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M.A. (HISTORY)

The Port of La Rochelle

1715 - 1745

by

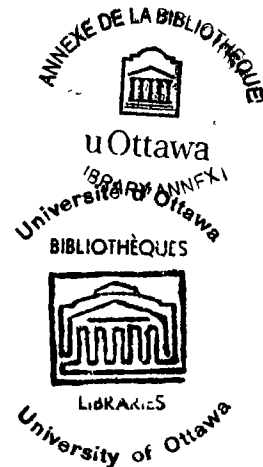
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Curriculum Studiorum

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	<u>Archives des Colonies</u>
BRH	<u>Bulletin des Recherches Historiques</u>
PAC	Public Archives of Canada
RAPQ	<u>Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec</u>

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INTRODUCTION

The city of La Rochelle between the years 1715 and 1745 offers an interesting field of investigation for students of Canadian history since there is such a close connection between it and the colonies of New France. This thesis will attempt to show some of the details of this connection. However, the emphasis throughout will be on La Rochelle itself, its location, facilities, and activities, and reference will be made to the colonies only in so far as they affect or complement La Rochelle. The reason for this emphasis is twofold: first, to give a wider and deeper knowledge of one source of the edicts, supplies, and manpower emanating to Quebec and Ile Royale; and secondly, to keep the thesis within manageable limits.

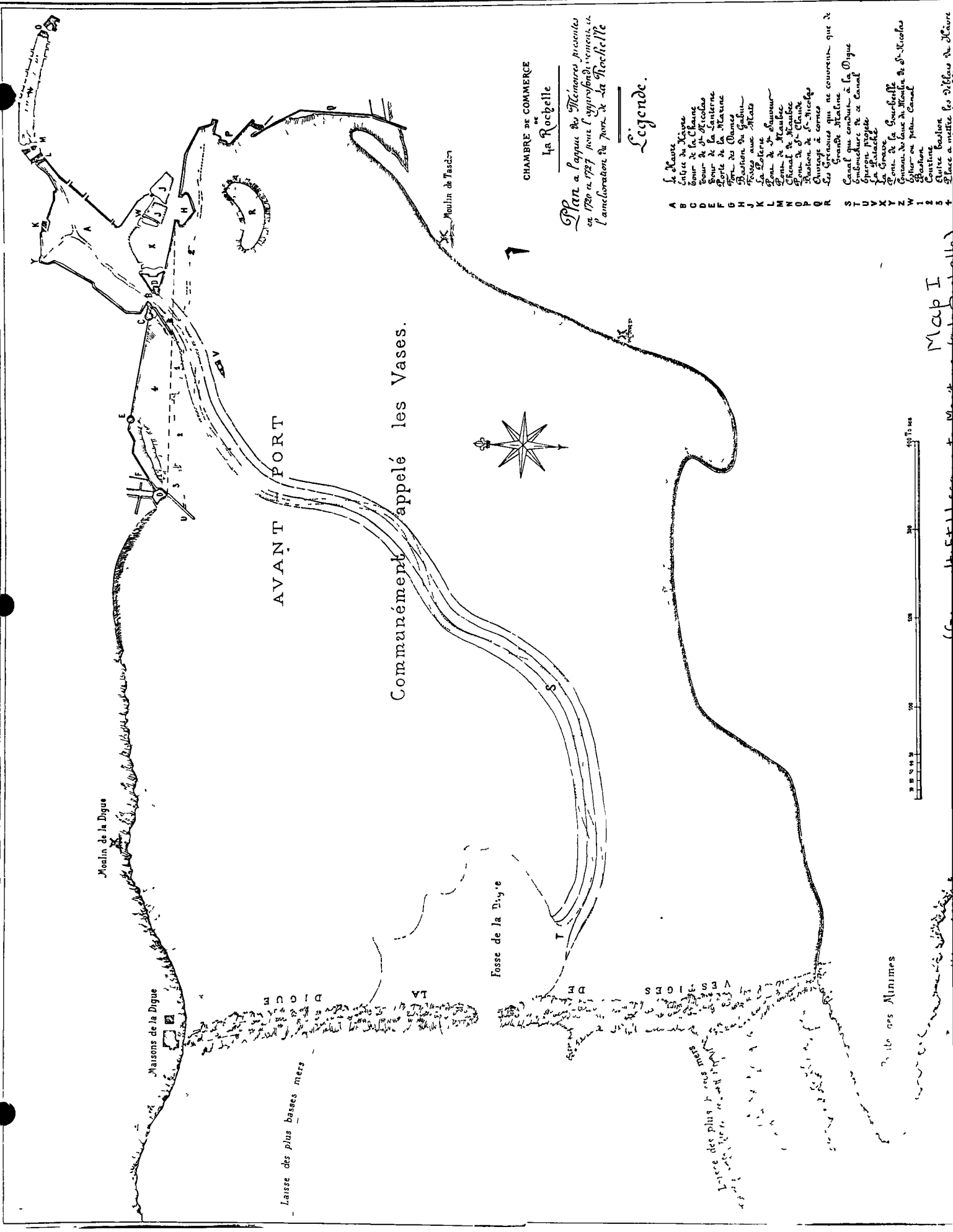
This study has been limited to the resources located in the Public Archives of Canada and has involved four main points of research: a survey of official memoranda from the King addressed to or concerning the port of La Rochelle; the conditions and regulations of shipping at this time; group emigration through engagés and fauxsauniers; merchants and commerce. One of the difficulties connected with this research has been the scarcity of European material, since the Public Archives, naturally enough, contains for the most part, material dealing chiefly with Canada rather than

