A clash between Burke and Fox in the debate on 6 May was eagerly anticipated and so extensive press coverage was certain. What transpired surpassed anticipation. It was, one paper claimed, 'a Political Contest, the most extraordinary, perhaps, in its nature of any on the records of Parliament' (Oracle, 7 May 1791). Printers therefore apologized to advertisers and correspondents for clearing space to give full accounts of it. The most extensive were in the Diary, the Morning Chronicle, apparently reproduced in the Star, and in the Oracle, all on 7 May (the Diary published on 9 May 1791 a number of amendments necessitated by the 'extreme hurry' in which the original 'sketch' had been written). The version in Parl. Reg., xxix. 318–22, 323, 323–4, 324–5, 327, 329–30, 335–41, 347–50 was compiled from the Diary and the Morning Chronicle. Parl. Hist., xxix. 364–8, 369–70, 370–1, 372–3, 374, 380–8, 395–8 follows Parl. Reg., with a number of small amendments. The text that follows has also been constructed from the versions in the Diary and of the Morning Chronicle. What Burke said in the first part of the debate is taken from the Diary. His two major contributions following the formal motion of order in the later stages of the debate (pp. 338–50) are taken from the Morning Chronicle. The long account in the Oracle differs significantly from both the Diary and the Morning Chronicle; excerpts from it are given in footnotes.

As late as the debate on the Catholic petition on 1 March, Burke and Fox were anxious to make light, at least in public, of any differences between them. Within a few weeks, however, Burke was determined to bring their differences into the open by confronting Fox in the Commons on the French Revolution. He chose to do so on an important piece of legislation, the Quebec or Canada Bill, which was to provide for the future government of Britain's major remaining North American colony. Letters written by Burke's son and later by Burke himself indicated that words of extravagant praise of the French Revolution used by Fox on 15 April in a debate on a crisis in British relations with Russia were the immediate trigger that, he felt, compelled him to act. That was decisive evidence for him that Fox had been captured by lesser men of bad
principles and even that a public statement praising the Revolution was the condition of their support for him.² Fox had apparently told Burke before the debate that on the French Revolution he spoke ‘the sense and by the desire of the party, at least of a considerable majority of those who compose it in both houses and of nine-tenths of those who are considered to belong to it out of doors’.³ Burke felt that he must express his dissent. To limit the damage to the party, some of its leaders, while accepting that Burke could not be deflected, hoped that Fox might be persuaded not to respond. This was not to be. For all his effusions of grief at breaking with Burke, Fox was unrepentant on the issues of principle and resented Burke's tactics, suspecting, not without some foundation, that Burke was being encouraged to smear him as a republican by Pitt and his colleagues.⁴ He was to respond with vigour and in a way that Burke found unforgivable. Burke particularly resented what he interpreted as a deliberately planned attempt to rake over his whole career for the purpose of demonstrating totally misleading inconsistencies between his previous reforming beliefs and his allegedly unyielding defence of the status quo in the Reflections. He was to go to great pains to refute any such charges later in the debate, when it was renewed on 11 May,⁵ and in much of the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.⁶

Burke had tried to make an immediate response to Fox's speech of 15 April but had been prevented then from speaking by clamorous calls for the question to be put. So he chose the committee stage of Quebec Bill as an appropriate occasion. As events were to show, he was vulnerable to being called to order both for trying to introduce matter irrelevant to Quebec and for breaking procedural rules by making statements of general principle when the business before the House concerned the detailed examination of the bill's clauses. Nevertheless, he had given warning on 21 April that ‘it was his intention to give his opinion on certain principles of government at the proper moment in the future progress of the bill’.⁷ When the bill came before a Committee of the Whole House on 6 May, in an atmosphere of keenly anticipated drama, he was the first speaker after the chairman of the Committee had moved that ‘the clauses of the Bill be read paragraph by paragraph'.

Mr. Burke rose and observed, that when the Bill was formerly under discussion, some Members had expressed their apprehensions that when that subject came again to be considered, there would be some necessity for calling other Members to Order, on account of the extraneous Foreign topics that might be introduced into the Debate.³ On account of some supposed aberration and irregularity on a subject which was certainly connected with some of the most extensive topics of legislation that could possibly be urged in argument. What they were then going to do, Mr. Burke said, required an enlarged view of things. They were going to exercise the most ample and extensive powers which one man or a community could exercise upon another. They were not going to make laws, but they were going to make and organize a body which should make laws.² They were about to form a machine, an organ by which those people should contribute to their own happiness or their own misery. They had assumed to themselves a power of performing this act of sovereignty. At a time when every thing was disputed, he said, they ought to be sure they had a right to finish such an act as that, before they entered upon it. The Question of Competency therefore came first to be
considered. They ought to look to their own character, and to take care they did nothing that was founded on usurpation and injustice; for, if they had no right to do the act, it was not the wise and beneficent use of their power that could justify them. A wise and benevolent use made of an authority was as much an usurpation when they had no title to it, as the worst use of it, the good use yet being only matter of mitigation. Whence he asked, did they derive that power? They had lately heard of the Rights of Man. These rights of man were, that all men being by nature free and equal, and continuing so, no man could exercise any power over any number of men but by calling all the people together, and demanding the vote of every man by number, and asking him in what way he wished to be governed. These were what were called the Rights of man, and they said that every government that did not practice them, ought to be called an usurpation, as every Government not so constituted, was an usurpation; upon what ground, therefore, was

their competency founded? Upon two grounds; one of these was the Rights of Man. There was another ground on which men exercised acts of Sovereignty over other countries; and that was by acting in conformity to the Law of Nations. The question therefore was, whether they should follow these Rights of Men, or this Law of Nations? Whether they should take their competency from novelties that had been lately raised in the world, or from what had been received for many ages, by the general consent of all nations, and which was emphatically called the Law of Nations. Mr. Burke thought they must ground their competency on the Law of Nations. They had acquired the Province of Canada by conquest, which carried with it all the Rights of the Ancient Government, and all its duties, to govern by the rules of justice and equity, and to promote the essential interests of the persons governed. They had another foundation for their competency grounded on the law of nations; the antient sovereign had ceded to us that country by treaties. Another part of the law of nations, Mr. Burke said, was prescription. They had been in the undisputed possession of Canada for more than thirty years, they were consequently bound to give that country what in their estimation was the best form of Government. They ought to employ their utmost exertions for the happiness, quiet, satisfaction, and rational liberty of the people they governed, and on the other hand, the inhabitants of Canada were bound to obey. This was the law of nations; and for that reason, and upon that ground he found a competency in the House to make laws for Canada. The question of competency being settled, the next thing to which they were to proceed, was upon what principles they were to make those laws. What principles and what examples were they to follow? By the Act they were going to make, they were bound to give that country the best Government it was capable of receiving. Canada stood in a double relation to us as with regard to its internal happiness, and with regard to its external security in point of permanent connection with this country. Mr. Burke said, he did not mean to resort to any examples of the old world. In the first place, he did not think them very applicable; and secondly, because it was the disposition of many people to explode
all the lights of the old world. As they rather wished to have recourse for knowledge to the Academies of Paris, and the clubs of London; they wished to be enlightened by their

