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The Quebec Act (1774) rarely receives the attention it deserves. US historians often cite it as one of the causes of the American Revolution, yet the Quebec Act had much greater reach than one nation. The law affected religious freedom and civil rights in Canada as well as Indigenous land claims from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. It was written using the lessons of British imperialism in Minorca, Grenada, and Ireland and helped to reshape British policies in India. Despite its global implications (or perhaps because of them), the Quebec Act has often fallen through the historiographical cracks.

Entangling the Quebec Act provides a fresh, transnational approach to the law. It is the first book-length investigation of the Quebec Act in more than a generation. Consisting of ten essays by American, Canadian, and British scholars who are well known for their work in history, religion, law, and Indigenous studies, *Entangling the Quebec Act* provides a multifaceted and interdisciplinary approach, which is appropriate for a law of such expanse and import.

For those unacquainted with the Quebec Act, a brief description of the law may be helpful. At

the end of the Seven Years' War (1756-63), Great Britain found itself in possession of an expansive Canadian territory populated by French colonists and Native Americans. When previous attempts to govern the province (such as the Proclamation of 1763) proved ineffectual, Parliament authorized the Quebec Act in June 1774. The law mandated that colonists would be subject to English criminal law but "the Laws of Canada" for civil law. It confirmed the property rights of Canadiens, including the seigneurial rights of large landholders, but not the claims of religious orders. The Quebec Act guaranteed religious freedom for the province's overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population and allowed priests to collect tithes; it even exempted Catholics from taking Test Oaths in order to serve in public office. It also enlarged the province's boundaries to include Labrador, the Great Lakes, and the Ohio and Illinois countries. News of the Quebec Act coincided with the arrival of the Coercive or Intolerable Acts of 1774, which sought to punish the American colonists for the Boston Tea Party. For this reason, the American revolutionaries cited the law as one of their grievances against King George III in the Declaration of Independence of 1776. Conversely, Canadiens understood

the Quebec Act as a recognition of their unique status in the British Empire and later cited the law as a foundational document of Canadian nationhood.

Entangling the Quebec Act begins with a thorough introduction to the law and its historiography written by the editors. Ollivier Hubert and François Furstenberg explore the various approaches that US, Canadian, and British historians have taken and how perspectives on the law have changed over 250 years. They eloquently explain how the Quebec Act has been seen as both an act of tyranny and freedom, of popular self-determination and centralized authority.

The book is divided into three thematic sections. Part 1 (“Quebec, Law, and Empire”) considers the law’s background and implications from a legal standpoint. Hannah Weiss Muller examines how petitions from inhabitants of Quebec shaped the decisions of policymakers. She highlights the dialogue over rights that emerged between Quebec governor Guy Carleton who advocated a preservation of French legal traditions and British merchants who demanded the extension of English liberties to the province. Ultimately, the former carried the day and thus introduced the idea of “a subjecthood that could accommodate the many peoples and the many laws of the British Empire” (p. 64). Donald Fyson offers a textual reading of the Quebec Act and points out, surprisingly, that “many of the apparently radical changes that the Act made were not changes at all, but rather the confirmation of pre-existing conditions” (p. 88). He argues that many of the most controversial parts of the act (such as freedom of worship, the collection of tithes, and French civil law) either came from previous laws or were in place de facto before 1774. Indeed, even novel parts of the law like the non-recognition of religious communal lands were often ignored, while charges that the Quebec Act invalidated the rights of habeas corpus and trial by jury were either incorrect or occurred only in very specific instances.