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with France. In certain cases, therefore, it was necessary to use specialized published works to overcome the lacuna in available primary sources.

Most of the documents cited in this thesis are transcriptions of original documents preserved in France. The originals (and their transcripts) are in old French. No attempt has been made to modernize or correct this writing, with the exception of the use of contemporary letter formation, and, to some extent, the regularizing of capital letters.

Finally, the author of this thesis wishes to acknowledge the help of all those who have contributed directly or indirectly to its completion. Dr. Alfred Vanasse, of the History Department of the University of Ottawa, supervised the writing; Dr. Comeau and the staff of the Manuscript Division of the Public Archives provided efficient and congenial service in the search for relevant documentation; and Miss Gabriel Bourque, with her assistants made available the resources of the Archives Library. Mr. Marcel Delafosse, Archivist of La Rochelle and La Charente-Maritime, was kind enough to clarify certain points by correspondence. The author is most grateful also to all the "listeners" along the way.



Plan à l'appui de Mémoires présentés
en 1720 et 1727 pour l'agrandissement et
l'amélioration du port de la Rochelle

Legende.

- A Le Mûrier
- B Entrée du Canal
- C Tour de St. Nicolas
- D Tour de la Lanterne
- E Tour de la Marine
- F Tour de St. Charles
- G Tour de St. Martin
- H Tour de St. Pierre
- I Tour de St. Jean
- J Tour de St. Louis
- K Tour de St. Michel
- L Tour de St. Anne
- M Tour de St. Germain
- N Tour de St. Julien
- O Tour de St. Etienne
- P Tour de St. Nicolas
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- V Tour de St. Germain
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- Y Tour de St. Etienne
- Z Tour de St. Nicolas
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- 2 Tour de St. Jean
- 3 Tour de St. Louis
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- 5 Tour de St. Anne
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- 94 Tour de St. Michel
- 95 Tour de St. Anne
- 96 Tour de St. Germain
- 97 Tour de St. Julien
- 98 Tour de St. Etienne
- 99 Tour de St. Nicolas
- 100 Tour de St. Pierre



Map I



A. Where the English Men of War Anchor'd
 B. Where the English Transports Anchor'd
 ☉ Banks Dry at Low Water.
 ☉ Banks always Under Water.

Scale
 English Miles
 English & French Leagues

Map II

CHAPTER ONE

THE PORT 1715-1745

La Rochelle lies in the latitude of 46 degrees 10 minutes north, and 1 degree 10 minutes to the westward of the meridian of London, being but two leagues distant from the isle of Ré, and four leagues from that of Oleron,¹ the two islands sheltering the bay on which La Rochelle is situated. The small "isle d'Aix", on the coast, might be considered an adjunct of La Rochelle. During the period under consideration (1715-1745), La Rochelle was the capital of Aunis province, and had a population of approximately 13,500 inhabitants. It was not readily connected with the great routes of the interior going towards Paris or Poitiers, for example, because it was largely surrounded by marshes. Although not itself an outlet for any great river system, it seems to have been at the heart of commercial activity along the Atlantic coast between the Loire and the Gironde, being the Atlantic port "des cinq gros fermes". It did, however, make considerable use of three rivers: the Seudre and the Charente, respectively to the

¹ Thomas Jefferys, A Description of the Maritime Parts of France, Vol. 1, Charing Cross, MDCCLXI (1761), p. 353.