*lanterns:* he should set aside all the authority of antient governments. There were three authorities in the modern world, which he conceived would be of great weight; the first was the American Constitution; the next the French Constitution, and the third was the British Constitution. He knew no others that were likely or fit to be resorted to as precedents. With regard to the American Constitution, Mr. Burke said, there was no doubt when they were making laws for a Province in the vicinity of the United States, very great consideration should be used that the inhabitants of Canada might see nothing in the situation or government of the American States to excite their envy or their discontent. Mr. Burke begged leave to say a few words on the American Constitution. He said they certainly ought to draw examples on all sides, but he warned the Committee to beware how they forced nature. In so far as they attempted to force the habits of men they were tyrants of mankind. The first Question respecting Canada was undoubtedly the local situation; another circumstance was, that the people consisted of two sorts. The most considerable part of the English there were people who had emigrated from the neighbouring Colonies. It was a comfort to him, Mr. Burke said, that they had great freedom on this subject; if we should offer them the British Constitution there was no great danger that they would prefer the American Constitution to it, since they had emigrated from the United States and had fled from that Constitution which might be supposed to be an object of their jealousy. This they had deserted, and had taken refuge under the British Monarchy, and therefore the British Constitution, it was clear, had not displeased the people of that country to such a degree as to shock their inveterate prejudices. He conceived, by giving them the British Constitution, they were in no danger of giving them what would make them envy their neighbours. If he chose the British Constitution for them, he should offer no violence to their minds, nor afford them any subject of

jealousy. Mr. Burke said, he wished to consider how far the American Constitution was fit to be resorted to on the present occasion. He believed the Americans had made their Constitution with as much regard to circumstances as the nature of their affairs would admit; and what was to be very much regarded, they were a people singularly well qualified to form themselves into a Republic. In the first place, they had what was essentially necessary to every people that would be free; they had a certain degree of phlegm; a certain temper; a certain portion remained of the original phlegm, and slowness of temper, and of the good disposition and good nature of the people of this country, to enable them to exist in a republick. That extreme coolness which characterised the people of England,
eminently qualified the people of America for a Republick. Another thing to be considered, was the materials on which it was to be composed. The Republicks of America had this great advantage, that their inhabitants had formerly lived under a wise, vigilant, powerful, and a beneficent Monarch. They had had the guardianship of a great monarchy over them, and which prevented them from turning into those excesses that other Republicks had gone into. They also had another advantage, and that was, the foundation of their government had been preceded by a long war. Military discipline, Mr. Burke said, qualified them for civil government; it produced order, regularity, temper, obedience, and submission to authority. They learned, in that school, the admiration of great example, and a submission to great men. The military art, war itself, with all its horrors, was a great school of virtue. They had been trained, they had been instituted to a Commonwealth by war and arms. This was the advantage which America had. A King of Sparta being asked what was the proper rule of Government, had replied, "It was to command and to obey," a reply, which Mr. Burke declared, contained the most profound wisdom. He next called the attention of the House to the use the Americans had made of these advantages; they had not gone into all the folly and absurdity of the French, but had erected Republics as near to the principles of our Constitution as Republics could be. They had never dreamt of the Rights of Man, or that absurd maxim of the French Democrats, who say, that "the Nation governs the Nation," in other words, Prince Prettyman governs Prince Prettyman. He said, he knew by something which in such times as the present he was ashamed to mention, viz. experience, that an English Colony naturally loved Monarchy. When they saw the American States approaching as near as possible to our Constitution, why should they not give the British Constitution to our Colony in the neighbourhood, since Canada and the mother country ought to reflect one another like parents and children. Agesilaus, King of Lacedomon, had said he could sing like the Nightingale, when another said "I have heard the Nightingale itself." So it was with regard to the English Constitution, which was the true nightingale, and was infinitely superior to any light of knowledge to be derived from the academies of Paris or the clubs of London. Mr. Burke said, the next set of subjects in Canada were those of French origin, or the original inhabitants of the country. The province being a conquered country was, however, no reason to treat the inhabitants hardly, or use them ill; on the contrary, it ought to operate as a double reason to induce us to behave to them with justice and equity and treat them as friends peculiarly entitled to our protection; and they were also entitled to all possible tenderness and respect; and here he would ask what was the consideration with respect to them, that we should take the French Constitution for Frenchmen? The Constitution was founded on principles diametrically opposite to those he had stated; no part of what had been done in France being at all applicable to our constitution. The French Constitution, was, in fact, directly the reverse of the English one. It was in all its parts abominably bad, vicious, and impracticable; it could not be engrafted on the English Constitution. It was as distant
from it as Heaven from Earth, as Vice is from Virtue, and Wisdom from Folly. Mr. Burke said he should take the liberty of throwing out some ideas, to shew why they were so different.

The French Constitution was formed on what they called the Rights of Man, and he had an example before him of the effect of the French Declaration of Rights.¹ He said he should go on in the old fashioned way of reasoning a posteriori. This mode of reasoning had been adopted in experimental philosophy, and might with equal propriety be applied to the philosophy of the human mind. The French colonies of St. Domingo, Guadaloupe, &c, at the beginning of the French Revolution, he declared, were in the most prosperous and flourishing state, notwithstanding three disastrous wars. But this was before they heard the sound of the Rights of Man. The French, however, were willing to communicate those rights to their colonies, not niggardly and penuriously, but largely and munificently. As these rights were readily given on the one hand, they were as readily accepted on the other.

From that moment one would have thought that Pandora's box was opened,² and that Hell had vomited out its fiends of Outrage, Fury, Distraction, Discord, Violence, Civil War, and Mutual Assassination. These had continued to rage from that day to this. The partizans of the old Government were attacked; the troops had attacked the Governor, and the Governor attacked the troops. The troops were at length sent out of the country. The shepherd and dogs were sent away, and the flock was left to the wolves. A general slaughter took place, each man tried to cut another's throat, the father attacked the son, and the son the father; and the blacks attacked the whites, and the whites the blacks; anarchy, confusion, and bloodshed raged;³ it was a general summons for

Black spirits and white,
Blue spirits and grey,
Mingle, mingle, mingle;
You that mingle may.⁴

The Bastile was destroyed, and the troops were sent over well seasoned with the rights of man. The old ultima ratio regum⁵ had become the new

ultima ratio of the rights of man. Mr. Burke quoted a narrative of the National Assembly of the 25th of April, 1791, which stated, that the latest accounts from St. Domingo were the most alarming, that the troops that had been sent from France had joined the insurgents, and that their General was cut to pieces by his own men:¹ a nation might as well think of feeding to their colonies a bale of cotton from Smyrna, infected with the plague, without performing quarantine,² as of sending to them a cargo of the rights of man. One of the
Rights of Men was, for the Troops to assassinate their General. It would be idle, Mr. Burke said, to argue on the old foolish thing, called experience. He said it was not enough for Parliament to send out a Constitution to Canada, they must first approve of it themselves. To do otherwise, would be to send them out old, and not the best cloaths; a kind of cast-off cloaths, not worth wearing elsewhere. When gentlemen were enlightening the world so much, they had no objections to make experiments in Canada.\(^3\) The first consideration was, that if the French Constitution be applied to that country, there might be a recoil on ourselves, and the French constitution notwithstanding what had been vauntingly said of it; he would prove before he sat down to be a Revolution of consummate folly, founded in every vice, and pregnant with endless anarchy. What was the best account received last from Paris? Mr. Burke said the National Assembly had declared they would give to the country an immoveable, an eternal Constitution, never to be changed; and that they would prevail on the whole nation to swear to the observance

and support of its principles.\(^1\) It became that House, then, duly to consider what sort of a Constitution they were about to form. When the French had obtained a King such as they wished, a King that was no King, who was kept a strict prisoner, and had no guard in whom he could confide, they had a mind to shew the nations of Europe what a miserable thing a King could be made. The King of France was committed, Mr. Burke said, to the Chief Jailer of Paris, M. de la Fayette, who allowed him his day rule, to go out and to breathe a little fresh air. He had the length of a chain, which was 60 miles long, but when the King was going to set out, to spend a few holidays, as the Members of that House had lately done, one of the guards clapped his bayonet to the horses and said, “You must not go—”\(^2\)

At this point Burke was called to order by William Baker, a supporter of the opposition, well disposed to Burke. He complained that Burke was gratuitously abusing the new French order and was not speaking to the question. Fox added that Burke was claiming a right 'to abuse the Government of every country as much as he pleased and in as gross terms as he thought proper, whether it had any reference or not to the point'.

