, but rather how those commodities are produced."<sup>10</sup> Now what is peculiar about capitalist development is that it expands through bringing labour and the productive process under the control of capital--not all in one fell swoop--but gradually and persistently. The

producer-capitalist, unlike the merchant-trader is not dependent on what individual craftspeople--working on their own time, and in their own houses and workshops will sell him, or upon the number of commodities--like furs, for example,--that are brought to him by others. More than this, bringing production under control makes increased production possible--a development that makes sense precisely because 'free' wage labourers must also be consumers, in a way that peasant producers did not have to be nor could have been. Their separation from the means of production turned them simultaneously into both.

As the peasants became landless, they not only became labourers. They became consumers with an income entirely in the form of wages (not all, but mostly money) who needed to buy in the market the goods which previously had not gone through the market.

This process was well underway in seventeenth century England. Investment was being channelled into the creation of colonial markets as well as into the manufacture of cheap goods for mass markets.

The destruction of domestic workshops in town and country, and the commercialisation of farming, created the demand which was to absorb the products of factory industry. Unlike France, where the most important industries, and those encouraged by governments, were luxury industries, in England the expanding industries were textiles, stockings, hardware, catering for a mass market.<sup>12</sup>

The manufacturing that did take place in France has sometimes been described as capitalist. As with maritime

trade, these industries were largely directed towards bringing luxury goods to the affluent, rather than consumer goods to the masses. As Charles Cole, Colbert's biographer wrote, "[i]t might truly be said that the greatest industry in France was supplying the wants of the king and his court."<sup>13</sup> Daneau also made this clear in his discussion of the priorities of 'colbertisme'. Fine textiles came first: "[c]es fins tissus furent surtout vendus aux habitants de Paris et plus spécialement à la noblesse." And "la production de soie put d'imposante proportion durant la même période...en fait l'offre avait tendance à dépasser la demande." Colbert also "dépensa des millions de livres sur la production d'articles de luxe, tels des tapis et les tapisseries." The new industry of producing mirrors to decorate royal homes "profita beaucoup des larges subventions gouvernementales."<sup>14</sup>

There were many variations on how these industries were organised, with most of them having roots in the guild structures. Production was still often in the homes of individual craftspeople or, when centralised, each individual still worked on her own commodity. The manufacture royale, so encouraged by Colbert--both through direct subsidies and through intricate protective legislation of many kinds,--showed many of their characteristics in relief: state regulations tried to control who worked there, for how long, precisely what was made, how it was made and how many were made, and

finally to whom they were sold, and for how much. At the same time there were penalties for those who insisted upon making these products elsewhere. Cole's description of Mme. de Voullemin's efforts to run a lace company at Auxerre, under Colbert's careful tutelage, reveals the nature of the labour supply, the process of production and the class interests involved. The workers were the daughters of the inhabitants of the city. Their fathers were promised exemption from the taille if at least three of their daughters went regularly to work. (An exemption that, given the nature of the tax system, was not in the interests of local collectors who therefore, often failed to respect it). Despite the exemption, or promise of one, it was difficult to encourage workers to come to work where they were obliged to learn new ways of doing things.

Certain workers who had deserted had been forced to return by M. Lemuet, the governor of the town. About fifty of the girls came to the house of manufacture to work--(out of the one hundred who were supposed to come). Despite Colbert's orders, it was impossible to force the rest to do so. Mme. de Voullemin remarked that she was having trouble with the lace company, which wished her to force her girls to make a different kind of lace. She refused to change, because the girls had already been taught one style... The royal officials of the town had cooperated with her, Mme. Voullemin declared, in a house-to-house visit to suppress the manufacture of lace under any auspices save those of the company... The indefatigable directress likewise reported that some of the ladies of the town dropped in occasionally at the house of manufacture, but she expressed the wish that one of them could be there all the time.<sup>15</sup>

A predecessor of General Motors, it was not! While evasions to the regulations of every sort occurred, this kind of industry--whether in England or France was not the harbinger of capitalist development, had no appreciable effect on economic life and organization, and did not survive the revolutions of 1640 or 1789. "The manufactures réunies were created by the haute bourgeoisie that was tied to and integrated within the feudal order; as such they disappeared with the end of this order, in the French Revolution".<sup>16</sup> The wealth to be made from such industry, "the lion's share of the profits"<sup>17</sup> went to the merchants.

The investment activities of these merchants have often been held responsible for retarding the development of capitalist production in France.<sup>18</sup> This position has a kind of truth about it, albeit a decontextualised one. Certainly their investment patterns provoked no challenge to the feudal mode of production; rather they contributed to, and confirmed, the existing class structure. No one,

... has been able to alter the estimate which Marx made of their historical role, that their capital remained always within the sphere of circulation, was never applied either to agricultural or industrial production in any innovative fashion. The so-called commercial revolution in no way<sup>19</sup> altered the feudal mode of production.

This was true also of merchant-traders in England. The impetus for capitalist transformation in that country did not come from them but from the activities of much 'smaller' men: the middling sort, men benefiting from the conditions

which had permitted some capital accumulation in agriculture and crafts production--the very conditions, in fact, that had pushed their poorer neighbours off the land and into wage labour. In this case, the new

... producer-capitalist produced for the market and was therefore interested in its enlargement and in decreasing costs of production, thereby emancipating himself from subjection to commercial capital and indeed tending to subordinate the latter to industrial capital.<sup>20</sup>

Only when this process had made considerable progress did those who had grown rich in the old system find it necessary and profitable to change their ways. Until then they fought to retain "the various barriers and guild privileges"<sup>21</sup> upon which their profits rested. The comparison made by Brenner in his study of the Civil War politics of London's merchants brings out this distinction clearly. The government-protected monopoly companies were not those which channelled investment into the colonisation process and in particular, into the "staple-producing plantations."

During the first quarter of the seventeenth century, when English trade to the Americas was systematically developed for the first time, the government-protected monopoly company was the accepted instrument of commercial development. It was natural, therefore, that corporate organisation continued to prevail in the original colonial operations of the Jacobean era. However, unlike their predecessors trading to Europe and the East, the American colonial companies were only rarely able to achieve either permanence or financial success. By the

late 1620's most of them had collapsed and, the great burst of colonial commercial development which marked the following decades took place on a non-corporate individual basis, under entirely transformed commercial conditions.<sup>22</sup>  
(underline mine)

The regulated companies failed because of the new imperative thrown up by colonisation: "colonial operations often required investment in commodity production, not simply in trade."<sup>23</sup> The "establishment merchants" were unwilling to make this kind of investment and "given the controlled conditions of their normal trading operations," their "conservatism (was) reasonable."<sup>24</sup> So it was the "new men" who "were responsible for the crucial inputs of capital and entrepreneurship for this colonial development. They were "new men in several senses:"

Few of them had previously been members of the great London monopoly trading companies, or overseas merchants of any kind. Nor were they drawn from the upper ranks of either London or country society. Originally men of the "middling sort", they were usually born outside of London and by and large the younger sons of smaller gentry or prosperous yeomen. A few came from borough commercial families.<sup>25</sup>

They were part of a rising capitalist class. So while it is clear that the merchant-traders of England had their French counterparts, these "new men" did not--or at least certainly not in the numbers that could challenge or supersede the established ways of doing business. Because the peasants had been able to retain control of their land, the possibilities of capital accumulation 'from below' did not emerge. The development of



capitalist agriculture and the concomitant spiralling growth of mass markets were not unleashed. There was no economic 'takeoff'. Indeed, Soboul argued convincingly that the peasants' struggle to retain land continued through the Revolution.

The poor peasantry was marked by the same pre-capitalist mentality as the sans-culottes of the cities; it was attached to collective rights and controls; and in the course of the Revolution it was equally opposed to the seigneurs and to the agencies of the capitalist transformation of agriculture.

He concluded rather sadly that, "[i]n the realm of agricultural production, the resistance of the poor peasantry was such that capitalism could not win a definitive victory."<sup>26</sup> Again, it is in the different agrarian histories of England and France that the explanations reside for the differential timing of capitalist transformation. The continuing 'regressive' behaviour of the merchant-traders in France could neither have produced nor prevented the dawn of that bright new era in human relations. An exploration of their complex relations with the state will help explain, however, why they have so often been accused of aborting the development of capitalism in France.

It should be understood that this analysis applies equally to the merchant-traders operating in New France. For the distinction between French and Quebec merchants, at least at the top of their hierarchy, seems virtually

meaningless. The traffic in merchants, as much as in their merchandise, did not recognise such boundaries. The links between Quebec and the port cities of France-- particularly La Rochelle and later Bordeaux<sup>27</sup>--were continuous and multi-dimensional, encompassing business partnerships and family relationships,

The most substantial Lower Town merchants were factors and consequently metropolitan Frenchmen . . . The traditional categories of marchand forain and domicilié, the seasonal trader from across the Atlantic and his settled counterpart, attached by the interest of property or family to the colonial community in which he lived, obscure the factors' situation. Some were little attached to the colony and were scarcely distinguishable from the forains. "They come here to spend two or three years or more," wrote the Intendant Bigot, who characterised them as "itinerant merchants who come and go." But others stayed longer, marrying Canadians and founding families, although never cutting the transatlantic ties that were their raison d'être and that drew them back again to France.<sup>28</sup>

#### State-Trade Relations

Trade, commerce and industry played a "marginal and dependent" role in the French economy in this period, far and away less important than agriculture.<sup>29</sup> Its place in the scheme-of-things--including its treatment by the state reflected this. As the last chapter concluded, the Absolutist State was fundamentally implicated with and tied to the long-term interests of the nobility, the

society's ruling class. Overseas and wholesale trade essentially depended upon the purchasing power of this class. In this important sense, then, what was good for the nobility and the state was good for the merchant-traders; their interests were symbiotic even without merchant aspirations for ennoblement. But as noted in Chapter 3, the abiding concern of the state for the viability of trade and commerce was pecuniary. In Miquelon's felicitous phrase the state's stance towards commerce was that of "an anxious taxcollector."<sup>30</sup> This is very important: the state's primary interest in trade was not to facilitate it, but to live off it. Both the life of conspicuous consumption and the waging of war, the underwriting of what Louis XIV called "my dignity, my glory, my greatness, my reputation,"<sup>31</sup> left the state continually starved for funds. Trade and commerce provided a dual source: first in the selling of office to the tax farmers, and second in the taxes themselves.

What has been described as the "parasitical" relationship of the state to trade<sup>32</sup> mirrored the relationship between state and peasant, noble and peasant.

... [v]enality skimmed vast amounts of money from the rural and coastal riverine economies, creating a superstructure of functionaries with varying degrees of status but few duties beyond the collection of fees ... holders of those privileges required sufficiently large returns to meet their contractual obligations to the crown and to amortise their original investment while reaping a suitable annual profit.<sup>33</sup>

Clark argued that the fiscal demands of the state and its reluctance to spend money for the improvement of trade and commerce posed the greatest of "all the threats to the vitality of the port" of La Rochelle.<sup>34</sup>

This financial 'burden' was so decentralised, however, so subject to local negotiations and payoffs, that it was perhaps more cumbersome than curtailing. Brière has made this argument in his study of the cod industry.

Les droits qui frappaient le commerce de la morue étaient fort nombreux. Les droits de gabelle payés à l'achat du sel dans les portes situés en pays nonexemptés et les droits de sortie des traites sur les marchandises d'avitaillement étaient levés avant le départ des navires. Au retour, la cargaison de morue se voyait soumise à une série de droits royaux ou privés d'autant plus nombreux que la destination du poisson était éloignée du port de débarquement. Mais nombreux ne signifie pas énorme; en effet, la fiscalité à laquelle était soumis le commerce de la morue en France ne semble pas avoir été aussi lourde que les négociants cherchaient toujours à le laisser croire.<sup>35</sup>

Without the imposition of all the taxes and charges<sup>36</sup> he calculated that the price of cod after the long trip from Nantes to Paris would only have been reduced by one-fifth. The risks of weather and war, and particularly of the English navy, rather than the proliferation of taxes<sup>37</sup> seem not only to have been greater hazards, but constituted more compelling reasons for seeking safer investment.

Furthermore, the relationship of the state to trade cannot be characterised simply as parastical. If that

were the case, we would expect the merchant-traders to have taken a clearly oppositional stance towards the state. No such situation emerged and it is important to see why. For the taxes on trade and commerce were enmeshed within a complex and shifting set of obligations and privileges that pitted port against port, commodity against commodity, large merchants against small. While merchants of one port shared interests and would systematically make common cause, their demands were for special privileges over other ports, or to protest obligations not hampering others.<sup>38</sup> "In La Rochelle, as in all other seaports local officials and merchants were sensitive to any shift in advantage that threatened the status quo."<sup>39</sup>

The commercial towns were divided not only by distance and geography, but also by historical development and private interests. Certain towns enjoyed special privileges and consideration, such as the monopoly of certain types and areas of trade, and they competed with each other for prosperity and influence. It was natural, therefore, that they should regard the proposals of the deputies (of the Conseil de Commerce) not from the standpoint of the merchant interest as a whole, but from the benefits and disadvantages which would accrue to their own town and region.<sup>40</sup>

The likelihood of their transcending local issues to fight against state incursions as such was further undercut because they owed their privileges as well as their restrictions and costs to the state. As Clark put it,

... the economic and political elites within each municipality derived their

formal status and power essentially from the system of privilege; thus their self-interest moderated any inclination to attack the system in a fundamental way.<sup>41</sup>

The local institutions to defend merchants' interests, for example, were set up and sanctioned by the state. The Chamber of Commerce acted partly as a lobbying group with a deputy in Paris who "theoretically represented the total economic interests of the realm" but who, in fact, "spent most of his time lobbying for hometown interests."<sup>42</sup> But the hometown was far from homogeneous. Which hometown interests did he represent? "The Chamber was an exclusive system to maintain those privileges essential to 'le commerce du grand cours'."<sup>43</sup> So the state bodies protected the large "négociant-armateurs" from the presumptions of their social and economic inferiors.

The conflict of interest between Canadian merchants and the marchands-forains from France has often been taken as a sign of the development of indigenous colonial interests. And indeed the Canadian merchants in their petitions to the state demanding protection from French competition argued that they had

... discovered the cause of their distress in the trade carried on by transient merchants from France, who spend the winter here, retail their merchandise, and send their agents into the countryside to skim off the cream of this land's products.<sup>44</sup>

But within French port cities also, as Clark showed, there were important social and economic distinctions between merchants. The Canadian cry against those with more capital

and connections seems quite comprehensible in this context. The subordination of small merchants, domiciled more or less permanently in Canada to French merchants has also been identified by Hamelin and Ouellet as a factor retarding capitalist development in the colony because it diverted capital back to the metropolis. But it makes more sense to see this flow of capital moving from the less privileged to the more privileged as it did in all port cities. The large merchants could afford both to take many kinds of risks and also to hoard goods to take advantage of periods of scarcity. They also had the opportunities to cash in on more substantial reservoirs of state patronage; privilege begets privilege.

Here we have in more tangible historical terms an elaboration of Marx' statement that the activities of these kind of merchants did not provide the "really revolutionary" way to capitalist development:<sup>45</sup> their interests were, in however contradictory a fashion, tied up with the network of privileges motivated by the feudal state. Furthermore, this network of privileges and obligations did not confine itself to the parasitic and protective relationship that the state offered to trade itself, as an economic activity, and to merchants as merchants. It was also embedded within the labyrinth of possibilities for social mobility and more secure fortunes that was available to the most successful merchants in seventeenth and eighteenth century France.

There is a rather remarkable consensus among historians of different schools about the behaviour of French merchant-traders and their relationship to the treasure trove of opportunities offered by the state. The argument which has been advanced by Henri Hauser, Perry Anderson, Immanuel Wallerstein, George Taylor and Fernand Braudel goes like this: wealthy merchant (capitalists) retarded the development of capitalism in France by some 150 years through investment behaviour that systematically removed capital from trade and industry into unproductive areas like land, rentes and office. Henri Hauser made the argument first in 1933.

The characteristic feature of French economic history from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the eighteenth centuries is a constant hemorrhage of capital which removed it from business as soon as it had been created and the commercial class was decapitated by the transformation of its best representatives into professional men.<sup>46</sup>

Taylor confirmed this judgement noting that Colbert and Necker, a century apart from one another, "complained that this tendency drained off commercial and industrial capital and undermined economic growth."<sup>47</sup> To evaluate this argument it is necessary to disentangle its two strands. That a large part of merchant capital was channelled into land, rentes and offices, what Taylor has called "proprietary wealth"<sup>48</sup> seems beyond dispute. Anderson has emphasised the role played by the state in this 'diversionary process': an "extreme ornate complex based on venality of office



which attracted nobles, bourgeoisie and their capital.<sup>49</sup> Purchasing offices was a step to even greater things for those rising in the social system: "the acquisition of noble titles and fiscal immunity became normal entrepreneurial goals for roturiers."<sup>50</sup>

It does not follow, however, that it was this pattern of investment that derailed the development of capitalism. There are two problems with such a leap. First there is a strong teleological dimension to this judgement--an assumption in fact, that there is a 'correct' path for a society to follow. French society should have gone in a certain direction, and blew its chance--at least the first time round. The consensus that this was lamentable is possible because Marxist and liberal historians both herald the development of capitalism as progress, albeit, for the first, it is only a step on the road somewhere else, while for the second it is as close to nirvana as we mortals are likely to get! Retrospectively the English trajectory is recommended for emulation. In that country merchant-traders understood their destiny and the universe continued to unfold as it should. But teleological assumptions interfere with a genuinely historical approach. As Skocpol put it, teleological reasoning

... has the effect of creating an impenetrable abyss between historical findings and social science theorising ... For, through ... (this) ... a posteriori style of argument, deviant historical cases do not force one to modify or

replace one's theory, while even a very inappropriate model can be illustrated historically without being put to the rigorous test of making real sense of actual patterns and causal processes in history.<sup>51</sup>

There is a second problem with this leap. Just as Skocpol cautioned, teleology tended to replace a dialectic between theoretical analysis and historical investigation. The historical comparisons between England and France stopped too soon. In particular, the 'blaming the merchants' argument failed to appreciate the centrality of England's agrarian revolution<sup>52</sup> for creating a transformed milieu in which merchant-traders understandably behaved very differently than they did before, or than they still did in France. In order to elaborate this, it is necessary to look again at this transitional period in England.