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south, and the Sèvre, with its tributary, the Vendée, to the north. It was through the estuary of the Seudre, for example, that the wood of the province of Saintonge was brought to La Rochelle, and Rochelais merchants sent ships to the Charente to pick up the wines of Cognac² for export, while through the Sèvre and the Vendée it received necessary wheat and wood. Important first as a European trading centre through the great coastal cities of Hamburg, Rotterdam, Calais, London, and Lisbon, by mid-seventeenth century, it was following the trend of other European ports towards greater colonial trade. During most of this latter half of the century, this commerce was carried in small ships of about 100 to 200 tons with small cargoes of between 15,000 to 30,000 pounds.³ Many La Rochelle traders were in debt and many even went bankrupt. It would be hard to find an impression of wealth or stability anywhere, and this state of affairs continued into the opening years of the eighteenth century, so that Pontchartrain, Secretary of State, writing to François Beauharnois, Intendant of the Generality of La Rochelle, in May, 1715, would say, "Je suis

² Etienne Trocmé et Marcel Delafosse, Le Commerce Rochelais de la fin du XVe Siècle au début du XVIIe, Paris, Colin, 1952, p. 10.

³ Henri Robert, Les Trafics Coloniaux du Port de la Rochelle au XVIIIe siècle, Poitiers, Oudin, 1960, p. XII.

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fasché d'apprendre les diferentes banqueroutes qui ont esté faites à la Rochelle".⁴

As the eighteenth century progressed, however, mighty ships left La Rochelle with great cargoes; shippers were able to undertake great trading ventures and laid the foundation for great commercial companies frequently built on family alliances, such as the one built up on the marriages of the Pascaud brothers, Antoine and Joseph-Marie, respectively, to Elizabeth and Dorothee, daughters of Robert Butler, both the Pascaud's and the Butler's being ship-owners (armateurs), and wholesale merchants (négo-⁵ciants) from La Rochelle. The Peace of Utrecht in 1713 reinforced this trend towards greater commercial activity just described, and La Rochelle, along with other French ports trading with the colonies, became a focal centre of the commercial life of France during this period.

This first chapter will try to show the economic position and status of La Rochelle at this time by discussing the port, the regulations governing commerce at the port, the business of the port, and something of the human

⁴ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 29 mai, 1715.

⁵ Aegidius Fauteux, La Famille Pascaud en Le Bulletin des Recherches Historiques, Vol. 33, No. 1, January, 1927, p. 85.

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situation which prevailed. The emphasis throughout will be on La Rochelle itself, so that from a study of its commercial organization, nautical equipment, facilities and routines, its problems and plans, its relations with officials, its commercial ventures, will emerge a clarifying context for understanding the historical events of the era.

Before proceeding to a description of the physical conditions of the port, this chapter had best point out that La Rochelle in 1715 suffered also to some extent from the weakness of one of its chief officials, namely, M. Massiot, Commissioner -- a man well past his prime, who clung to office while his superiors looked for a suitable means of removing him. Two letters from Pontchartrain to Beauharnois make this clear. The first, written on May 22, 1715, reads as follows:

Il y a deja longtems Monsieur que je suis informé que le Grand age de M. Massiot le mettant hors d'Etat d'agir et de suivre luy mesme les affaires dont il est chargé. Il s'y commet bien des abus et que le departement de la Rochelle tombe dans le desordre. Comme les plaintes qui en reviennent pourroient aller plus loin, et luy attirer quelque chagrin, vous luy rendriez un grand service si vous pouviez l'Engager a se defaire de sa charge de commissaire de marine en faveur de son fils (ou d'un autre Et on metroit un bon com^{te} a la Rochelle qui en a besoin). Il devoit desja avoir pris ce party pour se reposer. Je vous prie d'Employer vos soins pour l'exciter a faire une retraite qui luy fera honneur, et qui previndra les desagremens que je

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ne pourrois peut estre pas me dispenser de luy donner. J'ay gardé le silence croyant quil se determineroit luy mesme a quitter, mais je ne puis plus m'exposer aux justes reproches que l'on pourroit me faire de n'avoir pas pris les mesures necessaires pour faire le service dans le departement de la Rochelle ou je seray obligé denvoyer un autre com^{re}⁶