Mr. Burke said, the Honourable Gentleman's conclusion was very ill drawn from his premises. If he was disorderly he was sorry for it. His Right Honourable Friend had also accused him of abusing Governments in very gross terms. He conceived his Right Honourable Friend meant to abuse him in unqualified terms. He had called him to an account for the decency and propriety of his expressions. Mr. Burke said he had been accused of creating dissention among nations. He never thought the National Assembly was imitated so well as in the Debate then going on. M. Cazales\(^3\) could never utter a single sentence in the Assembly without a roar.

Michael Angelo Taylor,\(^4\) another opposition supporter, called Burke to order for speaking irrelevantly.
Mr. **Burke** submitted to the Committee whether he was or was not in order. The Question was, whether the Bill was then to be read paragraph by paragraph. It was a fair way in reasoning to see what experiments had been made in other countries. His Right Honourable Friend said no body had the least idea of borrowing any thing of the French Revolution in the Bill. Mr. Burke asked how his Right Honourable Friend knew that? For any thing he knew, he, (Mr. Burke) himself, might mean to insert some clause. If he was to be stopped, he asked, why was it not in the beginning, and before he had fully declared the French Revolution to be the work of Folly and not of Wisdom. It was the work of Vice and not of Virtue. If the Committee would permit him to go on, he should endeavour to meet the most captious ideas of order. He declared he would not suffer friend nor foe to come between his assertion and his argument, and thereby to make him a railer. His Honourable Friend said, although he did not do it himself, he was probably, though unwittingly, the instrument of some other people's folly. He declared, he had not brought forward this business from any views of his own. He said if they did not suffer the affair to be discussed, if they shewed a reluctance to it —

St Andrew St John, also from the opposition side, called Burke to order for departing from the question in talking about the French Revolution.

Mr. **Burke** said he meant to take the sense of the Committee, whether or not he was in order. He declared he had not made any reflection, nor did he mean any on any one Gentleman whatever. He was as fully convinced as he could be, that no one Gentleman in that House wanted to alter the Constitution of England. The reason why, on the first regular opportunity that presented itself, he was anxious to make his reflections on the subject, because it was, a matter of great public concern, and occasion called for his observations. As long as they held to the Constitution he should think it his duty to act with them; but he would not be the slave of any whim that might arise. On the contrary he thought it his duty not to give any countenance to certain doctrines which were supposed to exist in this country, and which were intended fundamentally to subvert the Constitution. They ought to consider well what they were doing.

Here there was a loud call of **Order!**—**Order!**—and **Go on!**—**Go on!**

Mr. **Burke** said there was such an Enthusiasm for order that it was not easy to go on, but he was going to state what the result of the French Constitution perfected was, and to shew that we ought not to adopt the principles of it. He might be asked, why state it, when no man meant to alter the English Constitution? Why raise animosities, where none existed? And why endeavour to stir up passions where all was quiet before? Mr. Burke confessed a
thing might be orderly, and yet that it might be very improper to discuss it. Was there any reason for doing this, or did they think the country was in danger? He declared he was ready to answer that question. He was perfectly convinced that there was no immediate danger. He believed the body of the country was perfectly sound, although attempts were made to take the Constitution from their heads by absurd theories. He firmly believed the English Constitution was enthroned in the affections of their bosoms; that they cherished it as a part of their nature; and that it was inseparable from Englishmen, as their souls and their bodies. Some Ministers and others had, at times, apprehended danger, even from a minority; and History had shewn that on this way a Constitution had been over-turned. Mr. Burke said the question would be, what had they to do with the French Constitution? They had no right to have recourse to the proceedings of the National Assembly because the government of this country had not yet recognized it.\(^1\) If they had, they would silence him. If the French Revolutionists were to mind their own affairs, and had shewn no inclination to go abroad and to make proselytes in other countries Mr. Burke declared that neither he for one should have thought, nor any other Member of the House, had any right to meddle with them. If they were not as much disposed to gain Proselytes as Lewis XIVth was to make conquests, he should have thought it very improper and indiscreet to have touched on the subject. He said he would quote the National Assembly itself, and a correspondent of his at Paris who had declared he appeared as THE AMBASSADOR OF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE.—\(^2\)

At this point Burke was again called to order by John Anstruther,\(^1\) who had worked closely with him on the Hastings trial. He said that if Burke considered that the constitution was in danger, it was his duty 'to bring forward some specific measure on the subject' rather than try to introduce it through a debate on the Quebec Bill. It was 'neither fit nor prudent' to discuss the French constitution.

Mr. Burke said an objection had been taken against arguing the business on the ground, that although it might be in order, yet the discussion of it might be attended with mischievous consequences. If some good was not to be obtained by it, Mr. Burke admitted, it might be censurable to argue it, and prudence he owned was a very useful quality, and a part of every man's duty to his country. He said he had formerly observed in the course of this most irregular debate, that the body of the country was as yet untainted, and that the Government was yet untainted with this French malady.\(^2\) The House smiled at the expression, and Mr. Burke observed, that there might be some allusion which might not be so proper. He hoped there was a very little minority indeed out of doors, who were disaffected with the English Constitution, and who wished to put the country out of love with it, by endeavouring to fill them with admiration for another.—He was asked why he did not come forward with this business as a distinct subject? He said, before he did that, it would be proper first to know what support he was likely to have. He must know how Government
stood affected to the business, and also how the other side of the House liked it. Mr. Burke observed, that he had sat six and twenty years in that House, and had never called any man to order in his life. This being a question of prudence, he thought it was the part of a wise man and good citizen rather to discountenance the measure, and to admonish those, who might entertain such designs of their danger, than to come immediately to the knife. He knew there was a levity natural to mankind; but when they were alarmed, they might recollect themselves, and correct those things which he should be sorry if the law were to correct for them.

[Here there was a loud cry of "Chair! Chair!" and of "Hear! Hear!"]

Anstruther again called Burke to order. In a long discussion that followed Charles Grey and Sheridan called on Burke to make a specific motion on some future occasion about the danger to the constitution. Pitt said that he would only give his opinion on whether Burke was in order 'unless some question had been moved or order made to stop' him.

Mr. *Burke* again submitted to the Committee, whether he was orderly or not. He desired to proceed no farther, without taking the sense of the House upon it. When he spoke of a design that was formed in this country against the Constitution, he said, he spoke with all the simplicity of a Member of Parliament. He did not imagine there were any plots but he had a knowledge or conviction of them.—Mr. Burke complained that his friends had not used him with candour. He said, if they reluctantly forced him to take a regular day, he should certainly do it, provided they gave him a regular Parliamentary call to do it.

Grey repeated that if Burke knew of designs against the constitution it was his duty to mention them.

Mr. *Burke* said, he charged that there was such a design, so far as could be collected from the conduct of certain persons in the country, to put us out of love with our Constitution. If he was called on regularly, he should certainly make good his charge.

St John called Burke to order again and said 'he should think it necessary to take the opinion of the House on his conduct'.

Mr. *Burke* said an attempt was now made, by one who had been formerly his friend, to bring down upon him the censure of the House; it was unfortunate, he said, for him, sometimes to be hunted by one party, and sometimes by another. He considered himself to be unfairly treated by those Gentlemen with whom he had been accustomed to act, but from whom he now received extreme violence; he should, he said, if the *tumult of order* abated, proceed in the account he was going to give of the horrible and nefarious consequences flowing from the French Idea of the Rights of men.
Lord Sheffield\textsuperscript{1} moved: ‘That Dissertations on the French Constitution, and to read a Narrative of the Transactions in France are not regular or orderly on the question, that the clauses of Quebec Bill be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.’ Fox seconded the motion. Pitt opposed it, ‘not conceiving’ that Burke was ‘disorderly’.