#### A Comparison With England

The transformation to capitalism in England involved an unprecedented upheaval in the way a growing majority of people would henceforth make a living. The causes of this ferment, as Chapter 2 pointed out, lay deeply embedded in centuries of history, and especially in the losing struggle of the poorer peasantry to retain land. The large London pre-Civil War merchants were clearly not 'responsible' for this transformation to capitalist social relations. More than that, even when the processes were

in full-motion they opposed the political struggle that would consolidate and enhance the legal, social and economic changes. Change took place not because of them, but quite truly, in spite of them. Among the "enemies of the people" in the Civil War were the "oligarchies of wealthy merchants who controlled town governments and dominated trade and commerce through monopoly companies."<sup>53</sup> In fact, like their French counterparts, "a handful of merchants and financiers, especially customs farmers, came to play an increasingly crucial role in providing credit for royal government during the 1620s and the 1630s."<sup>54</sup> During the Civil War they chose sides:

The Aldermanic Court backed the Crown throughout the period, raising money through the sale of Crown lands, or enforcing unpopular royal policies, such as ship money. The customs farmers provided the advances necessary to maintain a tolerably stable financial basis for day to day royal governance ... insofar as both the Aldermanic Court and the customs farming syndicates were recruited from the ranks of the overseas merchants, they were drawn almost entirely from the Levant-East India complex ... As very rich merchants and leading officers in their companies ... these men must have exerted a considerable influence to bring their fellow company merchants behind the royal cause. The degree to which they had actually succeeded in doing so before the emergence of a powerful revolutionary movement served to galvanise the City's conservative forces behind the royal cause in late 1641 is not certain. It is however, notable that at no time did either the Levant or East India Company, as corporations, support Parliament. <sup>55</sup>

It was the "new men" that we discussed earlier,<sup>56</sup> men from the middling sort, including those involved in the colonisation of America, men who were thwarted by, not beneficiaries of, the established network of monopoly and privilege, who "overwhelmingly supported the parliamentary cause"<sup>57</sup> during the Civil War.

This was a complicated war, and there were more than two sides. For the people, once committed to parliament, had their own interests to pursue. They had not taken sides simply to facilitate a takeover by a newly constituted ruling class. But when the dust had settled, when the king's men and the parliamentary men realised that to continue was to risk losing everything, there had been only half a revolution. The people went unsatisfied. Hill put this aptly.

The struggle for freedom, then, in the seventeenth century, was a more complex story than the books sometimes suggest. The men of property won freedom--freedom from arbitrary taxation and arbitrary arrest, freedom from religious persecution, freedom to control the destinies of their country through their elected representatives, freedom to buy and sell. They also won freedom to evict copyholders and cottagers, to tyrannise over their villages, to hire unprotected labour in the open market.

Furthermore, "the smaller men failed in all spheres to get their freedom recognised, failed to win either the vote or economic security."<sup>58</sup> The link between capitalist development and progress, at least for the majority of the people at this point in history seems unconvincing.

Winstanley was clearly disillusioned. "If the common people have no more freedom in England but only to live among their elder brothers and work for them for hire, what freedom then have they in England more than they have in Turkey or France?"<sup>59</sup>

The outcome of the war had cleared the way for legislation governing land, taxation, trade, and industry. That legislation was in the interests of a growing capitalist bourgeoisie, a class that came to include a successfully reconstituted nobility. In that process, the form of the aristocracy was maintained, but the nobility can no longer be described as feudal. As Hobsbawm put it,

... they were a post-revolutionary elite ... Honour, bravery, elegance and largess, the virtues of a feudal or court aristocracy no longer dominated their lives ... their parliaments and governments made war and peace for profit, colonies and markets in order to stamp on commercial competitors.<sup>60</sup>

The 'successful' English aristocrat was called upon to embrace a different world-view in order to survive. Here he is lectured by Ben Jonson, an early proponent of bourgeois values:

That ancient hospitality, of which we hear so much, was in an uncommercial country when men, being idle, were glad to be entertained at rich men's tables. But in a commercial country, a busy country, time becomes precious, and therefore hospitality is not so much valued ... Promiscuous hospitality is not the way to gain real influence ...

No, Sir, the way to make sure of power and interest is by lending money confidentially to your neighbours at a small interest, or perhaps at no interest at all, and having their bonds in your possession.<sup>61</sup>

The major challenge to the old ways came from the new demands of capitalist agriculture. Nobles had to compete with their neighbours who were turning to more efficient uses of land.

These new methods--land drainage and reclamation, the use of fertilizers, hedging and ditching enclosed land--all required capital. Racking rents and evicting tenants required the abandonment of one set of values and its replacement with another. The investment of capital in new procedures instead of the displaying of wealth in potlatch fashion required a changing life-style.<sup>62</sup>

The legislation that emerged from the struggles of the Civil War facilitated these developments, and was quite precisely class-specific in its conferring of benefits.

The laws abolishing feudal tenures, for example, gave landowners absolute ownership of their land, free from the obligations and interference of the Crown, while, at the other end of the scale, "[c]opyholders obtained no absolute property rights in their holdings, remaining in

subject dependence of their landlords, liable to arbitrary death duties which could be used as a means of evicting the recalcitrant."<sup>63</sup> In other words, feudal tenures were

"abolished upwards only, not downwards."<sup>64</sup> This legislation--the abolition of feudal tenures and the Court of Wards in 1646--brought the Middle Ages to an end in agrarian relations.<sup>65</sup> Copyholders and small property.

owners, unable to stay abreast of rising prices, lost their property: "the agricultural boom of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries rebounded to the benefit of big landowners and capitalist farmers, not peasant proprietors."<sup>65</sup> This was the legal confirmation of the agricultural revolution, the revolution that did not happen in seventeenth century France.<sup>67</sup>

The passing of the Navigation Act in 1650-51 was as important for colonial and trade relations as the abolition of feudal tenures was for agrarian relations. Described by Adam Smith as "perhaps the wisest of all commercial regulations of England"<sup>68</sup> it subordinated the colonies to Parliament and ensured that trade with them would be monopolised by English shipping. All colonial commodities had to be routed through England and the resulting re-export of colonial goods constituted "the principal dynamic element in English trade expansion during the second half of the seventeenth century."<sup>69</sup> This Act "represented the victory of a national trading interest over the separate interests and privileges of the companies" leaving the merchant "to work out his destiny free of formal organisation within a general protective framework of national legislation."<sup>70</sup> For while the Navigation Act gave English traders a monopoly over trade with the colonies, internally old monopoly regulations were swept away.

Companies no longer restricted output to keep prices high. The economy was

geared to the export of large quantities of cheap goods. England had entered the competitive epoch well ahead of her rivals.<sup>71</sup>

The comparison with France is dramatic... Christopher Hill put this succinctly: "down to 1640, England and France moved along parallel lines of industrial regulation; after that date they are poles apart."<sup>72</sup> For only in the second half of the eighteenth century did "the corporations, trading companies, maitrises and jurands which exercised a stranglehold on French trade and industry"<sup>73</sup> begin to break down. In the history of capitalism, as Dobb put it, "nascent capital itself (had) to be emancipated from the restrictive monopolies in the sphere of trade in which merchant capital is already entrenched."<sup>74</sup> And clearly the impetus for this "emancipation" would not come from merchant-traders themselves, whether in England or France. In France the regulations continued to exist because of the interests they did serve, and because of the absence of strong competing interests to challenge them. In England the restrictions were removed, but it was the outcome of a political struggle engaged in by those who believed they stood to gain in some way from the changes.

After 1688, the taxation system was revised to favour the industrial classes over the landed and the poor. "Henceforth wars fought in the interests of trade were paid for by the gentry and through the excise, by the poorer classes who had no vote anyway."<sup>75</sup> Not only that, but the state's debts in these wars henceforth



became the National Debt. "This revolutionary association of parliament with the borrowings of the State"<sup>76</sup> bound the king to Parliament, on the one hand, and allowed for the guaranteed underwriting of state projects, including wars, on the other. The French kings were undoubtedly envious of the second part of the equation, and equally appalled by the first. For the English kings lost any claim to absolutism although, once they had learned what that meant, they gained a new kind of security of tenure that, unlike their French counterparts, they had not yet known.

The English state--with its new relationship between Parliament and Monarch, its new and more secure financial underpinnings, its legislation on all the important issues of the day--had been refashioned through the struggles between the old and the emerging ruling class. Although these struggles included decisive interventions from the people, their outcomes had no tangible benefits for them. The state itself, as a network of relations and institutions was both the site of the struggle, and in a sense 'the thing' that was fought over. The Monarchy was subordinated to Parliament and that institution was henceforth dominated by the new ruling class, a capitalist bourgeoisie, a class which included a chastened, but educable, and hardly impoverished, aristocracy. That there were important internal divisions in this new and reconstituted class is certainly true; but its collective fear of the unprivileged

and their potential power had a subduing effect. The memory of the Civil War when "the revolution became an open class conflict ... between rich and poor, rulers and ruled, strong and weak"<sup>77</sup> remained strong. The intraclass divisions would have to be lived with:

Tories and Whigs may have had many differences, but they had one decisive thing in common: They were all rich; their wealth rested on a common basis of absolute (i.e. capitalist) property. Even the great landowners derived their wealth from economic organisation based on bourgeois, not feudal, social relations. less than 150,000 people out of a population of roughly 5,000,000 argued about how best to secure<sup>78</sup> their wealth and assure their power.

By the first decade of the eighteenth century it was a "world in which governments put first the promotion of production for policy is no longer determined by aristocrats whose main economic activity is consumption."<sup>79</sup> England was now a nation of wage-labourers-cum-consumers; the era of the expanding marketplace had dawned, with a new generation of traders, manufacturers and merchants, backed by Parliament, ready to serve and create its needs. And the state's power to enforce its will outside its borders "rested chiefly on that most commercially-based and trademinded weapon, a Navy."<sup>80</sup>

We can return, then, to the merchant-traders of France in order to understand and evaluate their investment behaviour in the context of their own environment, rather than that of neighbouring England's, and free from

the assumption that their behaviour could have transformed a feudal society into a capitalist nation.

French Merchants and Their Capital

Let us begin by looking at Robert Forster's biography of the Depont family.<sup>81</sup> The Deponts were a Protestant merchant La Rochelle family which made a nominal conversion before 1721. In 1718 Paul Depont was named manager of the Compagnie des Indes, responsible for consigning goods to Louisiana and Canada. But as early as 1687, and accelerating in the early eighteenth century, he began investing in seigneuries. In 1721 he purchased the office of Trésorier de France in the Bureau of Finances of La Rochelle for his son, Paul-François, thus putting him on the road to a noble title. After his death in 1742, Paul-François reinvested the rest of his father's fortune in land and rentes. Clearly, if the Hauser through Quellet thesis holds, the Depont family stands as a typical example of those who turned their back on their historical mission to bring about capitalist development in France.

In Forster's hands, however, the Depont decision is shown to be economically rational, and, indeed, led to the survival of the family fortune even through the revolutionary period. Merchant families who remained in trade were hurt by the Seven Years War for their fortunes

were far more precariously based. "There can be little doubt," declared Forster, "that the Deponts had secured the bulk of their capital at the right moment."<sup>82</sup>

Remaining in overseas trade might have led to personal misfortune but hardly to earlier capitalist development.

For there was no agricultural revolution in France in the seventeenth century, no massive 'freeing' of the peasants from the land, no development of a consumer society as there was in England. The Depont family and its peers, either in their guise as merchant-traders or as landlords and magistrates, can scarcely be given either credit or blame for this. Merchant-traders were part of the network of feudal social relations, not budding capitalists who were seduced by unproductive forms of investment.

Forster counters those critical of the Depont-type decisions with simple pragmatism: "if economic historians point to this kind of decision as contributing to the decapitation of French capitalism, who can deny that subsequent events confirmed the wisdom of this shift to security?"<sup>83</sup>

Commercial investments were financially attractive, however; the rate of return probably ranged from five to twelve or even fifteen per cent while returns on "proprietary" investments was certainly less.

Rents from land had been calculated at two to four per cent of capital value, while investment in venal offices, which absorbed so much French capital, sometimes

earned no return at all or only as much as five per cent.<sup>84</sup>

The decision to opt for the lower yield investment was not however "unnatural," Taylor allowed, "in a society afflicted with a mania for prestige"<sup>85</sup> whose population had an "atavistic attachment to the soil."<sup>86</sup> Undoubtedly not! But why resort to these kinds of explanations when in the same article he informs his readers that,

... [r]isk, nearly unknown in the proprietary sector, was a central fact of business life. The merchant speculated in commodities, paper, and credit, and, no matter how prudent he was, his fate depended largely on events he could not control. Shipwrecks, acts of war, sudden changes in style, unforeseeable bankruptcies, or unfavorable shifts in exchange rates could wipe him out, and if it was bad luck that broke him it was largely good luck that made him rich.<sup>87</sup>

Refusing to continue to place the bulk of their fortune in the hands of fate seems to indicate for Taylor manias and atavism rather than economic rationality. Clearly it is his bias for the values and behaviour which he thinks would have facilitated capitalist development that motivates his language. But as we saw in England, the process of capital accumulation that 'moved' the society from feudalism to capitalism did not depend on 'luck', at least not in this sense. Taylor realised this:

If in the eighteenth century France had had an agricultural revolution comparable to that in England, it would be possible to speak of agricultural capitalism and to discover an entrepreneurial mentality that saw income as profit and was prepared to increase profits by investing in productivity.<sup>88</sup>

But his slip shows in the next line: "unfortunately for the old regime, no such thing took place." An odd remark. Surely the "old regime" would never have survived an agricultural revolution, any more than it did in England. Not only that, for whom precisely in that society was it unfortunate? On the effects of the early days of capitalist agriculture in England, Hill had this to say.

We can understand why men and women of the poorer classes were prepared to face the risks of drowning in the Atlantic or starving in New England winter, in the hope of ultimately winning free land and a regular source of livelihood. Nearly 80,000 men, women and children<sup>89</sup> left England between 1620 and 1642.

But we must not diverge too far from the merchant-traders. The argument that they made economically rational decisions is not intended to deny that these men were men of their times, and their society. Forster did suggest that the Depont family left commerce "more as a consequence of economic conditions and the approach of war than because of any conscious decision to live nobly."<sup>90</sup> Perhaps! But social mobility within the system was clearly not unimportant, and the possibilities for advancement were not far-fetched. In fact, the question does not seem to have been whether to pull capital out of trade, but when:

... each family made its own calculation of the amount of fortune necessary before severing its connection with the generating source of wealth in

trade ... The common story of failure in the Ancien Régime is that of a family which had miscalculated, had made an ill-timed exit from trade towards an insufficient capital and property basis, had failed to gain access to a proper professional clientele, and had compounded these errors by unfortunate marriages, 91  
unwise procreation (and) lack of cunning.

In this context the question of dérogeance deserves consideration: that is, the legal and social incompatibility between trade and living nobly. For many-- historians and contemporaries--this threat of losing title explains why nobles did not invest in trade and commerce, and why merchants-aspiring-to-be-nobles had to 'wash' their money by channelling it out of trade into land, rentes and office. The question is would capital have been drawn to, and left, in trade, commerce and industry if there had been no legal or social liability? The assumption behind the argument emphasising the importance of dérogeance is that the decision to withdraw money from trade was made not, as Forster argued, on economic grounds but out of social considerations: Lucas insisted that "these men were dominated by the social motive, not by the capitalist profit motive." 92 I have already argued that their investment behaviour was economically rational. (It is not just capitalists who engage in economically rational behaviour, and they do not always either.) But still did the fear of dérogeance also exert a determining influence?

There are three reasons for thinking that its effects have been exaggerated. First of all the vast majority of

the small people engaged in shopkeeping and retail trade, those people that were "unpejoratively" described as "médiocres,"<sup>93</sup> would not have entertained noble aspirations. They were the shopkeepers, small employers, modest tradesmen and rentiers--a group similar in surface appearance to England's 'middling sort', those kind of people who, in a transformed countryside were gradually accumulating capital. If there had been a capital accumulation process 'from below' these people, or those like them, would have stood to benefit; as it was, their lack of capital was attributable to the economic system, not to pursuing strategies for ennoblement. Second, a clear distinction was made between retail trade and overseas and maritime trade. Only involvement in the first held the threat of dérogeance. The charters of monopoly overseas trading companies specifically stated that participation "would not impair the privileged status of any individual." More than that, letters of nobility were offered to merchants to entice them to invest in commercial companies and colonial enterprises.

Twelve of the associates of the Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France were, for example, not only granted titles of nobility, but also exempted from the terms of an edict directing the payment of taille by nobles of less than twenty years standing.<sup>94</sup>

Third, it is hard to decipher how systematically the rules of dérogeance were upheld. Grassby has argued that these "ancient but dormant" customs were revived in the



early seventeenth century by the provincial nobility who found that the barriers between themselves and the wealthy roturiers were increasingly meaningless.<sup>95</sup> At the same time others were defining the contempt of the French for trade as a social problem. The Conseil de Commerce presented recommendations at the beginning of the eighteenth century designed to raise the social position of those prepared to increase their investment in trade and commerce. The main suggestion was to offer letters of nobility "to the fourth generation of families with an honourable and continuous tradition of wholesale commerce."<sup>96</sup> The proposal was never accepted--but one argument against it was its redundancy. By the fourth generation such families would already have acquired nobility in any case! Clearly being a wealthy merchant --those called négociants--was a step towards, not a deterrent to, nobility.

Grassby insisted that the proposal to create a "business aristocracy"<sup>97</sup> was a useful and pragmatic one. Let us stop to speculate on whether the adoption of such a regulation would have altered patterns of investment. It is difficult to think so. After all, the merchants who were rich and powerful had already had the rules changed to suit them.

The rich merchants (of Marseille and other seaports) legitimised their needs as early as 1566, when they obtained a royal ordinance permitting the nobles ...<sup>98</sup> to engage in commerce without dérogeance.

The Conseil de Commerce wanted to change some fundamental patterns of economic behaviour by fiat; England had profited from more positive attitudes towards trade--why not France? But the legislation in England had come in the wake of shifting economic realities, of a world indeed "turned upside down."<sup>99</sup> Attempts to create a "business aristocracy" in France through a little cosmetic work must surely--Grassby's opinion to the contrary--be dismissed as "utopian."<sup>100</sup>

No less utopian, I would argue, were the state's colonial policies under Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the most powerful man in France under Louis XIV. The motivation for his colonial policy initiatives developed apparently from observing the benefits that the American colonies were bringing to England. He wanted to confer similar advantages upon France, in Cole's words, through an "application of mercantilist theories, policies and practices ... designed to secure for the nation and the king who symbolised it ... power, wealth and prosperity." In practical terms this meant that the colonies should become a market for French goods and a source of needed products."<sup>101</sup>

#### The State, Relations of Capital and Colonial Policy

Colbert's initiatives have been hailed throughout the historiography of New France as decisive for the

development of the colony. Under Colbert, wrote Eccles, "the influx of capital, manpower, military force and administrative talent laid the basis for the institutions of New France which would survive until the Conquest."<sup>102</sup> Trudel put it this way: "Colbert's sweeping reforms released the colony from the formless and stagnant condition to which it had appeared doomed forever."<sup>103</sup> And for Groulx this period is "la seule vraiment grande en l'histoire de la Nouvelle-France. S'il existe aujourd'hui un Canada français il le doit aux dix ou douze années fécondes qui vont de 1660-1670."<sup>104</sup>

Colbert wanted to encourage population growth, agricultural production for market, manufactures and shipbuilding. He was convinced that the lack of development in these areas stemmed from the great pull exerted on all classes of people by the fur trade. By imposing a system of rewards for a sedentary and fertile life, and punishments for its rejection, he hoped to rechannel the energies of the population. What he tried to do, in essence, using the power of the state, was to create in New France the economic diversity<sup>105</sup> wrought by private capital in New England. In terms of these goals his policies have been justly described as a failure. "Canada which had burst out of its confines in the St. Lawrence had conspicuously failed to fulfil the role intended for it by Colbert."<sup>106</sup> More than that, Cole pointed to the irony that Colbert failed to support

the "one kind of commerce that was really important to Canada."<sup>107</sup> The fur trade was lucrative in different ways for different people. First, the state received a revenue from farming out the rights to the trade.<sup>108</sup> Second the fur trade was important to the merchant traders who hoped to make sufficient money there to buy themselves into more securely privileged positions.<sup>109</sup> Third it was essential to the governing class of the colony which supported itself in large measure through "the network of trading posts and forts which commanded the trade routes of New France."<sup>110</sup> And finally it even helped to ease the lot of some of the peasants through providing an additional income to supplement their subsistence from agriculture.<sup>111</sup>

But it is certainly true that profits from the fur-trade were not channelled into diversifying the economy of New France, as Colbert and many historians would have wished.<sup>112</sup> The merchant traders, with one foot on each side of the Atlantic, sought safe returns and social mobility through re-investing in land, rentes and office even while continuing to increase their fortunes in trade. After all, the rationale for investing in the production of commodities for mass markets or in the kinds of projects envisaged by Colbert scarcely existed, not in France, not in the colony. Yet, although Colbert's policies have been termed a failure, this has not diminished the value placed on his ambitions. Their importance in the

historiography of New France has stemmed from their conformity with what so many students of the colony think should have happened. In essence this proposition is assumed: if only New France could have had 150 years of Colbert it would have been a prosperous viable society-- like New England. But, however, interesting and understandable was Colbert's vision, there is little value for historians to retain that perspective in interpreting the development of New France. His disappointment does not have to be ours. For it is not surprising that what Colbert did do was to help create in New France a society very much like France itself. And it is very difficult indeed to see how he could have delivered a New England on the shores of the St. Lawrence. The pressures, the incentives, the capital, the surplus population, the markets, in short the particular mix of inter-related requirements did not exist for such an undertaking.