In a second letter, Pontchartrain makes the situation at La Rochelle clearer, by speaking of the exacting demands of the position as follows:

Il faut pour en bien faire toutes les fonctions un homme qui soit en estat d'agir, et se donner les mouvemens convenables pour se transporter dans les lieux ou sa presence est necessaire pour avoir une parfaite connoissance de son Departement, et des affaires extraord^{res} dont il est chargé. Il est bien difficile quil se puisse remplir ces sortes de devoirs dans un âge aussy avancé et les gens quil employe peuvent souvent abuser de sa confiance.⁷

The centre of activity was, of course, the port itself. During the eighteenth century the old port situated within the walls was still used, the entrance being guarded by the tower of Saint Nicholas, where prisoners were kept,⁸ and that of la Chaîne. The entrance to this

⁶ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 22 mai, 1715.

⁷ PAC, Ibid., Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 19 juin, 1715.

⁸ PAC, Ibid., Vol. 133, Maurepas à Ricouart, 16 avril, 1741.

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harbour was marked off by a large chain stretching between these two towers. It was put up every evening and on Sundays and holydays to prevent ships from entering and leaving without authorization. A captain, named each year by the mayor, guarded the "tour de la Chaîne" and lived in it. He was ordered not to put the chain up when the weather was bad (since incoming ships would be cut off from shelter), nor before 5 p.m. in the winter (November to March), nor before 8 p.m. during the other months of the year. On each working day, he was to take it down at 7 a.m. in the winter and at 5 a.m. during all other months. This point illustrates how carefully the port was controlled and how difficult it would be to escape paying dues, tariffs, and taxes. Only in May, 1758, was the ritual of the chain⁹ abolished.

On the west bank were the docks where barges unloaded and this bank remained clear. The north bank opposite the main thoroughfare of the port was somewhat obstructed by the pottery, a cumbersome construction which interfered with the free flow of traffic of hauling vehicles and carts. It consisted of three houses joined together and now on the verge of ruin. In 1733, the King's

⁹ Emile Garnault, Le commerce rochelais au XVIIIe siècle, 2^e partie, Etablissements maritimes de la Rochelle, La Rochelle, Mareschal and Martin, 1887, pp. 17-18.

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prosecutor drew the Admiralty's attention to the condition of the second building which was ready to fall and which would endanger not only the public and neighbouring houses, but the boats and other ships which daily passed in proximity to it. In his notification to the Admiralty, the Prosecutor demanded an official report in the presence of a ¹⁰ contractor.

In addition to the meeting rooms of the Chamber of Commerce which were very small and shared with the Tribunal of Commerce (Juridiction Consulaire) of La Rochelle, and the buildings in disrepair already mentioned, La Rochelle in the first decades of the eighteenth century possessed a group of sixteen refineries of which several had four boilers, for the brown sugar from the southern islands was a key product. Workshops, ("la pelleterie", for example,) warehouses, shops, inns, old houses, lined the port while on the main thoroughfare several dwellings of shippers stood close together. The house of Mme Pascaud, for example, must have been of sizeable proportions since she offered to receive into her home the religious Sisters who returned to France on the fall of Louisbourg. Maurepas referred to this offer in a letter to Intendant Ricouart in September, 1745, pointing out that "La V^e Pascaud ayant offert de recevoir

10 Robert, op. cit., p. 31.

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chés Elle les Religieuses arrivées à Rochefort, il n'y a point d'inconvenient à les lui envoyer et à les laisser chés Elle jusqu'à ce que l'on ait pû prendre un autre arrangement".¹¹

Regulations of long standing governed the dispersal of goods and conveyances in the port and by the eighteenth century they were taken very much for granted. Special landing sections were provided for passenger boats, for boats laden with firewood, fruit, and other daily provisions; big boats were not allowed to moor in this section. Boats carrying lime had a special place allotted. Large vessels and those loading or unloading merchandise were given larger areas on "la grande rive". Ships having their hulls repaired in the silted-up corners of the harbour were to be four fathoms distant at least from any other boat. Ships were to be moored before and aft, and moorings and floating chains attached to the dock were to be put in place and maintained by the city. The docks were wooden and it was difficult to moor vessels to the stakes (les pieux). Merchandise, anchors, cables, canons, could not be left on the quay more than three days after the complete unloading. An exception was made for firewood brought for the daily

¹¹ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 140, Maurepas à Ricouart, 7 septembre, 1745.