Fox then spoke at length. He began by complaining that Burke was now using a debate intended for a detailed examination of the Canada Bill to launch a discussion of ‘the Constitution of another country’, an issue on which he knew that he and Fox differed. ‘If this was not manifest eagerness to seek a difference of opinion, and anxiety to discover a cause of dispute, he knew not what was.’ Burke

seemed to be trying to confirm the insinuations against him of ‘having maintained republican principles as applicable to the British constitution’, which Pitt had made against Fox in a previous debate on Quebec.\textsuperscript{1} ‘No such argument had ever been urged by him, nor any from which such an inference was fairly deducible.’ On the French Revolution, however, he and Burke differed greatly. ‘Their opinions . . . were as wide as the poles asunder.’ He repeated that he thought the French Revolution ‘on the whole, one of the most glorious events in the History of Mankind’. At a proper time, he was prepared to debate with Burke and maintain, that the Rights of Man, which his Right Honourable Friend had ridiculed as chimerical and visionary, were in fact the basis and foundation of every rational Constitution, and even of the British Constitution itself, as our Statute Book proved; since, if he knew any thing of the original compact between the people of England and its Government, as stated in that volume, it was a recognition of the original inherent rights of the people as men, which no prescription could supersede, no accident remove or obliterate. If such were principles dangerous in the Constitution, they were the principles of his Right Honourable Friend, from whom\textsuperscript{2} he had learned them. During the American war they had together rejoiced at the successes of a Washington, and sympathised almost in tears for the fall of a Montgomery.\textsuperscript{3} From his Right Honourable Friend he had learned that the revolt of a whole people could never be countenanced and encouraged, but must have been provoked.\textsuperscript{4} Such at that time had been the doctrine of his Right Honourable Friend, who he said with equal energy and emphasis, that he could not draw up a Bill of Indictment against a whole people.\textsuperscript{5} Mr. Fox declared that he was sorry to find that his Right Honourable Friend had since learnt to draw up such a Bill of Indictment, and to crowd it with the technical epithets that disgrace our Statute Book, of false, malicious, wicked, by the Instigation of the Devil, and not having the fear of God before your eyes, &c. Having been taught by his Right Honourable Friend, that no revolt of a nation was caused without provocation, he could not help feeling a joy ever since the Constitution of France became founded on the Rights of Man, on which the British Constitution itself was founded. To deny it was neither more nor
less than to libel the British Constitution; and no Book his Right Honourable Friend could
cite, no words he might deliver in debate, however ingenious, eloquent and able, as all his
writings and all his speeches undoubtedly were, could induce him to change or abandon that
opinion. He differed from his Right Honourable Friend Toto Cælo.6

Fox concluded that he had 'said more than he intended, possibly much more than was either
wise, or proper'.

7Mr. BURKE said, that though he had been called to order so many times, he had sat with
perfect composure, and had heard the most disorderly speech that perhaps ever was
delivered to that House. He had not pursued

the conduct of which an example had been set to him, but had heard, without the least
interruption, that speech out to the end, irregular and disorderly as it had been, his words
and his conduct throughout had been misrepresented, and a personal attack had been
made upon him from a quarter he never could have expected it, after a friendship and an
intimacy of more than twenty-two years; and not only his public conduct, words and writings
had been alluded to in the severest terms, but confidential conversations and private
opinions had been brought forward, with a view of proving, that he had acted inconsistently;
and now a motion was introduced, which hindered him, in a great measure, from having
an opportunity to ascertain, by facts, what he had stated as opinions. He could not help
thinking, that on the subject of the French Revolution, he had met with great unfairness
from the Right Honourable Gentleman, who had said as much as that he had acted and
spoken rashly without information, and unsupported by facts to bear out his deductions,
and this had been treated in a manner that did little justice to his feelings, and had little
appearance of decency on the part of the Right Honourable Gentleman. However when,
and as often as this subject came to be discussed fairly, and facts that he was possessed of
allowed to be brought forward, he was ready to meet the Honourable Gentleman hand to
hand, and foot to foot upon it. Much was said against proceeding without good information,
and at the same time authorities that were solid and substantial were not allowed to be
quoted. But this, it seemed, was not the cause of quarrel; it was not because this authority,
or that example, were mentioned, but he was accused of misrepresenting what the Right
Honourable Gentleman had said on a former day,1 when he owned he was not present, and
which he disavowed in the most positive terms. He denied any reference to that, or any
other speech of the Honourable Gentleman; but contended, that he had argued on this, as
he wished to do on every other occasion, in a candid, plain, and simple manner. With regard
to the Quebec Bill, the Honourable Gentleman was no stranger to his opinions upon it; his
reasons for forming those opinions, he had mentioned in the fullest and most particular
manner to him at his own house, and walked from thence to that House, with conversing all
the time on that subject. The Honourable Gentleman had then certainly disagreed with him upon it, but they had no quarrel upon it, and what the Honourable Gentleman had said upon the subject, he did not now wish to state, farther than that their sentiments were entirely and diametrically opposite, and he would not be persuaded from what the Honourable Gentleman said, to give up his purpose of stating to the House upon this occasion, his mind with regard to the French Constitution, and the facts which led him to think as he did—and certainly in this he thought there could be nothing disorderly, especially when so much had been already introduced, not about the Constitution of Quebec, but about the American Constitution. He had asserted that dangerous doctrines were encouraged in this country, and that dreadful consequences might ensue from them, which it was his sole wish and ambition to avert, by strenuously supporting the Constitution of Great Britain as it is, which, in his mind, could best be done by preventing impending danger, than by any remedy that could afterwards be applied. And he thought himself justified in saying this, because he did know that there were people in this country avowedly endeavouring to disorder its Constitution and Government, and that in a very bold manner. The practice now was, upon all occasions, to praise, in the highest strain, the French Constitution; some indeed qualified their argument so far by praising only the French Revolution; but in that he could see no difference, as the French Constitution, if they had any, was the consequence and effect of that Revolution. So fond were Gentlemen of this favourite topic, that whoever disapproved of the anarchy and confusion that had taken place in France, or could not foresee the benefits that were to arise out of it, were stigmatised as enemies to the rights of men, to liberty, and to the British Constitution, charges that were false, unfounded, misapplied, and every way unfair. Doctrines of this kind, he thought, were extremely dangerous at all times, and much more so, if they were to be sanctioned by so great a name as that of the Right Honourable Gentleman, who always put whatever he said in the strongest and most forcible view that it could appear. Thus it had become common to set the French Constitution up against the English Constitution, upon all occasions when the comparison could be introduced; and then he insisted, if the former was praised, the latter must be proportionably depreciated. Here again he reverted to what he had been told had passed on a former day, when he said the Honourable Gentleman had taken fire when the French Constitution was mentioned, and had termed it the most glorious and stupendous fabric that ever was reared by human wisdom. He still insisted, that the discussion of the Quebec Bill was a proper opportunity, after what had been said, for entering upon a true and minute comparison of the French Constitution with that of England, though the disorderly rage for order that prevailed that day, seemed to be adopted for the
purpose of precluding every fair or proper discussion. He had that day been accused, among
other breaches of friendship towards the Honourable Gentleman, of having provoked the
discussion, to give an advantage to the Honourable Gentleman's enemies, a principle that
he utterly disclaimed, and never thought that any fair or candid man could have brought;
however, if any could have supposed so before what they had heard from the opposite side
of the House this day, must convince them of the contrary.—In what he had repeatedly
said and written concerning the French Revolution, he had been accused of stating his
opinions rashly and without foundation, a charge which he was certainly anxious and able
to refute, if he had been allowed—and at the very time when he was going to produce
facts in support of what he had asserted, blended partly with private information and
respectable authorities, though he perhaps might have gone greater lengths than he wished,
by disclosing communications that he ought to conceal, yet being so particularly called
upon, he would have done it—at this very moment he was stopped in the most unfair, and,
notwithstanding, as he had already said, the rage for order in the most disorderly manner.
And but for this extraordinary conduct, he would have proved that the issue of the French
Constitution, or Revolution, which they liked to call it, was not intended for, and never could
be, for the cause of Liberty, but on the contrary, ever was, and ever would be for the cause
of tyranny, oppression, injustice, anarchy, and confusion. After what had been said, nobody
could impute to him interested or personal motives for his conduct; those with whom he had
been constantly in habits of friendship and agreement with him, were all against him, and
from the other side of the House he was not likely to have much support¹—and yet all he did,
was no more than his duty. It was a struggle, not to support any man, or set of men, but a
struggle to support the British Constitution, in doing which he had incurred the displeasure
of all about him, and those opposite to him; and what was worst of all, he had induced the
Honourable Gentleman to rip up the whole course and tenure of his life, public and private,
and that not without a considerable degree of asperity. His failings and imperfections had
been keenly exposed, and in