#### Conclusion

The analysis in the last three chapters of the central relationships predominating in seventeenth and eighteenth century France has had one underlying purpose: to provide a broad context for a re-interpretation of one of its Royal Provinces--the colony of New France. As a result, the questions have been motivated by some of the 'absences' in the traditional historiography of the colony

and by a critique of its central themes. Despite its diversity, that historiography appeared flawed by a failure to sufficiently reflect upon the salience of 'the metropolitan connection' for the development of the colony. This thesis is an attempt to redress that problem. The analysis proceeded through considering some of the major debates in European historiography that were relevant for a more comprehensive understanding of the colony: debates about the central relationships and contradictions of feudal society, the nature of the Absolutist State and the role of capital, trade and markets in a feudal economy.

What then does this analysis suggest about the colony-cum-province of New France? It produces skepticism of that assumption that France should have invested more heavily in the colony. For the ultimate source of the capital for colonial investment has been identified. It came from taxes on peasant production. Whether such capital came directly through the taille, was routed through the nobility from their purchase of luxuries or through the tithe paid to the Church, that was the bottom line. The benefits for French peasants, who comprised the vast majority of the population, of investment in colonisation are difficult to imagine. Why, then, should more resources have been diverted there?

It is also easier to explain now why investment in the French colony was hard to come by. In England the

processes of capital accumulation, primarily in the countryside, had thrown up a myriad of investors in colonial development; with the growth of internal and external markets such investment made sense. But in France and the colony circumstances were quite different, and it is hard to see from where the payoff would have come. Peasant-producers eked out their own subsistence and turned over a surplus, if there was one, to others; their need and ability to purchase commodities in the marketplace was quite limited. The luxury industries sponsored by the state were hardly a financial success in France, and the problems of trying to replicate them in America boggle the mind. Merchant-traders, government office-holders and financiers could hardly be diverted from safe avenues of investment that also provided for possibilities of social mobility into producing commodities for nonexistent mass markets. The truth is, that if there had never been an England, no one--from Colbert to Ouellet--would have dreamt of expecting these developments. For while the colonisation of England's American colonies represented the first steps towards our contemporary economic and political order, that of New France was well implicated within the last two centuries of the old. Without an understanding of the enormous implications of these differences there is a perpetual mystery about why all this investment and economic diversity occurred in the American colonies and not in New France.

In the next chapter a re-interpretation of New France will be developed which situates the colony in its metropolitan context. I will argue that the historical evidence sits more comfortably in an analysis that approaches the colony as an ongoing creation of the Ancien Régime than it does within the other interpretative frameworks discussed in the first chapter. The static model of feudalism will not hold up; New France was neither a benign theocracy, a promised land nor a nascent bourgeois capitalist society. The new society thesis is, however, correct in a very important sense: the colony of New France was developed in the New World using its resources and affected by its particular conditions. But those particular resources and particular conditions were approached, experienced and managed in the context of the relations, activities and interests that were in the process of being extended from the Old World across the ocean to the new.

This argument is dependent upon an analysis that clarifies how the important classes of French society were recreated in the colony--through the development of the seigneurial system, through the expansion of trading activity, through the initiatives of the Church and through the extension of state relations. This must be an account not just of state initiatives, Church decrees, and the investment of merchant capital, but also of the ways in which the ordinary people--the poor and unprivileged--



acted to shape the conditions of their life through their 'negotiations' with their seigneurs, with the Church and with the state. Through these struggles both among the privileged, and between them and the people, a feudal society developed in North America: not a ready-made one, any more than feudal society in France was static or pre-given, but a dynamic and particular one, that was shaped but not undone by the geography, climate and indigenous societies of North America.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE COLONISATION OF NEW FRANCE: CREATING A FEUDAL SOCIETY IN AMERICA

In this chapter I want to establish that a feudal society was created in New France between 1632 and 1760, and to explore the main processes through which that happened. This development was slow and uneven. There was no mechanical process through which institutions and social relationships were packaged, shipped off and re-assembled. Establishing some sort of a viable economic existence, not just for the poor but for anyone willing to take a chance on the New World, was far from a guaranteed proposition. Indeed for at least thirty years after initial colonisation there were at least two eminently possible alternative outcomes to the one that was realised: the first was that everyone but the obstinate would pack up and go home<sup>1</sup> and the second that New France would fall once again to the English.<sup>2</sup> Both possibilities were enhanced by the fierce and well-earned resistance to their presence from the Iroquois.<sup>3</sup> Settling new territory proved very different--certainly more hazardous and terrifying--than living in the place from generation to generation. A familiar society had to be sculpted out of

the wilderness, out of land with its distinctive geography, difficult climate and often unreceptive tenants. Convincing people to settle there, or to invest in the settlement of others was a formidable task. There was no inexorable flow of surplus people and surplus capital to oil the way to New France. Instead there was only a deliberate, if sporadic and often contradictory, effort by some people representing church, state or trading interests, a pooling together of resources reluctantly offered, and the persuasive power of a dedicated few.<sup>4</sup> The colony was not to resemble its metropolis overnight.

Many of the obstacles to the development of the colony have been read as signs that the New World was intrinsically inhospitable to the social relationships of the old.<sup>5</sup> Certainly the early settlers and missionaries often feared so, and the Indians who proved so unpersuaded by the blessings of a sedentary Christian civilization must have wished so. For the first decades the colony seemed to rattle about uncomfortably in its awesome socio-geographical location. The seigneurial system produced lines on a map and paper contracts, but left the land largely untouched and social relationships embryonic. If the English Conquest had occurred in 1663, future historians would be justified in insisting that there was little evidence to prove that French feudal society could take root in North America, that the obstacles presented by this forbidding, hostile and distant land were

insurmountable.

Yet, despite the interpretations of many historians, the subsequent history of New France reveals that there was nothing inherently incompatible between feudalism and America. If the vast expanse of land, the democratic air of the frontier, the salience of the mighty St. Lawrence, the perils of ocean-travel and the distance from the Old World each posed obstacles of various kinds and degrees, none proved unnavigable. If the seigneurial system looks a little pretentious in 1650, by the turn of the century it had put its permanent mark on the land, and was providing the parameters for the basic social relationships in the society; if the rich and powerful still did not line up to come, a posting to the colony could be potentially lucrative, a stepping stone to better things, or as in the case of Bigot and his associates an opportunity to serve as scapegoat for a beleaguered Crown--hardly an honour to be easily dismissed!<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the transformative role played by Indian societies both in providing an option to working on the land, and in altering the way of life in the colony appears to have been exaggerated in many accounts.<sup>7</sup> It was not, after all, Old Regime French society that was unhinged during its pilgrimage in North America. It was the Indian societies themselves which were transformed and displaced<sup>8</sup>--though not without a struggle that continues three hundred years later. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they were even more

affected by the expansion of the developing capitalist society to the south than by the feudal society in the north. This is a difference that will surface again when the effect upon feudal New France of the English Conquest is discussed. For what ultimately shattered Indian societies and derailed the project of extending feudal society to North America was the growing power of England, the world's first capitalist society.<sup>9</sup>

The argument that New France was a feudal society is contingent upon demonstrating that the central social relationships of the metropolis were extended and reproduced in the colony. There was nothing precise or inevitable or analytically tidy about how this happened. But people, after all, live in their own times; they encounter the options available and they make choices-- not once and for all, but, in a certain sense, again and again. A few people have many more choices than do the vast majority. People came to New France at different times and in different circumstances. And they sorted themselves out, and they were sorted out in the process.<sup>10</sup> Some were granted seigneuries; others only censives. Some accepted the offers; others declined--gratefully or not, we do not know. Some had the money and the connections to purchase offices, commissions for their sons, or trading monopolies; others laboured on their land, kept what they could, and turned their hand to whatever else was available. But because people operate

within a particular set of circumstances, with a particular set of options, what we find in New France is the re-creation and extension of metropolitan life into the colony. That does not mean there were no aberrations, no surprises, or no getaways for the disaffected. Such 'escapes' existed in France too--New France was one of them, but not many wanted to play. And that was true in the colony too: most people chose to live most of their lives within, or close to, settlement.<sup>11</sup>

This interpretation was developed through a dialogue between theoretical questions and existing historiographical interpretations. It does not produce 'new' evidence on the colony; it relies upon re-interpreting material that, we can say, has already been interpreted, sometimes many times over. Most historians have dwelt either upon the ease with which Ancien Régime France was 'transplanted' in America, or with the impossibility of the whole project, given New World conditions.<sup>12</sup> But there are also some very useful studies which have permitted the development of an interpretation which, in a sense, weaves between these two positions. For it argues, on the one hand, that both the processes of class formation, and those related processes through which the networks of the privileged were extended to America, did result in the creation of a French feudal province. But it also insists that it happened as it did as a result of particular decisions and particular actions by particular

people at a particular time. There were no robots, and there was no inevitable outcome. But the task is, nonetheless, to explain why things turned out as they did.

While this interpretation draws freely upon the entire range of the historiography of New France, it is particularly dependent upon the work of certain historians who share, at least in part, its approach. Louise Dechêne's remarkable book Habitants et marchands de Montreal au XVIIe siècle focuses upon the complex and uncertain processes involved in class formation and the analysis in this chapter, particularly on the making of the peasantry, owes a great deal to her sophisticated approach and her interpretations. There are also many excellent articles which explore different aspects of the processes through which French society was extended to America. These studies have focused upon how the networks of the privileged--networks of trade, office-holding, Church personnel and resources--expanded to include the colony, and how they contracted after the Conquest. There is also the work of W.J. Eccles which has told us everything we ever wanted to know about New France. His books have provided indispensable narrative accounts upon which I have drawn extensively. Finally Stanley Ryerson's The Founding of Canada and Gilles Bourque and Anne Legaré's suggestive chapter on New France in Le Quebec: La question nationale<sup>13</sup> are both forerunners of the interpretation offered in this thesis, and as such have

provided reassurance that it was not an exercise in solipsism.

This chapter focuses upon the processes of class formation in the colony. The discussion begins with an analysis of the state-sponsored Compagnie des cents associés. This was not the first French colonising initiative, but it was the first that resulted in colonisation. A brief analysis of this Company--why it was organised, its motivations, strategies, personnel and resources--will illuminate the role that it played in establishing a permanent colony in America.<sup>14</sup>

Trade, Conversion and Colonisation: The Compagnie des cent associés

The early interests of the traders in New France had to do with the relatively uncomplicated plundering of a new land of its resources. There was clearly no inherent compatibility between these interests and the development of a permanent colony. Champlain saw a "great fear" in the merchant traders that,

... if the country were settled their power would diminish ... and losing the greatest part of the furs which would fall into the hands of the settlers of the country who would hunt by themselves and who would be brought out at a heavy expense.<sup>15</sup>

The Church's interests originally centred upon the salvation of the Amerindians. Nonetheless, both the merchant



traders and the Church expanded their priorities in ways which allowed them to co-exist with, and indeed to gain advantage from, the state's colonisation initiatives. How trading and Church interests became implicated with the development of a permanent colony can be appreciated through recalling and elaborating upon the ambivalence of the state towards extending its territory in America.

The underside of the glory and potential rewards for staking out a continent was the enormous expense involved. The pressure to pursue this policy came largely from growing English and Dutch influence which threatened to destroy French trade.<sup>16</sup> Until 1663 the state tried to resolve the dilemma by developing the colony on a shoe-string through the farming out system. The costs and benefits of colonisation and trade were yielded to a company, the Compagnie des cent associés, charged with nothing less than reproducing French society abroad. But in Salone's words if the Company had to accept 'de lourdes charges' it received in return "ni plus ni moins qu'un empire."<sup>17</sup>

Cardinal Richelieu attracted some strange bedfellows for his project for the Company "was created by the pooling of missionary, business and state interests."<sup>18</sup> The largest contingent was "celui des fonctionnaires, surtout les officiers de finance."<sup>19</sup> They were particularly vulnerable to persuasion being "dependent on royal business for their livelihood."<sup>20</sup> The Company, therefore,

incorporated very different interests. The state rulers wanted to create a viable, productive and especially revenue-producing part of French society out of the purely formal French claims to the territory. In the days before the Indians had demonstrated their recalcitrance, this meant combining their 'frenchification' with the immigration of French settlers to produce an eventually homogeneous population. Although it had not been their first priority, by this time, that suited the missionaries also. Christianising the natives had proved an elusive goal. They had concluded that this could better be accomplished if the Indians were to accept the entire package of white, Catholic, French, agrarian civilisation.<sup>21</sup> But that kind of society would have to first be established in America by settlers from France.

Merchants and financiers, on the other hand, wanted profits from their investments. They had become Associates of the Company because the state, through creating monopolies and through its power to persuade, had made it their only option. But having invested they did not respond as helpless victims. Indeed, as Boulle has argued, "the Compagnie de la Nouvelle-France (1628-1663) [the same company] offers an interesting example of how private capital coped"<sup>22</sup> in these circumstances that were not of its own choosing. Fundamentally then there was a central contradiction between the goals of the Company as stated in its charter<sup>23</sup> and the interests of its main investors.

But the Company's first major loss ~~also~~ eroded its internal conflicts and paved the way to a resolution that was consonant with French business practices of the day. For the Company lost all its available capital when its first fleet was captured in 1628 by the English Kirke Brothers.<sup>24</sup>

The response of the Company's Associates was not to raise more capital.<sup>25</sup> Instead, once the territory was back in French hands, they proceeded "to farm out segments of its obligations [and privileges] to individuals."<sup>26</sup> In Salone's words, "[l]e roi s'est chargé sur eux du soin du peupler la Nouvelle-France, pourquoi à leur tour n'essaieraient-ils point passer la main."<sup>27</sup> In this way the package-deal handed to the Associates of the Company was fractured, parcelled up and subcontracted out to individuals: the trading monopolies--the potentially lucrative aspect of the Company's bequest from the Crown --was separated from its land settlement obligations. There were two important implications for colonisation.

First trade in New France, once uncoupled from the heavy costs of settlement, became financially worthwhile. As Eccles put it, the trade had not been "profitable enough to allow the vast expenditure of funds required to establish the minimum two to three hundred settlers a year called for in the company's" charter."<sup>28</sup> If merchant traders and their financial backers had not found a way to avoid the financial burden of settlement they would not have extended their interests and networks to the

colony. As it turned out trade with New France was increasingly incorporated within the French system, and the trading-post-colony gradually became enmeshed within the range of possibilities open to the economically and socially aspiring. With the introduction of direct royal government in 1663 that network of possibilities was expanded and amplified through the office system, the military and other state-financed projects.

The Company did not just farm out its privileges. It also divested itself "of the costly responsibility for bringing in settlers by granting tracts of land as seigneuries to persons willing to undertake the obligation."<sup>29</sup> This decision also had important implications for colonisation. For it was primarily the people of the Church who took up the challenge and became the first serious seigneurs in the colony.

The agency mainly responsible for the development of the colony during these early years was the Church. The company granted it almost twenty land concessions, ranging from small building plots of a few arpents in the towns to very large seigneuries outside.<sup>30</sup>

These were the days of the Counter-Reformation. Like the merchants and financiers, the people of the Church also had their eyes on windfall profits--but they were looking for souls not dollars. And colonisation offered a renewed hope.

#### The Early Development of the Seignorial System

Their years of low-yield proselytising had convinced the missionaries that success would only come through.

assimilating the Amerindians within French Catholic civilization. That involved creating a colony in America that would reflect the highest religious ideals of the Counter-Reformation through integrating the best Catholics of the Old World<sup>31</sup> with the simple converts of the new. A "New Jerusalem" could be established, "blessed by God and made up of citizens destined for heaven."<sup>32</sup> The offer of extensive land holdings from the Company, capital from the French Church and devout laypeople, and the apparent availability of "so many strong robust peasants in France who have no bread to put in their mouth"<sup>33</sup> all spoke to the potential for realising this dream. It was believed that as the Indians came to see the benefits of French Catholic civilisation unfold before them, their resistance to the white people's way-of-life, to their language and customs, and most of all to their God and their system of morality, would all be overcome:

... and if once reason obtains the advantage over their old customs, with the example of the French which they esteem and respect, inciting them to work, it seems that they will set themselves straight, withdrawing from a life so full of poverty and affliction, and that they will take their places beside the Frenchmen or Christian savages.<sup>34</sup>

But while this part of the dream was turning into a nightmare the Church seigneurs began to turn their land grants to account. For the enthusiasms of the Counter-Reformation had pragmatic underpinnings. There was a

full-hearted recognition that its tasks were not just demanding in spiritual terms but also very expensive. The religious founders of the medical, educational and social service infrastructure were financed and these heroic accounts are central to the clerico-nationalist historiography.<sup>35</sup> But money was also raised for the transportation of colonists and the preparation of forest land for cultivation.<sup>36</sup> A large proportion of this funding came through investments in land and rentes by religious orders and devout laypeople which were then turned over to the church in New France. These investments continued to pay off in the next century long after the demise of the charismatic and generous generations of the Counter-Reformation.<sup>37</sup> The land grants and the contributions from the faithful gave the Church a good head-start in the colony which continues to pay off some three centuries later.