Michel Morin peeks behind the scenes at the law’s creation and asks why Parliament authorized both English and French legal codes for the province. He observes that this was supposed to be a temporary measure as “it was assumed that the most important parts of French law would be repealed or rewritten” (p. 103). He also notes that it was the absence of an elected assembly (deemed unacceptable due to the province’s Catholic majority) that created a dilemma for lawmakers because the British government would not allow an unelected council to impose new taxes on the colonists. Christian R. Buset explores how legal pluralism in Quebec compared to similar efforts in Bengal and other places in the British Empire where white, Anglophone Protestants were a distinct minority. He details the political drama behind the Quebec Act: how authoritarian Whigs pursued legal pluralism “partly to divide colonial subjects” and thus prevent rebellion (p. 136). Establishment and radical Whigs advocated for imposing British law on Canadiens, but they were thwarted by the authoritarians’ argument that the preservation of French law would encourage raw material production and discourage the settlement of the interior.

Part 2 (“Religious and Ethnic Conflict”) turns to the peoples of North America and the unique challenges that governing a diverse population posed for British lawmakers. Aaron Willis asks what type of model Ireland offered for Canada. By 1774, he argues, few policymakers believed that English attempts to assimilate the Irish population by displacing native leaders had been successful. By vesting power in the hands of the seigneurs, the Quebec Act “solved the tricky question of how to rule over a populace that would remain culturally distinct and a demographic majority” (p. 186). Luca Codignola traces the shift of the ecclesiastical governance of Catholics in Canada from Paris to London. He reveals that it was a slow transition that took more than a half a century to effect. Brad A. Jones investigates fears of popish tyranny among the colonists by contrasting newspaper re-

ports from New York and Nova Scotia. He finds that “Anti-Catholic rhetoric came to justify both rebellion *and* loyalty in communities throughout the British Atlantic” (p. 251). Not only did Patriots denounce the king and Parliament for being in league with Rome, but Loyalists also attacked the Continental Congress as a popish organization that sought to deprive the colonists of their liberties.

Part 3 (“Indigenous Peoples and European Borders”) looks to the expansive boundaries drawn by the Quebec Act and the effects on Native Americans. Jeffers Lennox asks why British lawmakers chose to stretch the province’s governance from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. He answers that it stemmed from a need to place French colonists in the Illinois Country under colonial law as well as a desire to protect Native Americans whose property claims were being threatened by white settlers. Kristopher Ray views the redrawing of the province’s western boundaries from an Indigenous perspective. He articulates the challenges of diplomacy with the Cherokees and Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) and shows how their fluid existence defied British efforts to establish borders in the West. He argues that the Quebec Act firmly established the idea that a central authority should manage relations with Indigenous nations, an idea that later reappeared in the Articles of Confederation and US law. Alain Beaulieu ponders whether or not the Quebec Act has any legal legacy for Native Americans since it did not explicitly mention Indian territory. He notes that the British government in 1774 had little interest in abolishing Indigenous land claims and no desire to end the practice of acquiring property through treaties. He thus concludes that “the Quebec Act cannot be interpreted as a change in British policy” as it did not invalidate existing laws that recognized Indigenous property rights (p. 346).

Entangling the Quebec Act is an exceptional work that deserves the attention of scholars of the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and the Indi-

genous peoples of North America. It is particularly relevant to anyone seeking to better understand the legal issues surrounding the American Revolution or the creation of the Canadian nation. As the title suggests, the book demonstrates how religious freedom, Indigenous land rights, and independence movements were complicatedly intertwined. It is thus an admirable example of Atlantic studies, demonstrating the intimate connectedness of various peoples and nations scattered across an ocean and a continent.

The evidence and arguments of *Entangling the Quebec Act* are fascinating, and each essay provides new insights that will captivate readers. Yet as is perhaps inevitable of any edited collection, the book is somewhat uneven. The tone, length, and quality of the individual essays varies considerably. The chapters by Fyson, Bursset, Jones, and Lennox offer nuanced readings of the law as well as its global implication. However, those by Codignola and Ray consider the Quebec Act as only one data point in a much broader context, which makes their chapters feel out of place in this collection. The variety of the essays will appeal to advanced readers, but students new to Canadian history or British politics might struggle to appreciate the book as a whole.

Entangling the Quebec Act is a welcome addition to an underappreciated moment in US, Canadian, British, and Indigenous history that should serve to remind a variety of scholars of the importance of this law.

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