short, without the chance of gaining one new friend, he had made enemies, it appeared
malignant enemies, of his old friend[s] but, after all, he esteemed his duty far beyond any
friendship, any fame, or any other consideration whatever. He had stated the danger which
the British Constitution was daily in, from the doctrines and conduct of particular persons;
however, as neither side of the House supported him in this, but as both sides thought
otherwise, he would not press that point upon them now in a stronger way than he had
done; but he would still aver that no assistance which could either be given or refused
to him, would ever bias him against the excellence of the British Constitution; nor lead
him to think well of the French Revolution, or the Constitution, as it was named, that was
formerly in its place. The Honourable Gentleman, in the Speech he had made, treated him
in every sentence with uncommon harshness. In the first place, he, fatigued with skirmishes
of order, which being wonderfully managed by his light troops, he then brought down the whole strength and heavy artillery of his own judgment, eloquence and abilities upon him, to crush him at once, by declaring a censure upon his whole life, conduct, and opinions. Notwithstanding this great and serious, though, on his part, unmerited attack, and attempt to crush him, he would not be dismayed; he was not yet afraid to state his sentiments in the House, or any where else, and he would tell the world that the Constitution was in danger. And here he must, in the most solemn manner, express his disapprobation of what was notorious to the country, and to the world! Are there not Clubs in every quarter, who meet and vote Resolutions, the contents of which it was not necessary for him to enumerate? Do they not correspond all over the country, and with other countries? Do they not preach in their pulpits doctrines that are dangerous, and celebrate at their Anniversary Meetings, proceedings incompetent with the spirit of the British Constitution. Admitting these, and he believed no body would say his observations here were ill founded, would they hesitate a moment to pronounce such transactions dangerous to the Constitution, and extremely mischievous in their nature; when added to this, infamous libels against the Constitution were circulated every where. The truth of all this he could have shewn, which the present Motion so warmly contended for by the Honourable Gentleman, prevented him from doing, as well as his being discouraged by the want of greater support from the other side of the House. For the present, therefore, he must be content with having done his duty so far—but another time he would go farther; and being possessed of facts that must establish whatever he had said or written on the French Constitution, and the admiration it had met with from a particular class of men in this country, he should take care that the country and the world should know it in some shape or other—He intended, before he sat down, to move an amendment, whether he took the sense of the House upon it or not. The malignity with which the Honourable Gentleman had spoken of his sentiments with regard to Government, and the charge of inconsistency in his political life and opinions, were neither fair nor true; for he denied that he ever had any different idea of Government from what he now entertained and had upon many occasions stated; he laid it down as a maxim, that monarchy was the basis of all Government, and that the nearer to monarchy that any Government approached, the more perfect it was, and vice versa; and he certainly in his wildest moments never had so far forgotten the nature of Government, so far as to argue that we ought to wish for a Constitution, that we could alter at pleasure and change like a dirty shirt.—In carrying on this attack against him, the Honourable Gentleman had been supported by a corps of well disciplined troops, expert in their manoeuvres, and obedient to the word of their commander.¹

Grey objected that Burke's language in 'imputing improper motives' to M.P.s was 'extremely disorderly'.
Mr. Burke explained and went on. He had formerly said, that he believed those who fomented what he dreaded as dangerous to the Constitution, to be a very small number indeed; but after stating that there were 300,000 men in arms in France, under the King's command; and stating that at any time a small faction in England was more to be dreaded than a great one in France; and though there might be no immediate danger threatening the British Constitution, yet a time of scarcity or tumult might come, and in such a case it was certainly safer and wiser to prevent the consequences, than to remedy the evil. As to the present state of this country, he described the King as in full power in all his functions, that his Ministers were responsible for all their conduct, that the country was blessed with an opposition of strong force, and that the common people were united with the Gentlemen in a column of prudence.—From all which he argued that the Constitution was excellent, and that the most trivial attempt to subvert the principles of it ought to be watched with the greatest jealousy and circumspection; when he spoke of our Constitution as valuable, he spoke of the whole complete, and not of any particular or predominant part; and therefore thought it wiser to be prepared for any attack that might be made upon it, than to trust that we could preserve it, even after the attack was made. He then recurred to 1780, and mentioned the dreadful consequences of the riots occasioned by Lord George Gordon. Had he at that time cautioned the House to beware of the Protestant Association, and other caballing meetings, he supposed his cautions would have been treated in the same way as those he offered now; but he trusted no person would wish again to see such destruction and disorder; the Houses of some of the greatest and best men that ever adorned their country, the Marquis of Rockingham and Sir George Savile, beset by the mob, and obliged to be defended by armed force; they surely could not desire again to behold camps in all our squares, and garrisons in our palaces.—Having dwelt for some time upon this point, he next began to recapitulate the political questions upon which he had differed with the Right Honourable Gentleman upon former occasions, particularly the several attempts that had been made for a Parliamentary Reform, the Dissenters Bill, and the Royal Marriage Act, perhaps too in other instances; but in all these, in the course of their acquaintance and intimacy, no one difference of political opinion had ever for a moment interrupted or affected their friendship till now. It certainly would be indiscretion at any period, but much greater at his time of life, to provoke enemies, or give his friends cause to desert him; yet if that was to be the case, by adhering to the British Constitution, he would risk all, and, as public duty and public prudence taught him, in his last words, exclaim—"Fly from the French Constitution."—He had been told, that it was much better to defend the English Constitution, by praising its own excellence, than by abusing other Constitutions, and certainly the task of praising was much more pleasant than that of abusing, but he contended that the only fair way of arguing the
merits of any Constitution, was by comparing it with others, and he could not speak with propriety of the excellence of the English Constitution, without comparing it with the deformity and injustice of the French, which was the shade that brought its colours forward in the brightest point of view; and omitting to do it would be like presenting a picture without a shade. He would warn the Right Honourable Gentlemen who were the great rivals in that House, that whether they should in future move in the political atmosphere as two flaming meteors, or walk together as brethren—that they should preserve and cherish the British constitution; that they should guard against innovation, and save it from the danger of these new theories. In a rapturous apostrophe to the infinite and unspeakable power of the Deity, who, with his arm, hurled a comet like a projectile out of its course—who enabled it to endure the Sun's heat—and the pitchy darkness of the chilly night; he said, that to the Deity must be left the task of infinite perfection, while to us poor, weak, incapable mortals, there was no rule of conduct so safe as experience.¹ He concluded with moving an amendment, that all the words of the motion, after "Dissertations on the French Constitution," should be omitted, and the following be inserted in their room—"tending to shew that examples may be drawn therefrom; and to prove that they are insufficient for any good purposes, and that they lead to anarchy and confusion, and are consequently unfit to be introduced into schemes of Government, are improper to be referred to on a Motion for reading the Quebec Bill paragraph by paragraph."²

Fox spoke again in what all the reporters agreed was a state of great agitation; 'frequent effusions of tears, choaked and embarrassed his utterance for a great part of his speech'.³ For the last twenty years, he said, he and Burke 'had acted together and lived on terms of the most perfect intimacy'. Differences in the past had not affected their friendship and he hoped that the French Revolution might not do so now, even though they disagreed on it. Fox condemned the Reflections, 'both in publick and in private, and every one of the doctrines it contained'. He repeated his charge that, in choosing the Quebec Bill for a discourse on the French Revolution, Burke had shown 'an intention to injure him' because Pitt had accused him of wanting to introduce 'republican principles' into the new Canadian constitution. Fox thought that 'the British Constitution in theory was imperfect and defective, but that in practice it was excellently adapted to this country', although capable of improvement. When Burke had supported Dunning's resolution about the influence of the Crown in 1780 he had implied that there was a case for reform.