Its position was further enhanced through its special relationship with the state. For example, particularly in the early days, beaver was a common form of currency. The Church received them from the habitants as "les honoraires des messes, des mariages et des funérailles ou les aumônes à l'église."<sup>38</sup> While everyone else had to pay a tax on the beaver pelts they sold--a tax ranging from one quarter to one half the price of beaver in Paris--the Church was always entitled to full price for any beaver that it sold. "Le transport de ces castors en France et

les retours en marchandises étaient à la charge de la communauté et non défalqués sur la pleine valeur des fourrures appartenant au culte." 39

#### CLASS FORMATION IN NEW FRANCE

The charter of the Compagnie des cent associés served notice that the state intended to re-create the central relationships of the Old World in the New: this would not be a land of independent freeholders, of slaves and masters, or wage labourers and capitalists, but clearly one of peasants and seigneurs. That is very important. For as Abrams put it

... the construction, enforcement, struggle against, escape from the reproduction of that relation are the pertinent empirical realities in terms of which the society as a whole operated, held together and lived the hidden reality of the feudal mode of production. 40  
(underline mine)

But the processes for realising the state's formal intentions were enormously complex--as complex indeed as the entire web of social life itself. They were embedded in several different sets of relationships, relationships between the state and those it would make seigneurs and peasants, between those granted seigneuries and those granted censives, 41 between Church and state, between the peasants and the privileged, and between the state and the privileged. The next section analyses how a

peasantry was made in New France in the context of these relationships.

### The Making of the Peasantry

The comparisons between the New World habitants and the Old World peasantry in most of the historiography of New France assume that the exploitative relationships informing peasant life in Europe had been fundamentally undermined and even transcended in America. What I want to argue is that these relationships, "the hidden reality of the feudal mode of production" were being re-created in New France through the actions of Church and state and through the struggles between them, the seigneurs and the peasants themselves. The differences between the habitants and the French peasants can then be compared through exploring the particular circumstances in which those relationships were continually lived and reproduced on both sides of the Atlantic.

And those circumstances--especially in the early days--were different! Can we not, with due apologies to socialisation theories and theories of reproduction alike, say that the European peasants were born not made. The actual creation of the peasantry took place well before the emergence of the centralising state. By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the peasantry was primarily reproducing itself from generation to



generation on land that had largely lost its enthusiasm for the task. Because of the shortage of land peasant families were forced to push their excess sons and daughters into the growing pool of landless and vagrants.<sup>42</sup> Rarely do we see people 'becoming' peasants: as children they learned how to be peasants and with any luck they never had to learn not to be. In New France, however, the situation was quite different. Here were people who were not peasants reorganising their lives and making decisions to become peasants. This was part of a dynamic process which developed in a particular set of circumstances: a peasantry was both created by itself, as it were, and by those in the Church and state with the wealth and power to determine the parameters in which this would occur. The legal framework of the seigneurial system, the decision to grant seigneuries to some and not others,<sup>43</sup> and the amount of aid forthcoming to make the land habitable, were all largely outside the power of those who would become peasants to influence. But still 'the deal' offered them had to be sufficient either to attract them from their former pursuits as engagés or soldiers or to convince them not to return to France at the end of their contracts. And once they were established on the land the 'negotiations' between them, the state, the seigneurs and the Church over the distribution of their production continued. In the

historiography of New France only Louise Dechêne has made this process the focus of a sustained analysis. But the extensive literature on the fashioning of a working class out of a dispossessed peasantry in early capitalist society does alert us to some of the issues that bear upon processes of class formation. The emphasis has been upon the particular hardships and work discipline evolving from the imperatives of capitalist economic organisation: in particular, the loss of discretionary time, unsupervised working conditions and direct access to the means needed to realise the product of one's labour.<sup>44</sup> There was also, however, a particular set of processes involved in the creation and disciplining of a peasantry in America.

The state had formulated laws governing land tenure, and had decreed the Compagnie des cent associés responsible for finding people to give them expression. The Company had farmed out these obligations, and the Church had taken up the challenge. In 1663 Louis XIV and Colbert declared themselves displeased with the lack of progress.

... [I]nstead of finding that this colony was populated as it should have been, considering the long time that it has been in the possession of our subjects, we have learned with regret that not only is the number of inhabitants very small, but that they were continually in danger of being driven out by the Iroquois, which makes it necessary to take action.<sup>45</sup>

At this point there were 2,500 people in New France. By the time of the Conquest the population was 65,000--the growth resulting almost entirely from natural increase. But there had also been a largely state-sponsored immigration, "une emigration plutôt parcimonieuse, venait de France: environ 10,000 au cours d'une période de 150 years."<sup>46</sup> Four thousand were engagés--indentured servants--3,500 were soldiers, 1,000 were women destined to become instant wives and another 1,000 or so were prisoners--most of them salt smugglers.<sup>47</sup> With each kind of recruitment there were particular strategies, offers and difficulties involved.

Recruitment and Establishment: This task of recruitment involved those who sought to establish a peasantry, those upon whom the obligation devolved, and those potential recruits who subsequently accepted the offer of censives. More especially it involved the interaction between them. Great ambivalence, second guessing, conflicts of interest and subterfuge--by all parties involved, at certain points--attended the recruitment of a peasantry in New France. In 1663, as we saw, the king and Colbert were for it. But as Talon discovered, their enthusiasm was not boundless.

I will no longer write to you [Talon to Colbert, November 13, 1666] of the great establishments that I believe possible in Canada for the glory and utility of the King and state, as you believe that there are not in France

enough surpluses and useful subjects to populate New France ... I will give my care, and all my application, to that which you have ordered me until such time as the matter appears to you worthy of greater support than accorded this year.<sup>48</sup>

At the same time there were some state initiatives that were blocked or discouraged by administrators in New France. In 1663 Colbert suggested sending over colonists but was convinced by administrators in New France that such people would be better-off if they first spent three years as servants.<sup>49</sup> Most would die of hunger if given land immediately, so they argued. Perhaps. But the administrators were more likely motivated by the desire to fill the labour requirements of those already getting established on the land. For this policy meant the engagés spent those years, of their life in New France working directly for others rather than producing for themselves. Furthermore, once indentured labour was no longer required for land clearance, the state's quotas obliging each ship to bring a certain number began to be systematically evaded.<sup>50</sup> Colbert wanted colonists; the people in New France wanted indentured labour. The compromise was that the newcomers would be engagés first, then colonists. But once the need for engagés dried up, there were no more sponsored colonists brought over either.

The state's strategy for turning soldiers into peasants also collided at times with the interests of others--this time the soldiers' officers. During long periods when the soldiers were not needed for military

service they were encouraged to fill the country's labour shortages and accept wage-work in the countryside--this also obviated the need to import engagés. But permission was granted by their officers only if they agreed to turn over their army pay to them. A mandement from the Bishop noted this practice, and tried to give guidelines to a confessor on how he should "conduct himself towards officers who withhold the pay of their soldiers" given that they had "no right by law" to do so.

From this it follows that the soldiers must make a free gift of it, which would protect the officer. If then the soldier to gain the consent of their captains to work off the limits of their quarters so that they will have the means of earning more than their pay, freely concede their pay, the said officers, in good conscience, may accept it.<sup>51</sup>

During the first decade after Royal Government was proclaimed the state sponsored the immigration of nearly a thousand women of marriageable age. Except for a few destined for better things,<sup>52</sup> they came from impoverished circumstances, urban and rural, which explains why they came so far for so little.

Elles échappent sans doute à des misères plus grandes que celles qui ont poussé leurs maris hors de France. Qu'elles soient envoyées par les directeurs de l'Hôpital général ou par des parents qui veulent s'en décharger, elles se retrouvent sur une terre isolée dans une misérable cabane avec un homme qu'elles ne connaissent pas, sans avoir rien choisi, mais elles ont gagné une certaine sécurité dans l'aventure.<sup>53</sup>

This immigration had no immediate economic pay-off and "c'est pourquoi seuls l'État et les communautés soucieuses d'affermir le pays s'en préoccupent."<sup>54</sup>

Their passage was paid; they were parsimoniously dowered; they married quickly, sometimes within days of arrival; and, whether because of the state's pronatalist policies or not, they tended to have a lot of children.<sup>55</sup> From all accounts this seems to have been the least contentious recruitment that was undertaken. The conflict about this immigration has rested with subsequent generations of historians who are still quarrelling about the relative virtues and vices of the young women: in Lanctot's words, were they "filles de joie ou filles de roi?"<sup>56</sup> Dechêne has resolved this debate; "[e]lles sont jeunes et leur passé ne peut pas être lourd!"<sup>57</sup>

Not so with some of the state's later contributions, for in the 1720's the state began a series of experiments in forced immigration designed to ease the colony's labour shortages. Lunn has shown that the arrival of the first lot--about one hundred prisoners--resulted in an outbreak of swindling, housebreaking and highway robbery. They were followed by some young men of good family and ill-repute at the end of the decade who were also unwelcome. Between 1730 and 1743 between 500 and 600 faux sauniers, who seem to have been more acceptable to the colonial authorities, were sent over.<sup>58</sup>

In all these projects designed to populate New

France those with privilege and power played a key role. They sponsored those that did come--Harris estimates that only about 500 Frenchmen came on their own; they manipulated the circumstances under which the recruits came to ensure that it suited them; and they blocked and interfered when conflicts of interest arose. But the intentions and actions of those who were persuaded one way and another to come to New France, and who did decide to stay also have to be taken into account. Just who were they and why did they come?

By and large [t]he "people who settled the countryside came overwhelmingly from the nearly destitute and virtually landless."<sup>59</sup> Most of them were engagés or soldiers, occupations that "drew if not from the beggars at least from the desperately poor of France."<sup>60</sup> But even to those with virtually nothing, migrating thousands of miles away from home--on a trip during which one was almost as likely to perish as not, to a land where the dangers from Indian attack had been well-reported, apparently appeared as no prize. Knowing this, Colbert, in Dechêne's judgement, masqueraded his long-term plans for the regiment of Carignan-Salières in 1665. The operation was presented as purely military in character until after they had left France. "Il était important de dissimuler ces vues avant l'embarquement mais les lettres du ministre laissent entendre, à mot couverts, que la décision était déjà prise."<sup>61</sup> And the state resorted

to a similar strategy--what she has called "un autre enrôlement pseudo-militaire"<sup>62</sup> in 1669, sending over 333 soldiers and junior officers. For it was one thing to go to New France; it was another thing to stay there.<sup>63</sup> Some preferred the security of their present status; some were too old to contemplate the back-breaking work in the wilderness; many wished to return to France after finishing up their service or military contracts; some few took up with the fur trade; many died--which is one way of expressing opposition, perhaps! It is estimated that perhaps fifty per cent of the engagés and twenty per cent of the soldiers became permanent residents of the colony, and not all of them would have taken up their own land.<sup>64</sup>

Turning soldiers, indentured servants and women from Paris poor houses into peasants was no mechanical matter. And once established on the land, there were many complaints by the authorities that they lacked enthusiasm for the tasks at hand. Even if they had been experienced French peasants, nothing would have prepared them for the arduous work of land clearing in an unsafe and hostile wilderness. Furthermore, the work of a soldier or servant is supervised, often constantly, unlike that of a peasant, Acquiring the discipline--wanting to acquire the discipline--to work every day, at least in the good weather, to make a living for themselves did not, according to the authorities, come easily.<sup>65</sup> But, of course, these new



peasants were not expected to be satisfied with merely producing enough for their families: state, church and seigneur were all waiting-in-the-wings for the day when productivity crept beyond mere subsistence in order that they might insist upon their share. By that time, however, these soldiers and engagés cum peasants had their own ideas about this question. This leads us to the central issue in the development of a new world peasantry: the question of the exactions made upon its production by others.

Producing a Surplus: In Whose Interests? Many historians have claimed that the seigneurial system in New France, though embodied as a legal system, had failed to develop in practice. As a result of New World conditions it had been impossible to induce peasants to turn over any significant proportion of their production, as they did in France, and, that therefore, the system had atrophied. The habitants of New France were a new social type, independent, resourceful, and virtually free of feudal constraints. But it is, I will argue, theoretically limiting and historically distorting to perceive these New World conditions as having a dissolvent effect upon the feudal relationship. The discussion in Chapter Two demonstrated that the struggle over production between peasants and privileged was conditioned and informed by many different and always changing circumstances which

affected the bargaining power of everyone involved. But as long as the main producers continued to hold onto their land, and the privileged had a legal right to whatever amount of their production they could appropriate through law and custom, these struggles continued.

It seems reasonably clear that in Harris' words, "seigneurial dues were usually lower in New France."<sup>66</sup> What I will do is examine some of the evidence which bears upon how the rates for these dues, and the tithe, were actually arrived at--not once and for all--but as an ongoing aspect of the history of the colony. From the point-of-view of the privileged--state, church or seigneurs--recruitment of the peasantry was only half the battle. Once granted the land, the new peasants had to be provided with the means to put it into production, for in the beginning the land did not, of course, provide even for its own tenants.

Those engaged in mobilising capital for this agrarian expansion were embarking on a long-term venture.

The seigneurs had to bend every effort to attract settlers to their concessions; thus they had to make the terms as attractive as possible in the hope that once the land was brought into production the modest seigneurial dues could be collected.<sup>67</sup>

It was, as we saw, the Churchpeople who first took up the colonisation challenge that had been issued--though not funded--by the state. They had a double financial interest

in developing the seigneurial system--as a potential source of tithes and dues. Let us look first at the struggles in New France over tithing. They exemplify the nature of the relationship between those who produced and those who legally had a right, and believed they had a moral right, to a share. Now the Church knew as well as anyone that you cannot bleed a stone. But once settlers became established, its expectations began to alter. The requirements of the Church in an expanding colony were growing while donations from France were declining. From the Bishop's point-of-view, why should the population of New France not contribute to the upkeep of its own Church in the time-honoured European fashion? There was, as it turned out, at least one good reason. While the Church had undoubtedly seen the exemption from the tithe as a necessary, but temporary, expedient--the newly established peasantry had perceived it very differently. This experience had provided them with another--and more preferable possibility--keeping all the fruits of their own labour instead of turning over a surplus to others.

As we saw in Chapter Two peasants are most likely to resist those demands which alter the status quo by increasing the customary rates. That is when the peasantry rises to revolt, that is when this resigned army of toilers has, in many countries, on many occasions transformed itself into something quite different.<sup>68</sup> For peasants and for the unprivileged the ideas of

'customary rights' or the status quo were politically informed concepts that legitimated certain bargaining positions. From the point-of-view of the peasants in New France surely a new 'status quo' had evolved in America during the early colonising decades. The Church had been managing without their contributions and it could continue to do so. There were two further factors that probably bolstered the peasant claim that they should not have to pay a tithe. First, most of them had been soldiers and engagés--not peasants--and were, therefore, unaccustomed to the routine of tithe-giving, at least in the form of part of their production. Second they were drawn from different parts of France so that the experience of their families, neighbours and communities would have encompassed many variations. There was clearly no consensus throughout France about the amount that should be given to the Church and it could vary from nothing or almost nothing (1/50) to something terribly onerous (1/8).<sup>69</sup> Since tithe-giving was not a popular activity in France, it requires no great speculative leap to imagine that if a consensus were to form in New France about the acceptable amount of tithing it would gravitate to the lowest common denominator in their collective memory-- particularly since they had gone untithed to date.

Not surprisingly then, when the men of the Church decreed that the time had come for the free ride to end, they discovered to their chagrin that this newly-created

peasantry viewed the 'concessions' as business-as-usual. The bishop made several efforts to have a tithe calculated upon 1/13 of the harvest levied, but the resistance with which this demand was continuously met forced him to negotiate one at only half that rate.<sup>70</sup> Here Bishop Laval records a stage in that process in a letter "To All Inhabitants."

Having had registered in the records of the Sovereign Council the establishment to the tithes ... by which they were established at 1/13; and having declared, because of the present state of the country, that they would be assessed at 1/20 for six years ... nevertheless there have been difficulties in their payment, Wishing to show our affection for the inhabitants we offered to have the tithes continued at 1/20 for our lifetime which, still not being pleasing, we voluntarily consent to await the return of the vessels of the year 1665 so that they may present to His Majesty the reasons for their objections. <sup>1</sup> (underline mine)

According to Jaenan, "the matter of tithes" was never resolved. In 1705 the parishioners at Beauport and Ange Gardien "threatened revolt unless their pastors ... retracted their assertions that the tithe should be computed at the original rate of 1/13." Again the appeal was to the status quo--now considered 1/26: [t]he popular outcry was that the rate of tithing had been fixed and could not be altered."<sup>72</sup> The failure of the Church to enforce the level of tithing that they wished has been interpreted in the historiography as evidence that these peasants were not really peasants, both because they kept

most of their production and because their tenaciousness forced the Church to capitulate. But, if we stop to consider peasants in terms of their relationships with others we see that they were engaged in the same sets of relationships as were Old World peasants. Their response to those relationships was, similarly, a mixture of resignation and resistance. And what they resisted precisely--not as successfully as they would have liked, but certainly with different outcomes than were preferred by Church, state and seigneurs--were new exactions that altered the existing arrangements.

Furthermore Dechêne has pointed out that in continental France, in the second half of the eighteenth century, when the state wished to encourage the clearing and cultivation of new land, it allowed a total exemption from the tithe for the first twenty years and after that a rate levied at 2 per cent of the harvest in perpetuity. She concludes that "en regard de ces pratiques, les dégrèvements accordés aux colons canadiens sont fort modestes."<sup>73</sup>

The history of the imposition of seigneurial dues follows a similar pattern to that of tithing with "the generous concessions of land allotted during the founding of the colony ... quietly replaced by contracts in which obligations and constraints became increasingly burdensome."<sup>74</sup> Unlike the tithe which was at least formally uniform throughout the colony,<sup>75</sup> seigneurial dues varied

from seigneurie to seigneurie. The system operated as it did in France: "il n'y aura finalement qu'un seul frein efficace aux ambitions seigneuriales: les usages du pays que la population va graduellement et tenacement créer."<sup>76</sup> (underline mine) In other words, peasants attempted to retain as much of their production as possible, while seigneurs attempted to garner what they could.

As a result of the variations, the resistance to dues had less visibility than to that of tithes. But Dechêne's research and Dubé's study of the Intendant Dupuy reveal cases dealing with disputes over seigneurial obligations. Indeed, Harris has suggested that "the censitaires were at their creative best in court."<sup>77</sup> But given the outcomes to these cases it would seem unlikely that peasants would choose the legal route unless they were quite desperate. "Dans l'ensemble, si les seigneurs n'ont pas la sympathie des intendants, ils peuvent généralement compter sur leur appui dans les conflits qui les opposent à leurs censitaires."<sup>78</sup> Dechêne's work on the Sulpicians indicates that the peasants of new France also found other ways to resist paying their dues. Complaints that they were "mauvais payeurs" were common; the task of ensuring their compliance was clearly onerous.

... les habitants se plaignent de la perception trop dure; ils accusent le séminaire de s'enrichir à leurs dépens et jugent providentiel l'incendie d'un de leurs moulins tout comme celui du séminaire de Québec, survenu la même année.<sup>79</sup>

In 1960 Ryerson justifiably lamented the dearth of research on seigneurial revenue in The Founding of Canada.