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use of the inhabitants and which could be exposed for sale either on board ship or on the dock until the whole lot was disposed of. Those who had docking privileges were enjoined to keep their docks in good condition and furnished with rings for mooring vessels. There were to be at least 30 pilots, guides to the entrance to the port, and coast guards. High and low anchoring rings had to be placed on the masonry of the "tour de la Chaîne" as well as on that of Saint Nicholas for mooring vessels both at high and low tide. No house or building could be put up "à la grande rive" in order to leave it free for the piling of stones,¹² wood, and other large wares.

In the entrance, which stretched as far as the sand bars forming at the base of Richelieu's wall, sand deposits accumulated, so that this inner roadstead was given the name "the mire" (les vases). Boats, ferries, and skiffs anchored here while waiting for the tide. A narrow channel bordered with dangerous branches and very poorly marked out gave access to the harbour. The reconnaissance boat of the clerks of the slave ships was usually anchored near this entrance.

¹² Emile Garnault, Etablissements maritimes de la Rochelle, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

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In the rather confined interior of the port, skiffs and barges kept travelling to and from the open sea, laden with merchandise which they piled on the shore, covered with tarpaulins in front of warehouses. M. Belamy, Commissioner of the port, sent five barges to unload the Dromadaire coming from Saint-Domingue in 1734.¹³ The unloading of a three-mast ship took several days and brought to the quay a whole crowd of dock hands, hauliers, and carters, (without mentioning loiterers), and activated numerous vehicles from wagons to simple hauling apparatus. Merchants, carpenters, and shop-keepers of all kinds took a share in the volume of business which was transacted in the port: the equipment and repair of ships, their crews; the going and coming of a throng of sailors, officers, and travellers, who finding themselves on land for a few days after a journey needed various commodities and had at the same time money to spend.

Taken out of skiffs, merchandise was disembarked on the banks of the port. Several shippers, Jacques Rasteau, for example, owned his own dock where skiffs and barges came to moor, and a stand on the quay for receiving barrels of sugar or indigo, or bales of skins or cotton.

¹³ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 121, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 6 juillet, 1734.

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While unloading goods from a ship in the bay to some place on the dock was difficult enough, it was much harder and longer to transfer these goods to a place of storage after they were landed. To the eleven trips necessary to take the cargo off the slave ship, La Victoire, 366 return trips were required to haul the goods from the pier to the warehouse. Unloading by these means caused some expense to the shippers: 300 or 400 pounds to the ferryman (boatman), as much to the hauliers and dock hands, but the delay and inconvenience associated with the process was still more onerous. After its unloading, the ship, led by a pilot, went into the Charente, sometimes into the Seudre, to finish its paying off, to be repaired, and to wait anchored in the river for the next trip.¹⁴

Sand, pebbles, and low water level made navigation within the port very dangerous, so that ships weighing more than 150 tons had great difficulty, damage to cargo and ships frequently resulting. Also, wooden ships placed side by side in a crowded port created a dangerous fire hazard and an Ordinance of the King, January 21, 1722, forbade fires being made on board,¹⁵ while one was passed in 1737

14 Robert, op. cit., p. 33.

15 Ibid., p. 31.

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which "deffend d'embarquer des Paillasses" for the same
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reason.

Few of the great sailing vessels, even with empty holds risked penetrating into the harbour. The impression of the port itself filled with great sailing ships is inexact for the eighteenth century, because the old harbour at this time no longer sheltered anything except fishing boats, skiffs, and a few three-mast vessels now too far gone for service and destined to be sold. In laying plans for the development of the port, the merchants of La Rochelle did not hesitate to point out to the Council of Commerce in Paris that the various improvements of the port and of the roads leading to it would be of general use, would contribute to public safety and that therefore, the expenses should come from the public treasury and should not weigh heavily on one city or one province.

The merchants and financiers of La Rochelle had worked for many years to get a Chamber of Commerce established, feeling that this could be an instrument of power, a means of giving them control of the port, and of initiating a more effective influence on Versailles. This Chamber of Commerce was provided for by a royal prescript in 1701

16 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 127, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 18 août, 1737.