If original rights were totally to be disregarded, Mr. Fox said, he should contend that the resistance of Parliament to Charles the First, and the resistance of 1688, had been very unjustifiable; but the original rights of men were, in his opinion, the foundation of all governments, and all constitutions, which were a compact between the governors and the governed, binding on both sides. He would not say that the Government of France was good; it was undoubtedly capable of improvement and would be amended by degrees.
The French had, however, 'made their new government on the best of all principles for a government, viz. The happiness of the people who were to live under it'. He and Burke had joined in opposing Pitt's government, 'supporting the true principles of the British Constitution and watching the Prerogative'. If Burke had changed his views, he had not. 'Mr. Fox noticed the hard and cruel manner in which his Right Honourable Friend had used him, and spoke feelingly of the pain it had given him.'

Mr. Burke rose directly and said: the tenderness which had been displayed in the beginning and conclusion of the speech, had been completely done away by what had occurred in the middle part. Under the mask of kindness for him, an attempt had been made to injure his character, and attack the whole of his public conduct. The event of this night's debate, in which he had been interrupted, without being suffered to explain, in which he had been accused, and had not been heard, made him at a loss now to understand what was party or friendship. He had, indeed, as had been alleged, proposed a reduction of the power of the Crown; but he had proposed it only so far as he considered it necessary; and though his views had not been complied with, no bad consequences had followed.¹ In 1784 an attack had been made, not upon the form, but upon the spirit of the Constitution. His opposition to this attack had been single and unsupported.² He had

not, indeed, succeeded in securing a remedy. He knew not, indeed, where the remedy was to be found. The evil arose from the People; and till they should be made sensible of the disease, how was it possible to apply the means of cure? He did not expect that his jests, that hasty or careless expressions should have been recorded against him, and mustered up in the form of accusation.¹ And yet all this was done under the mask of friendship! He had been charged with inconsistency, but he desired that there should be shewn one word, one expression, one act or occasion, in which he had discovered the smallest inconsistency. It had been said, that the British Constitution might in some points be amended.—But had he ever affirmed that it, or any other human Constitution, might not? It had been charged upon him, that he thought it necessary to abuse every other Constitution, in order to praise the British.²—But had he ever displayed any such spirit? On the contrary, he should never have thought it necessary to bring forward the French Constitution as the subject of animadversion, had not attempts been made to introduce the monster into this country. He had heard the Honourable Gentleman, who now appeared as so violent an advocate of the French Constitution, say, that the King of France was the best intentioned Sovereign in Europe.³ This King might now be said to be in gaol. In consequence of his good nature, indeed, he had been ruined. He had gone on from concession to concession—from the grant of one indulgence to another, till at last he found himself deprived by his subjects of his own rights, thus holding out a memorable lesson to all Monarchs to be watchful in preserving their privileges, and cautious in guarding against the incroachments of their subjects.⁴ Political truth, it had been said, gains by discussion, but it was surely not that sort
of discussion which had taken place this evening, in which his facts had not been allowed to be produced, and his arguments had not been heard. A serious danger, as he had stated before, and would not now repeat, was to be apprehended from the introduction of the principles of the new French Constitution into this country. If there should be formed in this country a party, however small, who might join with those abroad, what evils might not ensue? However small might be the party inimical to the Constitution, in this country, yet they were not less to be dreaded, they would not want the support of numbers. The Constitution of this country leans to Monarchy. It was necessary that all parts of it should be defended together. All the parts of the Constitution had been now attacked. Libels were circulated against the Constitution by Societies, who assumed the name of Constitutional.\(^1\) Nay, libels were circulated through the country in the name of the Crown, and under the pretended sanction of his Majesty's Ministers, and from that authority, recommended to the perusal and attention of the people. Such libels, issued in the name of the Crown, and eagerly devoured by the ignorant and hot-headed multitude, had been, in a great measure, the source of the evils in France, and their progress was to be guarded against in this country.\(^2\) The new Constitution in France had been called a Stupendous Fabric of Wisdom.\(^3\) He had thought that the Honourable Gentleman had possessed a better taste in Architecture, than to bestow this magnificent epithet on a building composed of untempered mortar. For his own part, when he saw the new temple, he wept. He considered it as the work of Goths and Vandals, where every thing was out of place, disjointed, and inverted.

It had been said, that he did not love tests,\(^4\) yet, if his intimacy should be renewed with the Honourable Gentleman he might explain to him, that it was necessary that some evil should be suffered in order to obtain a greater good. In France, it had been asserted by the Honourable Gentleman, prevailed the largest religion toleration.\(^5\) It would be judged of what nature was that toleration, when it was understood that there the most cruel tests were imposed. Nay, tests were imposed for the most inhuman of all purposes, in order to deprive those of whom they were exacted of their bread. The treatment of the Nuns was too shocking almost to be mentioned—These wretched girls, who could only be animated by the most exalted religious enthusiasm, were engaged in the most painful office of humanity, in the most sacred duty of piety, visiting and attending the hospitals. Yet these had been dragged into the streets—these had been scourged by the Sovereigns of the French Nation, because the Priest, from whom they had received the Sacrament had not submitted to the Test.—This proceeding had passed not only unpunished, but uncensured.\(^1\) Yet in the country in which such proceedings had happened, had been said to subsist, the largest religious toleration. The present state of France was ten times worse than tyranny.
The new Constitution was said to be an experiment; but it was not true. It had already been tried, and been found to be only productive of evils. They would go on from tyranny to tyranny, from oppression to oppression, till at last the whole system would terminate in the ruin and destruction of that miserable and deluded people. He stated that his opinion of the Revolution in America did not at all militate with his opinion of the Revolution of France. In that instance he considered that the people had had some reason for the conduct which they had pursued. There was an expression of his, which had been taken exception at—"well-disciplined troops". He only meant that every body of men who acted upon a method, and in concert, were well-disciplined. He was sorry for the present occasion. Sufficient to the day was the evil thereof. Yet let the evil be to him, if the good was to many. He hoped that they would not barter the Constitution, of his country, the eternal jewel of their souls, for a wild and visionary system, which could only lead to confusion and disorder. With regard to pretences of friendship, he must own that he did not like them, where his character and public conduct, as in the present instance, had been so materially attacked and injured. The French principles in this country he had been told would come to some head. It would then be perceived what were their consequences. Several of the Gentlemen were young enough to see a change. They would be enterprising enough to act a part. It would then be seen whether they would be borne on the top, or encumbered in the gravel. In going along with the current, they would most certainly be forced to execute, and approve, many things very contrary to their own nature and character.

Pitt closed the debate. The absence of Lord Sheffield from the House permitted it, he suggested, to assume that his motion that Burke had been speaking out of order could be withdrawn and he also assumed that Burke would withdraw his amendment. The examination of the clauses of the Quebec Bill would have to be postponed for another day. He noted that Burke had said that he 'was to receive no support from him, nor from any near him in his argument that day'. On the contrary, ‘He thought the Right Honourable Gentleman entitled to the gratitude of his country, for having on that day in so able and eloquent a manner stated his sense of the degree of danger to the Constitution that already existed', and assured Burke of his future support in preserving the constitution. The House adjourned at half-past midnight.
NOTES

1 See below, p. 348.


3 Corr. vi. 248.


5 See below, pp. 353–6.

6 See below, pp. 390–430.

7 *Parl. Hist.*, xxix. 363.

1 M. A. Taylor (see below, p. 333) on 21 April had threatened to call to order any member 'who went out of the proper discussion of the subject' of the Quebec Bill (*Diary*, 22 Apr. 1791).

2 The Quebec or Canada Bill (*Commons Sessional Papers*, lxxix. 115–38) was to replace the system of government for the recently conquered British colony of Quebec that had been enacted by Parliament in 1774. Under the bill, a nominated legislature was to be replaced by elected assemblies and by appointed legislative councils in each of the two new colonies of Lower and Upper Canada into which Quebec was now to be divided.

3 'or' in original.