What the revenues derived by the seigneurs from feudal exactions amounted to is a question that cries out for research. The weight of "official" historiography has hitherto been heavily on the side of efforts to smother the facts of exploitation; and to present instead an idyllic picture of an alleged "rural equality" as between seigneurs and tenants.<sup>80</sup>

That tendency has been accentuated in much of the recent historiography, primarily bolstered by Harris' study of the seigneurial system.<sup>81</sup> In his words,

... [r]ural Canada had been a clean social slate to which immigrants who settled on the land brought similar backgrounds of poverty ... Farm families lived in rough sufficiency, their lives dominated by the seasonal rhythm of the land, not by the more powerful people who lived in other ways. With the safety valve of [cheap] land, an egalitarian, family-centred, rural society would be able to reproduce itself generation after generation.<sup>82</sup> (underline mine)

But his own research scarcely substantiated these claims. He acknowledged that the Church seigneuries produced healthy profits. Furthermore, at the time of the Conquest "the Church controlled a little more than a quarter of the conceded land [and] approximately a third of the population of the colony lived on this land."<sup>83</sup> It seems very difficult to square this with his insistence that farm families were not dominated by those powerful people who as he euphemistically put it "lived in other ways." Moreover, he also showed that although some lay



seigneurs completely neglected their holdings, an undisclosed number could be even more demanding than the Church.<sup>84</sup>

Ouellet's conclusions also contradicted those of Harris.

Ce régime faisait passer dans les mains du seigneur un pourcentage du revenu de chaque censitaire pour garantir à long terme, en tout ou en partie, le développement du groupe des seigneurs.<sup>85</sup>

And Dechêne has concluded that "[s]ous forme de cens et rentes, de dîmes et droits de mouture, c'est environ de 10% à 14% du revenu brut de l'habitant qui est versé au seigneur décimateur."<sup>86</sup> As noted earlier this rate has been described as 'only' 10-14% of the harvest. What is more pertinent is that this percentage effectively drained off everything not needed for bare subsistence. To quote Dechêne again, "lorsque la terre ne produit qu'entre cinquante et cent minots de grains, ces charges absorbent la presque totalité de l'épargne disponible."<sup>87</sup> Do we need to be surprised under these circumstances that, according to Eccles, the habitants were reluctant "to grow more than sufficed for their own needs,"<sup>88</sup> or at Harris' findings that "agriculture became primarily subsistent, clearing stopped when a family's needs were met."<sup>89</sup> In practice, this presumably meant that peasants were producing all they could, that any surplus was commandeered by others, and that the opportunity for any capital

accumulation in agriculture did not exist. This was the situation that we encountered in France where peasants had retained their land--and not in England where many were being evicted. Harris' argument that it was quite difficult for peasants to lose their land in New France bolsters the argument that the colony was evolving as France itself. And peasant strategies (that he documents) of delaying payments, and haggling over kind and amount are also consonant with the French practices.

Although the Church was able to institute a tithe in New France, and the seigneurs were able to increasingly garner a share of surplus production for themselves, the state's tentative initiatives to impose a direct tax were never realised. These attempts, to quote Macdonald, "reveal the hesitancy of the state to exact revenue from the colony before it was, in their view, firmly established."<sup>90</sup> And we could say that the 'moment' for the state to successfully press its claims never came! There is little direct evidence for this interpretation for why there was no taille in New France. But it makes more sense in light of our study of the Ancien Régime than alternative explanations that have been offered: those that dwell upon the monarch's paternalism and concern for the material welfare of his subjects, or those that insist upon the lack of fit, as it were, between tax-gathering and the peculiar conditions of America with its available land and fur trade option. Instituting new exactions was

far more problematic than gathering those already established.<sup>91</sup> Tax-collecting in New France, therefore, posed a special dilemma for the state.

In 1733 when the minister recommended the levy of 1/40 in the countryside and a taille in the towns, the Governor and Intendant replied that, since its application would require an additional 600 troops at a cost of 14,000 livres whereas the tax itself would raise only 40,000 livres,<sup>92</sup> it was not a paying proposition.

A rational position. But perhaps one not unmotivated by the self-interest of the colony's administrators. They would surely oppose measures that would make their own jobs more difficult. In this case it was clear that the imposition of a new tax would seriously aggravate the population and make it more difficult to govern. In 1704 the Governor and the Intendant had declared the people were "profoundly opposed"<sup>93</sup> to a taille, and we can assume that nothing in the succeeding twenty years would have served to alter this prejudice.

It has been assumed that because the state did not tax directly or because seigneurial dues or the tithes were much lower than those who stood to gain would have wished, that the system had altered substantially. It is true that uncultivated land could not yield a surplus. But gradually as land was put into production, the initial 'concessions'--which were hardly concessions but only reflections of a rather basic material reality--had given way to the demands of Church and seigneurs. Indeed

the interpretation that holds that a society was developing in America that was increasingly quite distinct from metropolitan France must be reversed. What we see instead is the growing ability of the privileged to insist upon their share of production. It is quite true to say that the peasants of New France were not producing enough to keep its rulers and privileged strata afloat. But this can only be attributed in part to the particular costs of putting land into reproduction, of 'setting up' in America as it were. Mousnier has pointed out that in France the peasants would not or could not deliver enough for the privileged to live as they wished, or for the monarch to pursue all the policies that he fancied. And the bubble burst often enough in the form of state bankruptcies--until the moment came when the whole structure could no longer be patched up. For the whole of French society was becoming top-heavy with the state "the giant war-making machine," living off the credit offered by financiers, who themselves had to be protected from bankruptcy by a state which depended upon them!<sup>94</sup> This was a mutually re-inforcing protection racket that worked for a good long time. But it was not just the state that kept coming up short.

The declining fortunes of much of the noble land-owning class of France sharply attest to the growing gap between past glories and a faded present. After the Fronde,

... the nobles who had kept their estates suddenly found that their income was no longer enough to cover the cost of living... the lords who had ceded land to their peasants against duties in cash, continued to collect the same revenue but without the same value ... the nobles were being impoverished without knowing it.

Paradoxically then, the social relations of feudalism--founded upon a particular method of surplus extraction--were becoming increasingly entrenched in the colony at the same time as their vulnerability was becoming glaringly evident both on the continent and in America.

#### The Establishment and Re-creation of the Privileged

I have argued that the creation of a peasantry in New France was a process engaged in by the state, the church, by those who were granted seigneuries, and by those who chose to become or remain peasants. This analysis clearly does not imply that this peasantry lived independently or unaffected by the social relations of metropolitan France. But just as the peasantries of the various provinces of France can, and have, been studied as peasantries of those provinces so a New World peasantry developed, living within a particular and defined socio-geographical location. But we cannot refer to a ruling class or even the privileged strata of New France in the way that we can speak of its peasantry. For these people straddled the Atlantic, encompassing both colony and

metropolis. It is not just that the relations of state, power, authority and wealth were initiated in France and reached over to the colony and back again. But also the lives and careers of the privileged--certainly the wealthier and more powerful among them--were embedded in continuous networks that included metropolis and colony in their scope. Whether such a person resided in the colony, and for how long, depended upon the demands of his economic activities, the opportunities for office and investment offered on both sides of the Atlantic, and perhaps also upon considerations of marriage and kinship. If the habitants equated the top of their social world with those they saw around them it is clear that the top level of seigneurs, traders, merchants, administrators and churchpeople did not.<sup>96</sup> Their fortunes and power depended upon their ability to operate within far broader networks, networks to which the mass of the people certainly had no access.

For anyone seeking fortune and status, New France was first and foremost another arena to mine. In the beginning that meant quite simply that there was a new part of the world whose resources could be plundered. When the state-backed company began to parcel out its privileges, however, that terrain, as we saw, expanded in a way that honoured normal French financial practices. The decree that made New France a Royal Province opened the door further for the privileged strata of France to

expand and develop in the colony. There were several aspects to this: the expansion of the seigneurial class, the administrative network with its system of offices, and of the farming out system, as well as the introduction of a substantial military presence. Through all these processes the state and trade relations of France were extended to the colony.

As Boulle and others have pointed out, the costs of this expansion were underwritten by the state but the profit was garnered by individuals. We must stop to recall, however, the source of the state's revenue and what it means to say that the costs were borne by the state. The monarch no longer bankrolled his elaborate operations through revenue from his own domains. Most of the state's income was now derived from the taille--taxes mainly on peasant production--and from taxes on the flow of commodities--which were really taxes on consumers whose own revenue came ultimately from the same peasant source. So we can say that money was channelled out of peasant production into the monarch's various projects including the costs of colonisation. The challenge for the privileged was how to tap into that flow of resources both in order to increase their wealth, attain the revenue necessary to purchase offices, land, and rentes, and finally to permit the most successful to purchase a noble status.

At the same time as the state went about recruiting

a peasantry it took up the task initiated by the Company of expanding the seigneurial class. While it is only in analytic terms that this class can be studied separately from the interlocked networks open to the privileged strata in the colony,<sup>97</sup> the relationship around land and production, defined by the legally constituted seigneurial system, shaped the lives of the mass of the people and the parameters for all economic development. In approaching the privileged strata of the colony it is important then to start with their relationship as seigneurs to peasants, land and production. That France was a society with far more room at the bottom than at the top, helps explain why the possibilities opened up on the New World were seized upon by those seeking financial and social betterment, despite the distance, risks, hardships and inconvenience involved.

#### The Creation of a Seigneurial Class

The argument that the seigneurial system was irrelevant in New France rested not just upon an analysis of seigneurial dues but also upon an examination of its revenue.<sup>98</sup> Harris proved that possession of a seigneurie in the colony did not even guarantee a comfortable income, let alone wealth or noble status. That does not advance us very far, however. In France itself, as we saw, the scarcely genteel conditions of the rural



nobility were clearly distressing the intellectuals of the day, not to mention the penurious ladies and gentlemen themselves. But what Harris failed to focus upon was the significance of the re-creation of the relationship between seigneur and peasant itself. For through that relationship the broad contours of the economic life of the metropolis were extended into the colony.

That some seigneurs were poor and that even more were disappointed, reveals the contradictions of a system where the mass of the people produced not only for their own livelihood but also in order to maintain a privileged class. But it does not signify that the system itself was undone in the New World, or that it did not shape the conditions of life in the colony.<sup>99</sup> Others have based their arguments that the seigneurial system was transformed in New France upon the plebeian origin of seigneurs. Trudel, however, categorised 84% of the seigneurs in 1663 as noble, 16% as bourgeois and less than 1% as métier.<sup>100</sup> Harris has argued that this prejudice for nobles was confined to the Company period.<sup>101</sup> Later on,

... [a]s long as he was Catholic and French and a bare notch above the ordinary habitant level, anyone interested in acquiring a seigneurie and able to convince the governor and intendant that he intended to develop it could usually expect a favorable response to a request for land.<sup>102</sup>

This seems to stretch even his own imagination however.

The tone of another statement that seigneurs ranged upwards from "prosperous habitants"--which by his own testimony were virtually non-existent<sup>103</sup>--to "the leading merchants in the colony, the most senior government officials, and wealthy men in France,"<sup>104</sup> seems more balanced. But even if 'anyone could be a seigneur' what is relevant to understanding the perpetuation of the social system is not that some labourers or peasants could become seigneurs but rather that the two classes --peasants and seigneurs were created and continued to be reproduced in New France. The salient point is not, that "habitants, the artisans and urban labourers ... for the most part did not aspire to rise in the social scale."<sup>105</sup> (underline mine). What is more relevant is that, whether they wanted to or not, most of them could not. Some social mobility does not indicate that the peasantry as a whole could have marched on to greater things with a little effort.

Clearly, certain kinds of people were offered seigneuries and other sorts of people were granted censives. Eccles notes that while the soldiers sent by Colbert "provided a sorely needed pool of labour for the colony ... most if not all the officers held seigneuries."<sup>106</sup> Seigneuries were part of the package of inducements provided to encourage officers to remain in the colony--along with cleared land, help in putting that land into cultivation, marriage bonuses and dowried wives. "Comme

les filles de bonne condition sont rares dans le pays, l'État en fait venir quelques-unes à grands frais et les dote généreusement."<sup>107</sup> The sponsored immigration of women was of two sorts--some were to be wives of peasants, a few were to wed prospective seigneurs--and as Dechêne noted, "les contemporains ne [les] confondent pas."<sup>108</sup> Clearly the expectations of officers were much higher than the average soldier's for despite all this, most declined the offer of permanent residence<sup>109</sup> to Colbert's apparent chagrin.

On avait espéré davantage, comptant sur les officiers pour donner l'exemple aux soldats. Ils pouvaient, s'ils insistaient, revoir la France, mais y coucheraient sur la paille, menace Colbert.<sup>110</sup>

The creation of the seigneurial system in the colony shaped the lives of the inhabitants, and provided the parameters for economic life. Alone it did not procure wealth and status. But it did not hurt either. Profits could be substantial--even in Harris' conservative (and reluctant!) judgement, and, as he pointed out, it put one in touch with other possibilities, both large and small. "Seigneurs often applied to the king for small cash presents which, for one reason or another, they thought they had earned, and the king frequently looked favorably on these petitions and accorded the requested gratifications.<sup>112</sup> Peasants were not in line for these royal treats. But the route to wealth and privilege did

not begin with land. Investments in land could consolidate wealth, and provide a necessary precondition for ennoblement. As in France, wealth had to be first generated through trade, and in the colony that, of course, primarily meant the fur trade.

### Trade, Wealth and Social Mobility

Participation in the fur trade contributed to the process through which a privileged stratum came to include New France in its repertoire during the period of Company rule.<sup>112</sup> As Armstrong argued, far from being a drain on the colony's economy, "furs proved to be the only product in which New France was able to establish a clear comparative advantage."<sup>113</sup> They were important for wages and profits, and they were also largely responsible for what economists call "international factor migration": that is, they attracted European labour, skills, and capital to the St. Lawrence and also raised the demand for "export services such as shipping, and public goods such as policing of contracts and military protection."<sup>114</sup>

The legal right to cash in at any stage of the trading process could only be granted by the monarch. These rights he was pleased to lease out for a price--and trading posts, gathering taxes, and the licencing rights were all farmed out. To clarify this process let us look at a transaction made in 1674 by Charles Aubert de la

Chesnaye, described by Zoltvany as "New France's most powerful and most prestigious businessman for over forty years." But to digress briefly we should first note that for six of those years--at perhaps the height of his success--he lived in La Rochelle returning to New France in 1678 because of the death of his Canadian associate. Men like La Chesnaye inhabited a world that reached comfortably from one side of the Atlantic to the other and they cannot be categorised simply as businessmen of New France.<sup>115</sup> In any case,

... in 1674 a group of French financiers ... known as the Company of the Farm agreed to pay Louis XIV 350,000 livres annually for a cluster of commercial and financial privileges in Canada and some of the other French colonies."

The Company turned around and "leased its Canadian rights to La Chesnaye for 119,000 livres annually." This was a move they took, according to Eccles "just to get it off its hands"<sup>116</sup> having been obliged by Colbert to purchase it in the first instance.<sup>117</sup> Although La Chesnaye had clearly overshot his mark with this transaction, and would have lost his shirt, he was rescued by "several powerful financiers ... who injected fresh capital into the enterprise."<sup>118</sup>

Whether his credit was good, or the financiers did not want the responsibility themselves is unclear. But these transactions were far more complex than portrayed here: their success depended upon the extension of

credit, one's reputation and contacts, the capacity of the Crown to annul debts, the favours of others, the development of the market, the warding away of competitors and many unknown and uncertain factors relating to trading conditions, transportation and weather. But La Chesnaye's route to success--starting with the fur trade--was clearly the most viable in New France.

His career, however, tells us a good deal more about the process of class formation in the colony. For he did not simply plough all his profits back into the fur trade: among other investments he purchased seigneuries, urban property and rentes. Zoltvany interpreted his acquisition of land as a search for "social prestige connected with seigneurial status"<sup>119</sup> and, indeed, he was granted letters of nobility by Louis XIV in 1693. But Zoltvany also described him as a failed businessman because he was deeply in debt with little more than his seigneuries, his home and 282,000 livres of rentes and accounts receivable at the time of his death. But would he have been a failure in his own terms or those of his contemporaries? That seems less clear. Seigneuries and rentes were a means to secure wealth and to shield capital from the high risks of transatlantic trade and the caprices of commerce. For men like La Chesnaye being in debt was a normal moment in the business cycle. Their creditors--whether the state, the financiers or their associates often had good reason to continue to prop them

up, extend more credit and wait to see if they could recoup and once again be useful to them. The state itself was profoundly and perpetually in debt--at least if it had been possible to keep modern-day accounts, that would surely be the conclusion. To stay afloat it had to keep its creditors solvent--and this it did, often by annulling their debts, just as it did in the Affaire du Canada with its own. The name of the game was to stay in the game; losses had to be distributed, and who was in a position to blow the whistle? La Chesnaye was surely, I would surmise, in a position to continue to make deals, borrow and loan money, and continue to move within the monarch's diverse networks of patronage.

The description of La Chesnaye as "merchant, fur trader, seigneur, financier, member of the Sovereign Council of New France, founder of la Compagnie du Nord ... enobled by Louis XIV"<sup>120</sup> reveals, at the level of the individual, the fusion of the economic, social and political networks in Ancien Régime France and its colony.<sup>121</sup> In Boshier's words, a typical Quebec merchant in the eighteenth century "was part of a large trans-Atlantic circle including perhaps royal officials, minor noblemen and other landowners, military or naval officers as well as bankers and merchants."<sup>122</sup> And while wealth made in trade was the route into this charmed circle, the fur trade was also an area to be mined by those whose primary public and political responsibilities were ostensibly located elsewhere.

For although the monarch ultimately held much of the control over access to trade, it was his officials further down the line who made many of the recommendations if not actual decisions. Not surprisingly, they found reason to favour themselves, their relatives, those on whom they wished to bestow favours, and those to whom they were indebted. A discussion of the role of the state in the process whereby the privileged strata of France branched out to include the colony in its purview has been threaded throughout this chapter. But at this point it requires some further consideration.

#### The Role of the State

The monarch's decision to declare New France a Royal Province, and, therefore, to bankroll it directly, created the conditions for the privileged strata of the colony to develop as a thoroughly integrated part of the class structure of the metropolis. There were several inter-related aspects to this: first there were the continuing efforts, as we saw, to create a seigneurial class. Second, the advantages of the fur trade were enhanced, elaborated upon and extended through the state's decision to offer military protection to the colony and the fur trade. This policy not only increased the amount of revenue flowing to the colony<sup>123</sup> and the direct profits from furs, but also the possibilities



of diverting capital and materials from military to trading functions. As a result, both those already in the trade, and the new military and state personnel stood to benefit from these primarily military operations. According to Eccles the military posts were leased to military commandants rather than to merchants because it was believed the latter had nothing in view but profits;<sup>125</sup> nonetheless, some of these post commandants were reputed to have made vast fortunes out of the fur trade.<sup>126</sup> Here, as elsewhere, the distinction between public expense and private profit had not been clearly drawn. While the trade did not (probably) provide the *raison d'être* for these military and state officials it certainly sweetened what might otherwise have been the tart, if not ungenerous, conditions offered by the state, the location and the climate alike. But this private pay-off from the military intervention was simply part of the broader processes through which state involvement and the potential for individual social and economic mobility proceeded hand-in-hand in Ancien Régime France. This point needs some elaboration.