4 The French National Assembly had promulgated a Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in 1789 and the first part of *Rights of Man* by Thomas Paine had been published on 13 March.

5 According to the version in the *Oracle*, 7 May 1791, Burke had said: 'If we adopt into our Political Creed this object of French Idolatry [the rights of man], we have no business whatever with the Province of Canada, except perhaps to call the inhabitants together in order to desire them to form a Constitution for themselves.'

1 The moral obligations entailed by conquest was a fundamental concern of Burke, which he expounded on St Eustatius (see above, pp. 78–82, 91–4) and above all on India.
French territory in North America had been ceded to Britain by the Peace of Paris of 1763.

Parisian mobs lynched their victims à la lanterne, by stringing them up from lamp-posts.

The main debate among British policy-makers was the extent to which the law and customs of Quebec before the British conquest should be preserved by the French inhabitants of Quebec. That the new French constitution might have any relevance seems never to have been considered.

The Oracle, 7 May 1791 (see also Parl. Hist., xxix. 365) records Burke as having spoken about France at this point, introducing a quotation from Horace. He had urged the House to take no account of recent French developments, since 'the mad democrates of France' had acted 'in opposition ... to that just maxim of the Latin Poet, non mihi res, sed me rebus submittere conor' (trying not to bend the world to myself, but submitting myself to the world; Epistles, I. i. 19).

Some 14,000 English-speaking people, of whom the largest element was loyalists who had left revolutionary America, were living in the western part of Quebec by 1791.

Burke was speaking inexactly: most loyalists had left long before the promulgation of the Constitution of the United States in 1787.

Burke's relatively generous assessment of the Constitution of the United States suggests a mellowing of his earlier scepticism about the political prospects for the new republics. Fox had enthusiastically praised American constitutional arrangements on 8 April as 'the best adapted to the situation of the people who lived under them, of any governments of the ancient and modern world' (Parl. Reg., xxix. 72).

'The character of the Americans is remarkable for a certain seeming apathy, which excites the admiration even of the cold Englishman himself; they are possessed of a wonderful degree of phlegm, a quality well suited to the principles of Republicanism' (Oracle, 7 May 1791).

See Plutarch's life of Agesilaus II of Sparta.

'. . . the Americans had no materials to form a Monarchy nor an Aristocracy; but they have brought their government as near as possible to the British Constitution . . . They have guarded their Constitution by reciprocal checks; they have established in imitation of the House of Lords and House of Commons in this Country, a Congress and a Senate' (Oracle, 7 May 1791).
2 This was a rather selective reading of recent American history, ignoring statements of 'inalienable Rights' in the Declaration of Independence and in many state constitutions.

3 Prince Pretty-man is a character in the Rehearsal, a play by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.

4 The conventional version of the story is that, when told of an actor who could sing like a nightingale, the king, Agesilaus II (c.444–360 BC), replied that he had heard the nightingale.

5 The great bulk of the European population of Quebec, probably some 150,000, were people of French origin.

1 The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of 26 August 1789 was prefixed to the Constitution.

2 In Greek mythology, Pandora's box contained all the evils of the world.

3 The French plantation colony of St Domingue (later Haiti) with its huge slave population was to be convulsed by the Revolution. The planters and other substantial elements of the white population had claimed the right to be represented in the National Assembly and to control the government of the colony. In 1790 the mass of poorer whites rebelled against them and this was followed by a rising of people of mixed race. Finally in August 1791 there was to be a massive insurrection of the slaves.

4 'Black spirits and white, red spirits and gray / Mingle, mingle, mingle you that mingle may'; words from Thomas Middleton, The Witch, V. ii; often inserted into Shakespeare's Macbeth, IV. i. 39–43.

5 The final argument of kings.

1 The General Evening Post of 3–4 May 1791 carried news of the report to the National Assembly on 25 April (Ancien Moniteur, viii. 219–20) that Colonel de Mauduit (Thomas-Antoine de Mauduit du Plessis, 1753–91) had been 'beheaded by the grenadiers of his regiment' in St Domingue.

2 Goods from ports in the Levant like Smyrna were regarded as potential carriers of the plague, which should be quarantined. The great epidemic at Marseilles in 1720 was blamed on imports from Smyrna.
This was a somewhat distorted interpretation of Fox's earlier interventions on Quebec, although Fox had given some ammunition to those who might wish to distort. On 8 April Fox had criticized the constitutional provisions of the Quebec Bill for being too restrictive. The people of Quebec should be given 'a government as agreeable to the genuine principles of freedom' as was possible and one that would not put them at a disadvantage compared with the United States. In particular, he hoped for elected second chambers as well as elected assemblies and had condemned proposals to create an hereditary aristocracy in Canada. He assumed that an opportunity was being taken in what had been 'formerly a French colony . . . of reviving those titles of honour, the extinction of which some gentlemen so much deplored, and to revive in the West that spirit of chivalry, which had fallen into disgrace in a neighbouring country'. He also condemned the scheme for a substantial endowment of the Anglican church. The main thrust of his argument was, however, that Quebec must be given 'the substance', not the 'shadow' of the British constitution (Parl. Reg., xxix. 71–4). Although he said that he did not 'use the word republican as an obnoxious term', Pitt had rejected such proposals as being based on 'republican principles' alien to 'the constitution of Britain' (ibid. xxix. 76). A newspaper reported that: 'The language of Mr. Fox on the Canadian Constitution was certainly the most boldly Republican that had ever been spoken in the British Senate.' It suggested that Burke's alarm about 'Democratic Plots' was 'now much better founded' than it had been in February 1790 (Oracle, 12 Apr. 1791).

The new constitution, proclaimed to be permanent and unchangeable, had not yet been formally enacted. Burke was probably reacting to a letter issued to all French emissaries to foreign countries by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Armand-Marc, Comte de Montmorin de Saint Hérem (1745–92), on 23 April 1791. They were told that the King had adopted the constitution 'without hesitation' (Ancien Moniteur, viii. 213). This letter was widely printed in the British press.

Louis XVI had attempted on 18 April to go with his family to spend Easter at St Cloud, six miles from Paris. A crowd prevented him from setting out. Shouts of 'Il ne faut pas qu'il part' were reported in the English press (St James Chronicle, 23–6 Apr. 1791). Burke had just received a letter describing the episode from E. J. A. Woodford, 29 Apr. 1791, MS. at Sheffield, Bk. 1. 2372. As commander of the National Guard, La Fayette had given the King permission to make the journey. He was unable to persuade the crowd to let the King leave.

Jacques-Antoine-Marie de Cazalès (1758–1805), who defended royal authority in the National Assembly and later as an émigré became a correspondent of Burke's.

(c.1757–1834).
1 On 21 April Fox had said that when he had spoken on the Quebec Bill 'the French Revolution had not been in his thoughts' (Diary, 22 Apr. 1791). He insisted that he objected to the Quebec Bill because he thought it was not fully extending the British constitution to Canada.

2 William Baker had said that Burke was 'the unwitting tool of those who wished to sow the seeds of dissention among Friends' (Oracle, 7 May 1791). He was referring to the widely held belief that ministers were trying to incite a quarrel between Fox and Burke in order to damage Fox.

3 (1739–1817).

The new constitution was to be adopted on 3 September 1791.

2 Jean-Baptiste du Val-de-Grace, Baron Cloots (1755–94), was a Prussian enthusiast for the French Revolution who took the name of Anacharsis Cloots. He had appeared before the National Assembly on 19 June 1790 at the head of what he called an embassy of the human race: that is, of peoples hoping to be free under the 'philosophical laws' of the new France. It seems that Burke started to read Cloots's Discourse on that occasion (copy in MS. at Northampton, A. vii. 21). For Cloots's correspondence with Burke, see Corr. vi. 109–15, 135–6.

1 (1753–1811).

2 The French pox was a common name for syphilis.

1 John Baker Holroyd (1735–1831), 1st Baron Sheffield, an old supporter of Lord North.

1 See above, p. 332, n. 3 and for Burke's fuller explanation on 11 May, see below, pp. 354–5.

2 ‘from' in original.