The decision to create a Royal Province in America was largely responsible for creating, consolidating and extending the privileged strata of France in the colony. Through assuming direct political power and increased financial commitments, New France was increasingly integrated into French society--a new arena in which

political power could be wielded, money made and lost, and social status enhanced or diminished. On the one hand, appointments and offices could now be made in the New World on a wider and grander scale. Plum postings they were not, but in a society with limited room in its privileged sanctuaries, and many claimants, openings in the colony did not usually go unfilled. They also provided the possibility of access to state-held resources and state-initiated projects. Paradoxically enough, the growing power of the king and the potential for individuals to increase their private earnings at the state's expense were intrinsically linked. The greater the state investments in the colony, the greater the amount of capital available for private appropriation--a private appropriation that was, if done with discretion and moderation, not generally considered inappropriate. Such tapping into the flow of goods and capital was, after all, often in lieu of direct salary or wages or as compensation for modest remuneration. For the state did not encompass within its networks, as we saw in Chapter Three, the direct means for collecting revenue or for undertaking most of its projects. All the activities expected to garner a profit--including tax-collecting--were farmed out to those with the money, appropriate social credentials, and the correct attitude towards favours and the return of favours.

Here we see both the limitations and strengths of

absolutism. On the one hand, there is "the deficit economy so characteristic of French kings"<sup>127</sup> and their lack of direct control over the financial system.<sup>128</sup> But, on the other hand, large numbers of people, everyone with money, social status or aspirations to both, were necessarily drawn into the intricate and proliferating networks of dependency relations that ultimately led back to the monarch. Appointments to governorships, intendancies and, indeed, to all the humbler offices were not just valuable for themselves. They also provided the incumbents with the opportunities to structure access to the other economic opportunities in the colony: the many aspects of the fur trade, the St. Maurice Forges, shipbuilding, commissions in the military, all the minor state offices and pensions as well as to the granting of seigneuries.<sup>129</sup> At the same time access to all these blessings was ultimately lodged back in France with the king and his appropriate ministers. Eccles' description of how appointments were made to military office illustrates this process.

Entry into the officer corps, and promotion, was dependent on the recommendations of the governor-general and the intendant to the minister of marine. The annual report of the intendant on the state of the troops contained terse comments on the character, ability, and economic circumstances of each officer. Petitions for Canadians for commission for their sons were forwarded with critical comments. Without the

recommendation of these two officials appointment and promotion stood little chance. But in the final analysis, the commission and promotion came from the king through the minister. This meant that the Canadian leading families looked first to the senior officials, who were the creatures of the metropolitan government, then to the senior officials in the Ministry of Marine for the realization of their hopes and ambitions.<sup>130</sup>

The crucial importance of the networks of class, status and especially kinship in the appointments of Canadian intendants has been strikingly revealed in Dubé's research. In particular he has shown the influence that family connections with Colbert had in such appointments--an influence he even appeared to exercise from the grave! "Des 15 personnages qui ont été nommés à Québec, aucun qui échappe à l'emprise de Colbert ou de son clan."<sup>131</sup> Dubé traced these intendants to primarily three families who had followed the normal route for advancement in Ancien Régime France.

A peu près simultanément, ces trois familles et d'autres qui s'y rattachent passer de la marchandise (la soie en général) à l'echevinage puis émigrent partiellement à Paris, pour y réussir soit dans les charges, surtout de finances, soit dans les affaires.<sup>132</sup>

These kinds of families could expect prestigious appointments to be made from their ranks, particularly when they also had family or marriage links with an important minister, as did these families. These links of clientage and favouritism which originated with the king or a minister continued down the ranks with each

incumbent giving the nod to those with whom he had similar relationships.

Si Talon pouvait « être » à Mazarin puis à Colbert, on pouvait aussi être à Talon ou à Bégon. Le premier intendant demanda pour son cousin, Mathieu Talon de Villeneuve, une place dans l'administration de la colonie; il plaça son neveu, François-Marie Perrot au gouvernement de Montréal. Le cas de Bégon, ou de Beauharnois, est semblable.<sup>133</sup>

Clearly in terms of its privileged elite, the colony developed as an integral part of French society: the kinds of appointments were the same; they were available to the same kinds of people who came by them in the same way. The further up the hierarchy one was, the more geographical mobility. For these people, all of France including the colony was a potential area for appointment, advancement or indeed demotion. Further down the ladder offices would be available to the more permanent members of the province who also came by them through the same networks of privilege and patronage.

Appointments to and purchases of state office provided the opportunity to integrate one's private interests with the affairs of state.<sup>134</sup> It is true that some governors and intendants have enjoyed good 'clean' reputations with latter day historians, while others have been castigated for contributing to the colony's downfall through their 'corrupt' practices. But it seems clear that the differences between them were more a matter of degree, and more especially perhaps of circumstance. In

particular the more the war machine was geared up, the greater the possibilities for personal enrichment.<sup>135</sup> Eccles has shown how Frontenac attempted to monopolise the western fur trade through setting up himself and his associates in opposition to the Montreal fur traders. His access to state resources made him a formidable opponent. But indeed it is believed that he was appointed governor precisely in order to shore up his sagging fortune and repay his debts.<sup>136</sup> Even Talon, the great Intendant himself, used his privileges to import goods for his own use on the king's ships free of duty and freight charges in order to build a large warehouse in Quebec. As Eccles remarked, it is unlikely that he used the 420 barrels of wine and brandy he ordered in 1669 just for his own household--and "if he did, then it would explain the poor state of his health!"<sup>137</sup> Boshier has concluded that "it seems likely that a careful investigation would show the great majority of government officials to have used their power or positions for promoting their own private money-making ventures."<sup>138</sup>

Those who were successful could use their position and capital to advance their relatives and friends. And these people knew no geographical--or even national boundaries. Frontenac, for example made money on the contraband trade to Albany.<sup>139</sup> My interest here is not to fuel the discussions about corruption in France or its colony but rather to emphasise how these opportunities

contributed to the production and reproduction of the privileged strata, to the processes of class formation and consolidation. The highly uncertain road to upward social mobility had to start in trade. But once some capital had been amassed there were safer ways to consolidate and increase it: through the purchase of seigneuries and rentes, and through the purchase of increasingly prestigious offices which provided access to the resources controlled by the state. This was a fluid system; money could be made and lost but, as in France, the safest way to consolidate and advance was through breaking into the networks of patronage and privilege ultimately controlled by the monarch. But here too, as we noted, and as Bigot and his associates discovered to their regret, there could be grave risks. A monarchy teetering constantly on the edge of bankruptcy and public sanction because of its almost permanent wartime economy had few loyalties that could not be undercut when circumstances were sufficiently pressing.

For the privileged, New France was another arena in which to operate, in which to make or increase fortunes, buy offices, secure the careers of their sons and the marriages of their daughters, and generally become or remain entangled within the patronage possibilities of the French state. That their stamping ground was not just the colony but France itself is clear not just from

the post-Conquest exodus but from the career patterns of administrators, traders, merchants, bishops and priests throughout the history of the colony. The arguments about whether the metropolis drained the colony or whether the colony was a deadweight on the metropolis obscure these relationships and certainly fudge the class question. The problem was not that capital that might have been invested in the colony was spirited out by those without a civic consciousness. For the flow of money did not depend upon metropolitan or colonial identifications or 'loyalties' but upon where it suited those with money to make investments given the particular range of possibilities available. In France and in the colony the most likely investments for profits made in trade were in land, rentes and office--not in the infrastructure for capitalist development--let alone in projects that might have ameliorated the life of the peasant-producers. Neither their well-being nor the possibility of transforming them into wage-labourers was on the conscious historical agenda of those with access to some capital.<sup>140</sup>

The attractions of trade and the interventions of the state had gradually drawn the privileged strata of France--merchants, traders, and government officials into the affairs of the colony. Slowly these people made it part of their economic, political and social world. For --clearly--it was their world. The mass of the people had no access to the growing networks of privilege and



patronage; no possibility of being granted or being able to purchase a seigneurie, no hope of purchasing office, no chance of state pensions for themselves or military appointment for their sons, and no access to the more lucrative aspects of the fur trade. As in France, the great divide was between the privileged and everyone else.

## CONCLUSION

The historiography of New France has been the site of many debates and controversies. They result in part from the normal processes through which interpretations are developed, refined, overturned and replaced. But there has been an additional difficulty that is more specific to the subject itself. To put it succinctly, New France has appeared to many analysts as something of an anomaly. The colony has been compared unfavourably to the English American colonies, or, alternatively, it has been made to resemble them as much as possible. But in both cases, the English colonies have been perceived as the norm. New France does not look the way it should. The question is, why has that been so?

I think the problem resides with an insufficiently reflexive approach. When historians reach back to the past they inevitably carry with them present-day interests, questions and assumptions. That can work rather well; using their own prisms they tease out and hold up for analysis that which most interests them and their own society. Yet clearly the usefulness of this approach varies with the periods and societies studied. And indeed it can be quite problematic when the society encountered appears familiar. In this thesis I have argued that the colonisation ventures of England and

France do appear similar but were, in fact, quite different. Moreover, the English colonisation of America has been more accessible to almost all historians than the colonisation of New France. That is their own assumptions about why people would have migrated to America carry them a good deal further in understanding the English colonies than the French.

For the English colonisation of America was part of the initial processes of capitalisation that created and continue to animate contemporary society. Historians-- indeed most of us--understand why the people of England colonised America in the seventeenth century because they went on doing it into the twentieth, with all the other peoples of Europe, and then the world, joining in, all contributing immigrants seeking a 'better life' in America. The early colonisation of America was both the harbinger and the creation of our modern society and, as such, it looks and feels familiar. Nearly four centuries after that initial colonisation society seems naturally divided into those who must find jobs and those who can offer them and, we take it for granted that we will buy everything we need, that is everything we want and can afford, in the marketplace. When Appleby writes that "under the sway of new tastes people had spent more, and in spending more the elasticity of demand had become apparent"<sup>1</sup> she speaks not about yesterday, or about the post war boom, but about seventeenth century England. The

everyday experiential link between production and consumption had been irrevocably shattered and in the resulting shock to the world eco-system thousands of wage-earners-cum-consumers had been cast onto the double market place to sell their labour power and to buy the growing number of life's 'necessities'.

But that was not all. For thoroughly implicated with a new economic existence, in which one was bound only by limited contracts, were the ideas that expressed political and religious aspirations and demands: the ideas that insisted upon limited contracts with monarchs and churches as well. These were ideas that motivated people to replace kings with parliaments and state religions with individual consciences. People came to America seeking religious and political freedom as well as economic opportunities.

The colonisation of New France simply did not exemplify this pattern; it pre-dates what now appear as two inter-locked and interdependent processes--capitalisation and colonisation. It can only be accommodated in the more 'usual' understandings of colonisation if the words, meanings and analysis are stretched out of all recognition and if overlapping activities are taken as congruent. Indeed, understanding this process would have been a good deal easier if England had not had a capitalist revolution in the seventeenth century. As it is, to

understand New France we must unshackle our minds about what is 'natural' and return to a period when production had not been uncoupled from consumption, when economic life and categories had not been lifted out of their social and political context, to a time when the "traditional interpenetration of economic and social concerns"<sup>2</sup> had not yet been shattered by new imperialistic economic imperatives. The underlying assumptions about the world that pre-dated the victory of the bourgeoisie gave expression to a different social order: guarantees for private property had not superseded those of feudal tenure, questions of religious freedom were not more important than the security of the faith itself, and the traditional rights and obligations of different classes were thought to be properly protected by kings not parliaments. Through analysing the central relations of state, capital and production prevailing in seventeenth and eighteenth century France, it has been possible to separate--at least analytically--the processes of colonisation from those of capitalisation, or to put it another way, it has permitted an analysis of the specific relationship between colonisation and feudalism.

The more easily apprehended history of the English colonies has not posed the only extraneous difficulty to understanding the historiography of New France. For the post-Conquest history has also cast its own particular and distorting shadow over the historiography of the

colony. There has been one special problem. The explanation for the fate of the French majority under the English Regime has been sought, rather consistently, through an analysis of the history of New France. The question posed has been quite simple: why did the military defeat of the French in America result in their economic and political subordination? The Parkman-Ouellet answers are clear; they attribute it to the resigned and retarded mentalité of the people. The English triumphed because, in the game-of-life, they had the psychological attributes which enabled them to dominate the economic life of the society. Now this mentalité is a curious phenomenon. Not only is it unsuitable to capitalist society but its problematic nature is projected backwards in time--it is even inappropriate in the feudal society which presumably first sponsored it. Peasants, merchants, nobles, and kings were all similarly afflicted, and those who stayed in Quebec after the Conquest continued to be plagued with it for centuries.

Historians sympathetic to Quebec's national aspirations do not, of course, share Ouellet's judgement that the French 'got what they deserved,' if only for failing to behave more like the English. But because they do share his commitment to capitalism as progress they were faced with a dilemma. Their resolution was to argue that, contrary to the views of its detractors, New France was like New England, and that it did have a capitalist

bourgeoisie. In this interpretation the Conquest was responsible for the decapitation of the society and, therefore, for its failure to develop towards economic independence and political autonomy. The colony had lost its dynamic and growing bourgeoisie.

The re-interpretation of the historiography offered in this thesis suggests different reasons for the economic and political subordination that followed military defeat. For the Conquest of Quebec did not represent just another in the long line of defeats and victories that punctuated French history through its centuries of state-building. For feudal New France was ceded to England--the world's first capitalist country. The Amerindians had already found out the difference. For the English line of settlement had grown by leaps and bounds, pushing and shoving them ever further into the interior. The French were to find out too. Led by land speculators, the growing population of the eastern seaboard spilled out into the Ohio Valley and, as Eccles put it, headlong into the French fur trade and military frontier.<sup>3</sup> The rulers of England took stock and offered to reimburse their colonies for eliminating the French from the area once and for all.

The point is that two very different societies were now clashing. Whereas once the victories and defeats between them--and the other European states--seesawed back and forth, this time England had the decisive

advantage. Its final military victory in Quebec was followed up in the next decades by a new sort of invasion--of men with capital backed by an increasingly supportive state. Indeed, the English Conquest of Quebec was just the second capitalist takeover in history--only Ireland preceded Quebec to that particular privilege, though many more would follow, with the military victory often becoming redundant. To Igartua's question, "did the [English] newcomers gain their predominance from previous experience with the sort of political and economic conditions created in post-Conquest Quebec?"<sup>4</sup>, the answer would surely have to be a resounding--yes! But not just their experience counted; it was also their capital and their connections.

The newcomers also came prepared to fight to retain and extend their "British liberties". Some have assumed, therefore, that democracy, if not economic opportunity, should have been the legacy of the Conquest to the French--if only they had known how to use it. But we must remember that British liberties were never given; they were always won. What they represented after the English Civil War were the freedoms won by a rising bourgeoisie from an aristocratic and monarchical state. They were extended to different parts of the population, through their own struggles, over the next two hundred and fifty years. And the history of state-making in Canada from the Conquest to the most recent constitutional



crisis has been, in large part, the history of manipulating those British liberties in a way that ensured that the French would never have the required majority to be able to impose their political will on the English. The interpretation developed in this thesis does have implications then, for post-Conquest historiography although these remarks have only been intended to outline what appears to be a promising line of inquiry.

There are, as I have argued, several competing interpretations of New France: that New France was a feudal society, a promised land, an embryonic bourgeois society and a new society. Although the interpretation developed in this thesis borrows from each, it has also departed in significant ways from all of them, and this has primarily been a result of its particular theoretical and historical approach.

With Parkman and Ouellet this thesis has argued that New France was a feudal society--a legitimate extension of the Ancien Régime. This agreement, however, turned out to be quite superficial. For them feudalism was synonymous with a set of values and behavior that, in turn, produced a reactionary and static society. Like a tree--almost as obliging and with as little difficulty-- Ancien Régime France had been successfully transplanted in America. The analysis in this thesis has taken serious issue with this formulation. It has demonstrated that feudal society was dynamic, carried its own seeds of transformation and its

own possibilities for disintegration. For the "hidden reality of the feudal mode of production" was embedded within the continuously contested relationships between peasants and privileged over the distribution of production. These relationships were not transplanted but had to be re-created in New France through the interaction of State, Company, Church and those who were 'recruited' as seigneurs and peasants in the colony.

The strength of the promised land perspective lies in its appreciation of the importance of the relationship between people and land. Unlike the others, these writers --in however an idealised fashion, and it was--did comprehend the reasons why people would fight to keep their land, given all that that meant for their survival and way-of-life. But they failed to attend to the con-text in which people held their land in New France, to the relationships of economic exploitation and political and social subordination that also defined their relationship to their land. They failed to appreciate that people struggled to retain their land in spite of these power relationships, and that they sought to minimise their impact through open and covert resistance.

The embryonic bourgeois perspective has played an important role in the history of the historiography of New France. The research undertaken from this perspective drew attention to the range of economic and political activity in the colony and to the inter-relationships

between the privileged in all spheres. But in the attempt to prove that New France was a 'normal' society, like New England, its authors interpreted their evidence within an inappropriate model of development. After interrogating their findings with the questions posed by the theoretical and historical debate on the transition from feudalism to capitalism, it was possible to identify their embryonic bourgeoisie as part of the privileged strata of French feudal society.

As a response to most of the previous historiography of New France, the development of the new society perspective was quite promising. The particular conditions of the New World--its climate, location, resources and previous tenants--were all taken seriously. Society in New France was not simply cloned--it was created. Up to this point its argument is consonant with that offered in this thesis. This perspective went on to argue, however, that the indigenous conditions presented by America had had a dissolvent effect upon the social relationships of the Old World, and that a dramatically different society had taken shape. This stage in the argument constituted a huge theoretical and historical leap that remains unconvincing. That there were fur-bearing animals in Canada and not in Virginia, winter freeze-ups in the St. Lawrence and not in the Hudson, a shorter growing season in New France than in the southern plantation states, more miles between the Antilles and Quebec than

the Caribbean and New York are all true, and not insignificant. But these conditions and situations were all encountered and had to be managed within particular social relationships, within a particular socio-economic context.

The interpretation in this thesis is not intended to supersede the kind of research that has been done from a new society perspective. But that research--which rightly attends to the indigenous and specific conditions of the St. Lawrence Valley, its environs and its location vis à vis the metropolis and other colonies would be more usefully apprehended in the context of the particular though dynamic set of class and state relations that were gradually linking the New World with the Old. If France had been predominantly capitalist in 1700 the climate and the location of its colony would still have been a problem for markets and transportation: How great a problem is an interesting, if hypothetical question. Clearly, however, they would have posed obstacles not facing those colonies further south. But the development of trade between France and New France was not just impeded by environmental factors. For their constraining effects were underwritten by the absence of markets themselves, the absence of the expanding mass markets of England's capitalist society. Why and how that was so has been an important focus of this thesis

and the answers have been located in a comparison between England and France in the seventeenth century.

Many historians have declared that it was impossible for the social relationships of feudal France to be reproduced in the American wilderness. But the structure of opportunities and constraints that governed people's lives in Europe arrived with them in America. Unless they were prepared to break with their society--as some few did--they responded to similar circumstances, to the exercise of the same kind of political power, to the claims of the same Church and to the same system of land tenure. If people were to live--whether as subsistence peasants or as part of a privileged elite--they had to negotiate their way through the particular relationships they simultaneously encountered and reproduced. That sometimes evoked responses of resignation and subservience. But it also provoked manipulative behaviour and resistance tactics. The officials of New France consistently overlooked the monarch's injunction not to engage in trade; merchants, traders and officials, with wide support from the population, engaged in the contraband trade with Albany; young men slipped into the forest to join trade expeditions instead of working their father's land; inhabitants openly and covertly fought against the exactions of seigneurs and Church. But, at the same time,

the seigneurial system itself was not challenged; the state's farming out system was never attacked; men competed for the chance to purchase an office, but they did not seek to undermine the system itself. The weight of political power, the economic interests and social considerations of the privileged, the tenaciousness of the peasant hold on land all contributed to the reproduction of feudal social relationships in New France. Only a revolution would eventually topple this system in France, while in the colony it would co-exist with, even while being undone by, the English capitalist newcomers. In spite of their contradictions the feudal relationships of the Ancien Régime had weathered the crossing of the Atlantic and were re-created in the Royal Province of New France.

## FOOTNOTES

### Introduction

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7. Ouellet, p. 14.

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10. Louise Dechêne, Habitants et marchands de Montréal au XVII siècle, Collection Civilisations et Mentalité, eds. Philippe Ariès et Robert Mandrou. (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1974), p. 482.
11. Denis Monière, Ideologies in Quebec: The Historical Development, trans. Richard Howard (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 30.
12. Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1967 (Laurentian Library 33), 2 vols. (Toronto: Macmillan, Rev. ed. 1968), I:20 20. "(when) the great struggle for the continent opened in 1689, 200,000 Anglo-Americans faced 10,000 French Canadians. When the Seven Years' War opened in 1756, 1,500,000 Anglo-Americans were opposed to 70,000 French Canadians. The simple fact of population, plus the major factor of Britain's new sea power, settled the fate of New France." [underline mine]. One of my aims is to show that the facts of population were indeed not simple.
13. For New France see R.C. Harris, The Seigniorial System in Early Canada (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), and Louise Dechêne, "L'évolution du régime seigneurial au Canada: le cas de Montréal aux XVII et XVIII siècles," Recherches Sociographiques 12(mai-août 1971). For the American colonies see Marshall Harris, Land Tenure System (Ames: Iowa State College Press, 1953), and Aaron Sakolski, Land Tenure and Land Taxation in America (New York: Robert Schalkenback Foundation, 1957).
14. W.J. Eccles, The Canadian Frontier 1534-1760 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1974), p. 11 and 156-157.
15. Ouellet p. 23; Wade, 31; Pierre Harvey, "Stagnation économique en Nouvelle-France," L'actualité économique 37(octobredécembre 1961):537-548; Ryerson, p. 136.
16. Eccles, p. 80-81; K.A. MacKirdy, J.S. Moir, and Y.F. Zoltvany eds., Changing Perspectives in Canadian History (Don Mills, Ontario: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1971), p. 16-31.



17. Frégault, p. 5; Eccles, p. 102.
18. Wade, p. 31; Jean Hamelin, Economie et société en Nouvelle-France (Quebec: Presses Universitaires Laval, 1960); Eccles, *ibid.*, p. 70; Ouellet, pp. 572-573; Allana Reid, "The Development and Importance of the Town of Quebec" (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1950), p. 126.
19. This debate was initiated in 1947 with Dobb. The contributions to the original debate were republished in The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism with an introduction by Rodney Hilton (London: New Left Books, Verso, 1978). For more recent contributions see the symposium "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Factors in Pre-Industrial Europe" in Past and Present 70:30-75 and 97:16-113 by Robert Brenner and 80:3-19 by Rodney Hilton.
20. There are many different versions of this idea. See for example, Francis Parkman, France and England in North America 10 vols. (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1851-1892)2:197; Donald Creighton, The Empire of the St. Lawrence (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 11, 126-127; Ouellet, p. 574.
21. See, for example, Hamelin, p. 135 berating the merchants of New France; Ouellet for a comparison between French and English merchants; and Wade, pp. 2-4 taking kings and administrators to task.
22. See footnotes 20-21. The Catholic nationalists applaud the feudalism-reaction equation but do not dispute it.
23. R. Cole Harris and John Warkentin, Canada Before Confederation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 62.
24. Dechêne has challenged the view that habitants had to work less hard in New France than in France; it is also questionable what proportion of the population had much time for "convivial pursuits." And according to Marshall Harris, outside of a few squatters, American settlers had "little desire to push beyond the frontier" either. p. 254.
25. Gilles Bourque and Luc Racine, "Classes sociales et la question nationale au Québec 1760-1840," Parti pris 4(1966-67):38 argue that Ouellet opted for an ideological explanation rather than one grounded in an appreciation of the social relations of production.

26. For an important discussion of the history and the centrality of historical sociology to a study of society see Philip Abrams, Historical Sociology (Somerset, England: Open Books Publishing, 1982).
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28. See Chapter 1 "The Time-Space Construction of Social Systems" in Anthony Giddens, A Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism (London: MacMillan, 1981), pp. 26-48.
29. Abrams, p. 16.
30. See footnote 19.
31. See especially Brenner's two contributions to the debate.
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34. Dobb, p. 13.
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### Chapter One

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3. Ouellet, p. 562.
4. Ibid., p. 9. See also Eccles, p. 81-96; Hamelin, p. 107; Pentland, p. 68,
5. Ibid., p. 7. See also Hamelin, p. 135.
6. Fernand Ouellet, "La formation d'une société dans la vallée du Saint-Laurent: d'une société sans classes à une société de classes," Canadian Historical Review LXII (December 1981):443.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Parkman, The Old Regime, 2:197ff.
10. Ouellet, "La Formation": 446.
11. Parkman, The Old Regime, p. 197ff.
12. Ouellet, "La formation": 446.
13. Ibid., p. 444.

14. Ouellet, Economic and Social, p. 568.
15. Hamelin, p. 135.
16. See footnote 13.
17. Ouellet, Economic and Social, p. 14.
18. W.J. Eccles, Canada Under Louis XIV, 1663-1701 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1964), p. 265.
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28. Gagnon, p. 392
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107. Dechêne, Habitants, p. 10.
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114. Harris, The Seignorial System, pp. 52, 56.
115. C.H. George, "The Making of the English Bourgeoisie 1500-1750," Science and Society XXXV (Winter 1971), p. 397.
116. Dale Miquelon, Dugard of Rouen: French Trade to Canada and the West Indies, 1729-1770 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978), p. x.
117. Robin Briggs, Early Modern France 1560-1715 (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 2.
118. Pierre Goubert, The Ancien Régime: French Society 1600-1750, trans. Steve Cox (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 128.
119. Isser Woloch, "French Economic and Social History," Journal of Interdisciplinary History IV (Winter, 1974):457.
120. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 121.

## Chapter Two

1. Quoted in Pierre Goubert, Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen, trans. Anne Carter (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1970), p. 19.
2. Ibid., p. 108. As Jones, p. 33 put it "[i]t mattered little whether the indigenous population was a friend or foe. Although it was desirable that troops should in the current military jargon maintain themselves at the expense of the enemy,

hungry soldiers were likely to pillage French peasants as cruelly and mercilessly as they might German, Italian or Spanish ones."

3. Briggs, p. 139.
4. J.H.M. Salmon, "Venality of Office and Popular Sedition in Seventeenth Century France," Past and Present 37 (1967):19-43.
5. Goubert, p. 26.
6. Ibid., p. 38.
7. Karl Marx, Capital III (Moscow, 1959), p. 722.
8. Abrams, p. 69.
9. Brenner, Past and Present 70:17.
10. See Williams Chapter 2 for a discussion of "determination". To give a practical example, it is no 'accident' that labour unions developed in capitalist society, but not in feudal society.
11. Abrams, p. 70.
12. Dobb, pp. 17-18.
13. Giddens, p. 112.
14. Quoted in Brian Manning, The English People and the English Revolution. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 123.
15. Giddens, p. 112.
16. Marx, Grundrisse, p. 471.
17. Since the 'surplus' is historically determined, it is more correct to say that the peasant household turns over what it does not retain.
18. Hilton, Past and Present 80:8.
19. Pierre Goubert, Cent mille provinciaux au XVIIe siècle: Beauvais et la Beauvaisis de 1600 à 1730, (Paris: Flammarion, 1968), p. 20.
20. Ibid., p. 212.
21. Robert Forster, Merchants, Landlords, Magistrates: The Depont Family in Eighteenth-Century France (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), p. 100.

22. Hilton, p. 6.
23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Marc Bloch, French Rural Society trans. Janet Sondheimer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), p. 117.
26. Ibid.
27. Harris, The Seignorial System, p. 195.
28. Whenever a roture sold out of the line of direct succession, the seigneur was entitled to one-twelfth of the sale price. This was known as the lods and ventes. The retrait roturier entitled a seigneur to purchase a roture within forty days after it was sold out of the line of direct succession. The retrait lignager allowed a wife or child to repurchase a roture that was sold by a seigneur after the death of the husband-father. And no sale could interfere with inheritance through the direct line of inheritance--the legitimé. Ibid. p. 75.
29. Sakolski, p. 27.
30. Ibid.
31. Marcel Trudel, Les débuts du régime seignorial au Canada (Montreal: Fides, 1974), p. 255. See also Eccles, The Canadian Frontier, p. 67 for this perspective on feudalism.
32. Maurice Dobb, "From Feudalism to Capitalism" in Hilton, The Transition, p. 165.
33. Ibid.
34. Hilton, Past and Present 80:5.
35. Marcel Trudel, The Seignorial Regime, Historical Booklet N. 6 (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1956), p. 3.
36. This perspective has been elaborated by Ryerson, Bourque and Legaré and Gérald Bernier, "Sur quelques effets de la rupture structurelle engendrée par la conquête au Québec: 1760-1854", Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française 35 (juin 1981):69-72.

37. Louise Dechêne, Evolution du Régime seigneurial, p. 180.
38. Wallot, pp. 376-377.
39. Monière, p. 42.
40. Ibid.
41. Hilton, Past and Present 80:5.
42. William Doyle, The Old European Order 1600-1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 112.
43. Ibid.
44. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, p. 115.
45. Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 40.
46. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, p. 111.
47. Ibid., p. 106.
48. Doyle, p. 20-21.
49. Briggs, p. 50.
50. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, p. 86.
51. Ibid., p. 85.
52. Jean Jacquart, "Immobilisme et catastrophes: 1560-1660" in Histoire de la France rurale, ed. Georges Duby (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1975), p. 243.
53. From Document 26 in Goubert, The Ancien Régime, pp. 139-140.
54. Ibid., p. 134.
55. Ibid., p. 133.
56. J.H. Shennan, Government and Society in France 1461-1661 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), p. 51.
57. R. Doucet quoted in Ibid.
58. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, p. 134.
59. See, for example, E.P. Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1968). To quote Thompson;

"I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand-loom weaver, the utopian artisan ... from the enormous condensation of posterity." p. 13.

60. Dobb, Studies, p. 43.
61. Goubert, L'Ancien Régime, p. 113.
62. Jacquart, p. 329.
63. Ibid., p. 333; William Doyle, "Was there an Aristocratic Reaction in Pre-Revolutionary France?" Past and Present 57: (November 1972) p. 117.
64. Jacquart, p. 336.
65. Ibid., p. 331.
66. Ibid., p. 322.
67. Roland Mousnier, The Institutions of France under the Absolute Monarchy: Society and the State trans. Brian Pearce (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 738.
68. Salmon, p. 35; Dobb, p. 43.
69. This argument is reviewed in Salmon's article.
70. Doyle, European Order, p. 119.
71. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, The Peasants of Languedoc trans., with an introduction by John Day (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1974), p. 201.
72. Jacquart, p. 342.
73. Ibid.
74. Salmon, p. 36.
75. Ibid., p. 41-42.
76. Jacquart, p. 335.
77. Brenner, Past and Present 97:59.
78. Ibid.
79. Bloch, p. 125.
80. Ibid., p. 129.

81. Ibid., p. 116.
82. Jacquart, p. 335.
83. Davis, p. 120.
84. Manning, p. 130-131.
85. Davis, p. 121.
86. Hill, p. 134.
87. Doyle European Order, pp. 107, 117.
88. Brenner, Past and Present 70:32.
89. Manning, p. 135.
90. R.H. Tawney, The Agrarian Problem in the Sixteenth Century, (London: Longman Green, 1912), p. 409.
91. Manning, p. 170; Davis, p. 197.
92. The last paragraph was drawn from Bridenbaugh, p. 355.
93. Hobsbawm, p. 53.

### Chapter Three

1. Davis, p. 209.
2. Shennan, p. 38.
3. Norbet Elias, The Court Society trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1983), p. 184. As Elias put it, [a]s the monopoly supplier of opportunities sought by a disproportionately large number of competitors, he has to calculate and organize very carefully the distribution of these opportunities, and with them himself, if he was not to lose control over this agitated situation." p. 137-8.
4. Eccles, Canada, p. 38; Eccles, Canadian Frontier, p. 79; Wade, p. 33; Frégault in MacKirdy, p. 27. MacKirdy, p. 16 summarised this debate.

5. L.H. Gipson in MacKirdy makes this argument, pp. 26-27. J.H. Boshier, "Government and Private Interests in New France" in Bumsted, p. 105-106 summarised this argument. W.T. Easterbrook and H.G.J. Aitken in Canadian Economic History (Toronto: MacMillan, 1956), p. 17 argued that "from the standpoint of industrial progress there is irony in the fact that the French government's success in regulating the nation's industrial life was a highly important element in the country's failure to keep pace in industrial change." For an opposing view see Eccles, Canada, p. 251.
6. Wade, p. 17.
7. Eccles, Canada, p. xi.
8. Frégault argued that the source of revenue for colonisation was an important issue to sort out. He wrote a series of articles entitled "Essai sur les finances canadiennes (1700-1750)" in Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française, XII : 307-327, 459-84; XIII : 30-44; 157-182.
9. Jones, p. 35. "Governments began to realise that the army, by crippling the subsistence-orientated economy of the majority of Frenchmen, was killing the goose that laid the golden eggs".
10. Wade, p. 22.
11. Charles Tilly, The Formation of National States in Western Europe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 23.
12. Macdonald, has criticised the concept of paternalism regarding the monarch, arguing that it was not a sign of royal benevolence" but the "very basis of the economy of New France, the privilege on which ... the colony proper was founded ... it was an outgrowth of mercantile absolutist strategy, p. 125. For some contributions to the debate on the nature of the Absolutist State see Footnote 32 of the Introduction. Also see Giddens, pp. 182-202 and the contributions by Brenner in Past and Present.
13. Abrams, p. 152.
14. Ibid.
15. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, pp. 1-2.
16. Shennan, p. 15.

17. Ibid., p. 14.
18. Ibid., p. 34. Also see Julian Dent, Crisis in Finance: Crown, Financiers and Society in Seventeenth Century France (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles (Holdings) Ltd., 1973), p. 33.
19. Mousnier, p. 730.
20. Shennan, p. 50.
21. Anderson, p. 32.
22. Dent, p. 44.
23. Ibid., p. 20.
24. Shennan, p. 51.
25. Dent, p. 34.
26. Shennan, p. 51.
27. Mousnier, p. 730. See also Dent, p. 21.
28. Shennan, p. 51.
29. Wallot, p. 375; Eccles, Canadian Frontier, pp. 80-1.
30. Dechêne, Evolution, p. 161.
31. Briggs, p. 157.
32. Dent, p. 36.
33. Shennan, p. 53.
34. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, p. 69; Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 41.
35. Shennan, p. 43.
36. John Clark, La Rochelle and the Atlantic Economy during the Eighteenth Century, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 20.
37. Shennan, p. 23.
38. Ibid.
39. Lucien Campeau, "Le commerce des clercs en Nouvelle-France", Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa 47 (1977): 31; Cornelius J. Jaenan, "The Catholic Clergy and the Fur Trade 1585-1685," Historical Papers (1970): 60-80.



40. Anderson, p. 32.
41. John Boshier, French Finances 1770-1795. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 10.
42. Ibid.
43. K.W. Swart, The Sale of Offices in the Seventeenth Century (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1949), p. 8.
44. Ibid., p. 15.
45. Ibid.
46. Briggs, pp. 101-102.
47. Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 137.
48. Guy Frégault, La civilisation, p. 133. In "Government and Private Interests" Boshier has summarised this point-of-view, pp. 107-108.
49. Boshier, *ibid.*
50. Ibid., p. 115.
51. Joel Hurstfield, Freedom, Corruption and Government in Elizabethan England (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), p. 307.
52. Shennan, p. 55.
53. Mousnier, p. 740; *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.
54. Boshier, French Finances, p. 19.
55. John Boshier, "The French government's motives in the Affaire du Canada, 1761-1763", English Historical Review 96 (January 1981): 59-78.
56. Boshier, "Government and Private Interests", p. 117.
57. Anderson, p. 95.
58. Boshier, "Government and Private Interests", p. 110.
59. George Taylor, "Noncapitalist Wealth and the Origins of the French Revolution", American Historical Review LXXII (January 1967):477.
60. Quoted in Boshier, French Finances, p. 13.

61. Dent, p. 46.
62. Vivian R. Gruder, The Royal Provincial Intendants: A Governing Elite in Eighteenth-Century France (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 3.
63. Dent, p. 234.
64. Ibid.
65. Salmon, p. 33.
66. Ibid., p. 32.
67. Boshier, French Finances, p. xiii; p. xi.
68. W.J. Eccles, The Government of New France, Historical Booklet N. 18 (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1971) p. 5.
69. Wade, p. 33. Terence Crowley, "Government and Interests: French Colonial Administration at Louisbourg 1713-1758," (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1975) has shown that the intendants of the colonies were modelled after the naval administration not after the provincial intendancy system. Professor Pritchard has told me that this made very little difference in the nature of their power in their respective jurisdictions. But they were not drawn from the same background as the men Gruder profiles in her portrait of the Provincial Intendants (endnote 62). For the background of Canadian Intendants see Jean-Claude Dubé "Colbert et l'intendance de Québec," Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa 47 (juillet-septembre 1977):292-306.
70. Boshier, "Government and Private Interests", p. 104-117; Boshier, "Affaire du Canada," pp. 62, 65, 69, 73, 75.
71. Dubé, p. 306.
72. Dent, p. 235. See also Michael Duffy, "Introduction: The Military Revolution and the State 1500-1800" in Duffy. "Indeed for all the glittering facade of a Versailles or a Sans Souci the government of Ancien Régime Europe were really giant war-making machines devoting their main efforts to the maintenance of large armed forces." p. 4.
73. See Doyle, European Order.
74. Anderson, p. 31.