3 Richard Montgomery (1738–75) was killed at Quebec in 1775.

4 ‘General rebellions and revolts of a whole people never were encouraged, now or at any time. They are always provoked.' Letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol; vol. iii, p. 310.

5 Speech on Conciliation with America; vol. iii, p. 132.

6 By an immense distance.
The rest of the speech from this point is taken from the *Morning Chronicle*.

On 8 April, see above, p. 332, n. 3.

On 21 April.

Much had been said about the need to give the Canadian colonies constitutions that would stand comparison with the American Constitution.

Fox had made this distinction.

On 15 April.

Those who called Burke to order were all from the opposition side of the House. His interventions were presumably not unwelcome to ministers. In Pitt's view Burke had not been out of order and he was to speak warmly of him at the end of the debate.

Fox took strong exception to the phrase 'disciplined troops'. He said: 'He could not but be sorry that such a character for a party linked together on the most honourable principles should come from one of their own corps.' Far from organizing the calling of Burke to order, 'he had earnestly intreated his friends not to interrupt the Right Honourable Gentleman'.

According to other newspaper accounts, he refused to apologize for his reference to 'disciplined troops'.

The body formed to press for repeal of the legislation of 1778 granting relief to English Catholics.

See *Corr.* iv. 241. As sponsor of bills to ease penalties on Roman Catholics, Savile was especially vulnerable to the violence of the mob.


See above, pp. 306–19.

It seems likely that Burke is referring to his opposition to Fox's attempt in 1781 to amend the Marriage Act (see above, pp. 94–8), which he had opposed, rather than to the Royal Marriage Act of 1772.
According to Parl. Reg., xxix. 340, Fox interjected in a whisper that 'there had been no loss of friends', to which Burke replied 'yes, there was loss of friends: he had done his duty at the price of his friend; their friendship was at an end'.

1 According to the Oracle, 7 May 1791, Burke invoked the deity, after warning Fox that arguments that, whatever its initial cost, the French Revolution would eventually bring benefits to humanity were 'by no means admissible. To do evil that good may arise from it was by no means the province of MAN, who may be very liable to err in his prophecy of events. That was the direct and incomcommicable attribute of the DEITY ... The power therefore of committing present and positive evils for the chance of eventual benefit, could not be assumed by man without the utmost arrogance or presumption.'

2 Parl Reg., xxix. 341 inserted at this point additions made to the Diary's report on 9 May 1791. 'In the course of the preceding speech, Mr. Burke having said that Mr. Fox had of late years forborne that friendly intercourse with him, by visits &c., which he had formerly preserved, the latter, in reply, said the omission complained of, was purely accidental; that men, at different periods, fell into different habits; and without any intentional neglect, it frequently happened that they did not see their friends so often as they might have done in preceding years; but at the same time, that their friendship was as warm and sincere as ever.

Mr. Burke, likewise, while in one of the parts of it, where he was reasoning with great warmth, checked himself, and addressing himself to the Chair, said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" [Acts 26: 25].

3 Oracle, 7 May 1791.

1 Fox had used Burke's Civil Establishment Act of 1782 as evidence that Burke was willing to support constitutional reform.

2 The opposition had not chosen to divide the House on Burke's Representation of 14 June 1784.

1 Fox recalled that in the debate on the Address on the King's speech on 6 December 1782, Burke had 'ridiculed' a passage in the speech lamenting that the American colonies would be deprived of monarchical government, by comparing it to 'a man's opening the door after he had left a room, and saying, "at our parting, pray let me recommend a Monarchy to you" '. Newspaper reporters seem not to have caught these words in a speech that one described as 'in a vein of wit, argument and satire' in which it would have been 'vain to attempt to follow' Burke (Parker's General Advertiser, 7 Dec. 1782).
Fox had said that he 'objected to every man being expected to have his personal principles put to the test by his being obliged to abjure every other constitution'.

The occasion on which Fox said this has not been identified.

As 'King of the French', Louis XVI under the new constitution exercised executive powers delegated to him by the nation as supreme chief of the general administration of the kingdom. He had no more than a suspensive veto on the decrees of the unicameral Legislative Assembly.

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In the Oracle account Burke was reported to have said: '… we were attacked by seditious Clubs, annoyed by seditious Pamphlets, and suffered from the thundering anathemas of seditious Preachers. These Gentlemen were equally kind in the distribution of their favours. They wantonly attacked the Commons, the Lords, and the Crown: and societies were formed to recommend PAINE'S Rights of Man, MACKINTOSH'S Vindication of the French Revolution [Vindiciae Gallicae by James Mackintosh (1765–1832)] and other abominable and dangerous publications.' It was 'owing to similar Libels that the antient Government of France had been subverted'. The 'libels, issued in the name of the Crown' have not been identified.

On 15 April Fox had praised the new French constitution in terms that alarmed and mortified Burke. Newspapers had reported him as calling it a 'glorious' or a 'stupendous' fabric'.

Fox had said he was 'an enemy to all tests, whatever, as he had previously thought the Right Honourable Gentleman was'.

Fox had said that 'France had established a complete, unequivocal toleration, and he wished that complete toleration was also established in England.'

The Civil Constitution of the Clergy of 1790 required clerics to swear an oath of loyalty if they were to continue to administer the sacrament. Many refused. The nuns whose plight moved Burke probably belonged to one of four Parisian convents, whose chapels were closed in April 1791 because their clergy would not take the oath. He may have seen an account of nuns being beaten and abused by market-women to make them 'change their confessors to those that were more attached to the present government' (Public Advertiser, 28 Apr. 1791).

Burke is responding to Fox's protest at his choice of words, see above, p. 343, n. 1.
3 ‘Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof’, Matt. 6: 34.

1 The Oracle, 7 May 1791, gave a much fuller account of Burke's conclusion in which he vented his fury against Fox. Some passages were put into inverted commas, presumably to indicate a verbatim account. He said of Fox: "He has been pleased to bestow many encomiums upon me, as his Master; but his invitation to a combat reversed the order of things, for the Scholar, right or wrong, was resolved to *whip his kind Master*! The whole tenor of his argument proves, that my friendship is unworthy of his acceptance. I feel the misfortune, but I feel it like a man! The torrent of odium which has been produced, and the reprobation of all mankind, will not make me swerve from my duty by the smallest alteration of sentiment! To his representation of me as a fool, he opposes his compassion and tenderness; but my character is paramount to every consideration, and I will abide by the consequence!!!"—The late Dr PRICE [Price had died on 19 April] or Dr. PRIESTLEY, somewhere affirms, that from urgent calamities, a time may arrive when the People would be forced to examine the State of the Nation; but Mr. BURKE, without any pretensions of penetrating into remote causes, alledged, that were they not careful to provide against impending danger, a storm would arise, whose wind, current, or tide, would involve us in the most dreadful disasters, and baffle every effort of resistance. "The seeds which these Gentlemen are now sowing, will spring up into a rank and poisonous quality and become bitter bread to them hereafter!!!" Now is the time for Parliament to certify its reprobation of these dangerous doctrines! The Honourable Gentleman, not recently arrived from College, having sat about twenty-four years in that House, cannot pretend to be such a young theorist as not to know, that by espousing these principles, he has attacked the sacred walls of the Constitution. Although supported by no side of the House, yet he liked to deliver his plain and honest sentiments. "My want of aid to maintain the conflict may afford those Gentlemen some degree of triumph. Let he and his Associates enjoy it. I envy not their victory. Driven to the wall, forced to the greatest extremities, abandoned by those with whom I have formerly co-operated, I may summon the utmost vigour, and repel the attacks of my foes by bringing forward the proposition now so urgently demanded."

2 Burke had moved an amendment to Lord Sheffield's motion that his dissertations on the French constitution were out of order: dissertations showing that the constitution tended to 'anarchy and confusion and the destruction of liberty and property' were 'applicable to the question before the committee'.