75. Quoted in Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 139.
76. Doyle, European Order, p. 265.
77. Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 70.
78. Ibid., p. 33.
79. Briggs, p. 156.
80. Eccles, Canada, p. 4.
81. See Footnote 67.
83. Brenner, Past and Present 97 : 58.
84. Mousnier, p. 731.
85. Ibid., p. 738.
86. Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 40.
87. Mousnier, p. 738. The collectors of the salt tax--  
la gabelle were originally called gabelleurs but  
this term came to be used for all the state tax  
collectors.
88. Salmon, p. 30.
89. Paul Sweezy, "A Rejoinder" in Hilton, Transition,  
p. 108.
90. F. Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private  
Property and the State (Moscow: Progress  
Publishers, 1948), p. 168.
91. Hill, "A Comment" in Hilton, The Transition, p. 118.
92. Monière, p. 32.
93. Theda Skocpol, "Review Symposium. Wallerstein's World  
Capitalist System: A Theoretical and Historical  
Critique," American Journal of Sociology 82 (March  
1977):1084.
94. Ibid., p. 1086.
95. Ibid., p. 1087.
96. Brenner, Past and Present 97:59 (Footnote 94).
97. Ibid.

98. Anderson, p. 13.
99. Abrams, p. 206.
100. Colin Lucas, "Nobles, Bourgeois and the Origins of the French Revolution" Past and Present 60 (August, 1973):87.
101. Guy Richard, Noblesse d'Affaires au XVIIIe siècle (Paris: Armand Colin, 1974), pp. 48-9.
102. Ibid., p. 18. "La noblesse, cependant, ou plutôt une certaine noblesse éclairée et suffisamment pulente, dispute à la bourgeoisie le contrôle de l'activité économique du royaume."
103. Cameron Nish, "The Nature, Composition and Functions of the Canadian Bourgeoisie, 1729-1748," in Bumsted, p. 123.
104. Nish, Le bourgeois-gentilshommes, p. 170.
105. Manning, p. 280.
106. Shennan, p. 65; Salmon, pp. 37-9.
107. Shennan, p. 59.
108. Ibid., p. 42.
109. Doyle, "Aristocratic Reaction", p. 121.
110. Lucas, p. 89.
111. Peter Burke, "The High Road and the Low Road: Approaches to Early Modern France," The Historical Journal 24 (1981) : 732.
112. Doyle, "Aristocratic Reaction", p. 112.
113. Ibid., p. 113.
114. Gruder, p. 3.
115. Ibid., p. 210.
116. J.M. Salmon, Society in Crisis: France in the Sixteenth Century (London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1973), p. 175.
117. Shennan, p. 15.

118. Ibid., p. 18.
119. Wade, p. 6.
120. Lucien Campeau, L'évêché de Québec (1674), (Québec: La société historique de Québec: 1974), p. 89.
121. Pierre Hurtubise, "Jansenism, Gallicanism, Ultramontanism: The Case of François de Laval" in Bumsted, p. 65.
122. Shennan, p. 22; Olwen Hufton, "The French Church" in Church and Society in Catholic Europe of the Eighteenth Century, Wm. J. Callahan and David Higgs eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 13-33.
123. Hurtubise, p. 64.
124. Shennan, p. 22.
125. Doyle, European Order, p. 159.
126. Gruder, p. 211.
127. Briggs, p. 134.
128. Jones, pp. 29-48.
129. Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 88.
130. Shennan, p. 72.

#### Chapter Four

1. Ouellet, "Formation": 444; Ryerson, p. 149.
2. Paul Sweezy, "A Critique" in Hilton, The Transition, p. 41.
3. See the contributions by Maurice Dobb, pp. 57-67, 98-102, 165-169; Kohachiro Takahashi pp. 68-97 and Giuliano Piovacci, pp. 128-142 in Ibid.
4. See Chapter 1, Footnote 8 ; Ouellet, Economic and Social, p. 23. Igartua has also criticized the "murky waters of psychological interpretations." p. 116.

5. See Chapter 2 for an elaboration.
6. In comparing the American colonies with New France, Ouellet concluded "This economic boom [in the former] was not only the reflection of favourable geographic conditions, but was above all an expression of the dynamism and ingenuity of the people of the Thirteen Colonies."
7. Mousnier, p. 731.
8. Hilton in Hilton, The Transition, p. 24.
9. Hilton, Past and Present 80, p. 11.
10. Takahashi, p. 71.
11. Hilton, "Capitalism--What's in a Name?" in The Transition, p. 156.
12. Christopher Hill, Reformation to Industrial Revolution (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 247.
13. Charles Cole, Colbert and a Century of French Mercantalism II (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), p. 303.
14. Marcel Daneau, "Le colbertisme," L'actualité économique (juillet-septembre 1961):249-250.
15. Cole, p. 249-50.
16. Procacci, p. 140.
17. Briggs, p. 55.
18. Ibid., See endnote 46.
19. Hilton, The Transition, p. 23.
20. Procacci, p. 138.
21. Ibid.
22. Robert Brenner, "The Civil War Politics of London's Merchant Community," Past and Present 53 (1973):65.
23. Ibid., p. 67.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 68.

26. Albert Soboul, "Classes and Class Struggle during the French Revolution," Science and Society XVII (1953):252.
27. In "The pattern of French colonial shipping to Canada before 1760," La revue française d'histoire d'outre mer LXIII (1976):189-210 James S. Pritchard draws out these links. He is able to distinguish between the merchants of La Rochelle who dominated the trade with New France until the 1730's, and who sometimes settled and lived there with the merchants from Bordeaux--the armateurs--who were drawn there between 1745 and 1760 by the metropolitan government's increased military expenditures. This second group had no desire "to exploit Canadian resources or trade with the Canadians." (p. 210) But this must also be the group that Brunet identifies as the imposing team of capitalists, Canada's embryonic bourgeoisie.
28. Miquelon, p. 70.
29. Ibid., p. 7.
30. Ibid., p. 4.
31. Goubert, Louis XIV, p. 62.
32. Clark, p. 17.
33. Ibid., pp. 17, 19.
34. Ibid., p. 226.
35. Jean-François Brière, "L'état et le commerce de la morue de Terre-Neuve en France au XVIIIe siècle," Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française 36 (décembre 1982):325.
36. Ibid., p. 327.
37. Miquelon, p. 162; Forster, p. 61.
38. Clark, p. 17; Brière, p. 329.
39. Clark, p. 4; Brière, p. 329.
40. R.B. Grassby, "Social Status and Commercial Enterprise under Louis XIV," The Economic History Review 2nd series, XIII (1960-1961):30.
41. Clark, p. 8.

42. Ibid., p. 12.
43. Ibid., p. 10.
44. The merchants of Canada to the Governor and Intendant (circa 1720), excerpted in MacKirdy, p. 24.
45. Marx, Capital III, p. 388.
46. Henri Hauser, "The Characteristic Features of French Economic History from the Middle of the Sixteenth to the Middle of the Eighteenth Century," Economic History Review IV (October 1933):257.
47. Taylor, p. 485.
48. Ibid., p. 471.
49. Anderson, p. 96.
50. Ibid., p. 97.
51. Skocpol, p. 1088.
52. See Chapter 2.
53. Manning, p. 298.
54. Brenner, "The Civil War Merchants" p. 64.
55. Ibid., pp. 72, 74.
56. Ibid., p. 68.
57. Ibid., p. 76.
58. Hill, Century, p. 265.
59. Ibid., p. 266.
60. Hobsbawn, p. 32.
61. Quoted in Christopher Hill, Society and Puritanism in Prerevolutionary England (London: Panther Books, 1969), p. 265.
62. Roberta Hamilton, The Liberation of Women: A Study in Patriarchy and Capitalism (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978), p. 44.
63. Hill, Reformation, p. 147.



64. Ibid.
65. Ibid., p. 146.
66. Ibid., p. 147.
67. Pierre Goubert, p. 43.
68. Quoted in Hill, Reformation, p. 155.
69. Ralph Davis, "English Foreign Trade 1700-1774," Economic History Review (1962): 291.
70. Hill, Reformation, pp. 156-7.
71. Hill, Century, p. 235.
72. Ibid., p. 136.
73. Albert Cobban, Social Interpretation of the French Revolution (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), p. 62.
74. Dobb, Studies, p. 161.
75. Hill, Century, p. 234.
76. John Carswell, The South Sea Bubble (London: Cresset Press, 1960), p. 23.
77. Manning, p. 70.
78. Marvin Rosen, "The Dictatorship of the Bourgeoisie, England, 1688-1721," Science and Society XLV (Spring 1981):48.
79. Hill, Century, p. 263.
80. Hobsbawn, p. 26.
81. Forster, Merchants.
82. Ibid., p. 63.
83. Ibid.
84. Miquelon, p. 158.
85. Taylor, p. 479.
86. Ibid., p. 473.

87. Ibid., p. 483.
88. Taylor, p. 475.
89. Hill, Reformation, p. 473.
90. Forster, p. 24.
91. Lucas, pp. 93, 95.
92. Ibid., p. 92.
93. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, p. 220.
94. Cole, p. 4.
95. Grassby, p. 25.
96. Ibid., p. 19.
97. Ibid., p. 29.
98. George Hippiert, Les Bourgeois Gentilshommes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 30.
99. The phrase is borrowed from one of the titles of Christopher Hill's books on the English revolutionary period: The World Turned Upside-Down (London: Temple Smith, 1972).
100. Grassby, p. 33.
101. Cole, p. 558.
102. Eccles, Canada, p. xi.
103. Marcel Trudel, The Beginnings of New France 1524-1663 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1973), p. 280.
104. Groulx, p. 104.
105. Cole, p. 558.
106. W.J. Eccles, France in America (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1972), p. 88.
107. Cole, p. 88.

108. Y.F. Zoltvany, "Some Aspects of the Business Career of Charles Aubert de la Chesnaye (1632-1702)", Canadian Historical Association (1968): 14.
109. Ibid. See chapter 5.
110. Frégault, Canadian Society, p. 9.
111. Ibid., p. 12.
112. Easterbrook, pp. 88-9.

#### Chapter Five

1. Trudel, The Beginnings, p. 270; Eccles, France, p. 37.
2. Eccles, Canada, p. 37.
3. Ryerson, pp. 90-96.
4. The Jesuit Relations were published in France between 1637 and 1673 and are a living testament to their early persuasive efforts.
5. Harris, The Seigneurial System; Walløt, Le régime seigneurial.
6. Boshier, "Affaire du Canada," pp. 59-78.
7. Dechêne argues that the fur trade economy was quite separate from agriculture and affected it very little. "Non seulement la traite ne les a pas bouleversées, mais en les délestant systématiquement de leurs éléments les plus entrepreneurs et les plus turbulents elle a pu hâter, l'éclosion de cette spécificité de ce conformisme." p. 488. Habitants et marchands.
8. Wolf, Europe and the People Without History.
9. Adair, p. 152.
10. Cameron Nish ed. and trans., The French Régime I, Canadian Historical Document Series (Scarborough Ontario: Prentice-Hall of Canada, Ltd., 1965), pp. 25-27.
11. Eccles, Innis, p. 437.

12. Fernand Ouellet represents the first view; R.C. Harris is a strong proponent of the second.
13. Bourque and Legaré actually credit Denys Delage for "les meilleures idées" in their chapter on "Le régime français." p. 7.
14. The argument on the role of the company is drawn largely from Pierre Boulle's insightful article, "French Mercantalism, Commercial Companies and Colonial Profitability," in Blussé, pp. 97-117.
15. Quoted in Innis, p. 38.
16. See Champlain's warning to the king in Nish, p. 14.
17. Salone, p. 46-47. Also see Boulle, p. 103.
18. Ibid.
19. Salone, p. 41.
20. Boulle, p. 100.
21. Cornelius Jaenan, "Problems of Assimilations in New France, 1603-1645" in Bumsted, pp. 40-58.
22. Boulle, p. 102-103.
23. Nish, The French Régime, pp. 18-19.
24. Eccles, France, pp. 26-28; Ibid., pp. 19-20.
25. Eccles, France, p. 29.
26. Boulle, p. 104.
27. Salone, p. 50.
28. Eccles, France, p. 33.
29. Boulle, p. 104.
30. Eccles, France, p. 38.
31. Cornelius Jaenan, The Role of the Church in New France, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill-Ryerson Ltd., 1976), p. 24.
32. Quoted from le Journal de Jésuites, 1634-1635 in Eccles, France, p. 40.
33. Le jeune's Relation 1636, quoted in Nish, The French Régime, p. 26.

34. Jaenan, The Role of the Church, p. 27.
35. Gagnon, Québec et ses historiens.
36. Eccles, France, p. 38.
37. Claude Lessard, "L'aide financière de l'Eglise de France à l'Eglise naissante du Canada," Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa 47 (1977):162-81.
38. Campeau, p. 31.
39. Jaenan, The Role of the Church, p. 70.
40. Abrams, p. 30.
41. A censive was "a concession of land which could not be subconceded, and which was held by a censitaire [peasant] from a seigneur." Harris, The Seigneurial System, p. 230.
42. See Goubert, The Ancien Régime, pp. 103-107 for a discussion of vagrancy in seventeenth century France.
43. Ouellet, "La formation," p. 446.
44. For the seminal work in this area see the previously cited work by Thompson, Making.
45. Quoted in Eccles, Canada, p. 10.
46. Jacques Henripin and Yves Péron, "La transition démographique de la Province de Québec" in La Population du Québec, ed. Hubert Charbonneau (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1973), p. 22.
47. Harris, The Seigneurial System, p. 110.
48. Nish, The French Régime, p. 54.
49. Dechêne, Habitants et marchands, p. 54.
50. Ibid., p. 55; Hamelin, pp. 77-79.
51. Quoted in Nish, The French Régime, p. 62.
52. Dechêne, Habitants et marchands, p. 30.
53. Ibid., p. 79.
54. Ibid., p. 78.

55. Jacques Henripin "From Acceptance of Nature to Control: The Demography of the French Canadians Since the Seventeenth Century" in Rioux, pp. 204-216.
56. See a critique of the historiography of this female migration in Jean Blain "Notes Critiques: La Moralité en Nouvelle-France: Les phases de la thèse et de l'antithèse," Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française 27 (décembre 1973):408-416.
57. Dechêne, Habitants et marchands, p. 79.
58. Lunn "Economic Development," pp. 10-11; Hamelin, pp. 87-33.
59. R. Cole Harris, "The extension of France into rural Canada" in European Settlement and Development in North America, ed. James R. Gibson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) p. 34.
60. Ibid., p. 33; Dechêne, Habitants et marchands, p. 59.
61. Dechêne, ibid., p. 81. (Footnote)
62. Ibid.
63. Eccles, Canada, p. 24.
64. Dechêne, Habitants et marchands, p. 86.
65. See for example, Salone, pp. 250-251; Eccles Canada, p. 207 and Wallot, p. 376.
66. Harris, Canada Before Confederation, p. 41.
67. Eccles, France, p. 34.
68. See Chapter 2, pp. 92-97.
69. Goubert, The Ancien Régime, p. 139.
70. Jaenan, The Role, pp. 84-90; Crowley, pp. 67-33.
71. Quoted in Nish, The French Régime I:72.
72. Jaenan, The Role, p. 89.
73. Dechêne, "L'évolution," p. 161.
74. Serge Gagnon, "The Historiography of New France, 1960-1974: Jean Hamelin to Louise Dechêne," Journal of Canadian Studies 13 (Spring 1978):87.

75. Jaenan, The Role, p. 85.
76. Dechêne, "L'évolution," p. 146.
77. Harris, The Seigneurial System, p. 66.
78. Dechêne, "L'évolution," p. 147.
79. Ibid., p. 177; Harris, The Seigneurial System, pp. 79-80.
80. Ryerson, pp. 109-110.
81. This tendency is strongest in the 'New Society' perspective but permeates the others as well.
82. Harris, "The extension," pp. 42, 44, 45.
83. Idem, The Seigneurial System, p. 43.
84. Ibid., p. 81.
85. Ouellet, "La formation," p. 85.
86. Dechêne, "L'évolution," p. 180.
87. Ibid.
88. Eccles, Canada, p. 207.
89. Harris, "The extension," pp. 42-43.
90. Macdonald, p. 138.
91. See Chapter 1.
92. Macdonald, p. 138. As Elias wrote, "without sufficient troops kings could not expect a secure income from taxation, nor would they have the troops without the income." p. 184.
93. Macdonald, p. 138.
94. I owe this point to conversations with Professor James Pritchard.
95. Elias, p. 184.
96. See among others, Harris, The Seigneurial System, p. 45 and the previously cited works by John Boshier and Yves Zoltvany.
97. See Harris, *ibid.*

98. Ibid.
99. See the discussions in Chapter 4, p. 187.
100. Trudel, The Beginnings, p. 260.
101. Harris, The Seignorial System, p. 44.
102. Ibid.
103. Harris, "The extension," p. 39.
104. Harris, The Seignorial System, p. 44.
105. W.J. Eccles, "The Social, Economic, and Political Significance of the Military Establishment in New France" Canadian Historical Review LII (March 1971):6.
106. Ibid.
107. Dechêne, Habitants et marchands, p. 88.
108. Ibid. p. 80.
109. Ibid.
110. Quoted in Ibid., p. 81.
111. Harris, The Seignorial System, p. 41.
112. See the discussion of the Compagnie des cent associés earlier in the chapter.
113. Armstrong, p. 9.
114. Ibid.
115. Zoltvany, p. 11.
116. Ibid., p. 14.
117. Eccles, Innis, p. 422.
118. Zoltvany, p. 14.
119. Ibid., p. 16.
120. Ibid., p. 11.
121. See for example, Nish, Les bourgeois-gentilshommes; Igartua, p. 279; Eccles, "The Social," 10.



122. John Boshier, "A Quebec Merchant's Trading Circles in France and Canada: Jean-André Lamaletie before 1763" Histoire Sociale/Social History (1977):25.
123. Eccles, "The Social," p. 16.
124. Idem., Canada, pp. 189, 202.
125. Eccles, "The Social," pp. 13-14.
126. Ibid., Idem., Canada, p. 204.
127. Elias, p. 160.
128. See Chapter 3.
129. For a full discussion of all the state-initiated projects in the colony see the previously cited thesis of Jean Lunn.
130. Eccles, "The Social," p. 17.
131. Dubé, pp. 295, 303.
132. Ibid., p. 295.
133. Ibid., p. 306.
134. See Boshier's previously cited book and articles.
135. I owe confirmation of this point to Professor James Pritchard.
136. At least, according to Eccles, Frontenac "sought the past to escape his creditors." Canada, p. 77. And McNaught wrote that he "had obtained an order from the Council of State which deferred his legal obligations to repay his debts during the King's pleasure." p. 33.
137. Ibid., 56. See Talon's expression of gratitude in Nish, The French Régime, p. 55.
138. Boshier, "Affaire du Canada," p. 65.
139. Eccles, Canada, p. 110.
140. Elias, p. 208.

Conclusion

1. Appleby, Joyce Oldham, Economic Thought and Ideology in Seventeenth-Century England. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 169.
2. Ibid., p. 26.
3. Eccles, Canadian Frontier, p. 11.
4. Igartua, p. 115.

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