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and another in 1710, but was not implemented until July 1719 by a decree, some pertinent Articles of which are quoted below:

Art. 12:

Le soin et l'application des Directeur et Syndics (de la Chambre de Commerce) sera de recevoir les mémoires qui leur seront adressés par les négociants et marchands avec leurs propositions et plaintes; de les examiner, donner leur avis sur le contenu d'iceux lorsque les matières leur paraîtront importantes et d'envoyer le tout au Conseil de Commerce, auquel ils pourront faire les représentations qu'il jugeront nécessaires pour le bien du commerce, et seront lesdites représentations visées par le s^r Intendant de la Rochelle.

Art. 13:

Aucun parère, ou avis servant de règle sur les matières de commerce, fait sur la place, n'aura d'autorité dans les affaires de commerce, qu'il n'ait été présenté à la Chambre particulière de Commerce et par elle approuvé.

Art. 19:

Sa Majesté a fixé les frais de ladite Chambre de Commerce à la somme de deux mille livres, qui seront employées tant pour le payement des appointements du Secrétaire, frais de l'écritoire, bois, bougies, chandelles, ports de lettres et autres menus frais,

Fait au Conseil d'Etat du Roi, Sa Majesté y étant, tenu à Paris le quinzième jour de juillet mil sept cent dix-neuf.¹⁷

Signé: Phelypeaux

17 Extrait d'un arrêt portant règlement pour la Chambre de Commerce établie dans la ville de la Rochelle du 15 juillet, 1719, cité par Emile Garnault, dans Le commerce rochelais au XVIII^e siècle, 1^{er} partie, La représentation commerciale de La Rochelle, La Rochelle, Mareschal et Martin, 1888, pp. 27-33.

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Immediately following this, a statement from the King ordered that the "Arrêt" be put into effect.

The Chamber of Commerce, therefore, was to handle exclusively anything concerning the regulating of the business of the port, and from the time of its installation, September 25, 1719, it concerned itself with working toward the improvements so badly needed as has been explained in the early part of this chapter. One of its first efforts was to send a memoir to the Admiral, to the Council of the Marine, as well as to the Controller General; to Mr. Amelot, La Rochelle's representative on the Council of Commerce, and to the Commander-in-Chief of the province. Part of this memoir will be quoted because it throws light on the needs of the port, the commercial interests of La Rochelle and its relative commercial status in the kingdom.

Elle a toujours partagé avec Nantes et Bordeaux la majeure partie du commerce de mer, tant en Europe qu'à la côte de Guinée et dans toutes les colonies de l'Amérique et pêche de la morue verte et sèche. La Rochelle fait en outre seule le commerce du Canada qui ne consomme que des manufactures de France et dont les retours en pelleteries passent la plus grande partie en Allemagne.

¹⁸ Garnault, Etablissements maritimes de la Rochelle, op. cit., p. 29.

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C'est par le commerce de la Rochelle que les vins, eaux-de-vie et sels de la province de Saintonge, des îles d'Oleron et de Ré, se consomment. Les denrées du haut et bas Poitou, d'Anjou, du Maine, de Touraine, du Limousin, d'Angoumois et de Saintonge se consomment pour la plupart par le moyen du commerce de mer qui se fait à la Rochelle.

Ce même commerce produit au Roi des sommes considérable par les sorties et entrées de toutes ces sortes de marchandises et denrées, et il y a peu de recettes des fermes générales qui produisent plus que celles qui sont comprises dans la direction de la Rochelle.

Si, depuis quelques années, ce commerce a diminué, c'est que les négociants ne peuvent plus le faire au même prix que celui des villes voisines, à cause des gros frais qu'ils sont obligés de faire pour l'armement et le désarmement de leurs vaisseaux, depuis que, par succession de temps, le port et les rades de la Rochelle se sont comblés et se comblent tous les jours.

Les vases et sables, qui sont depuis la digue jusqu'à l'entrée des tours de la Chaîne et de Saint-Nicolas, sont si fort haussés et le chenal qui décharge le havre si bouché, que la mer ne monte au-dessus qu'une moitié de ce qu'elle faisait il y a soixante ans, de sorte que tous les négociants sont obligés d'envoyer leurs grands vaisseaux à Rochefort, ou ailleurs, n'en pouvant plus entrer dans le havre que de très petits (et dans peu il n'en entrera plus du tout), ce qui leur cause de si grandes dépenses qu'ils perdent dans leur commerce, lorsqu'ils vendent dans l'Amérique, ou ailleurs, les vivres et denrées de France au même prix que font les négociants de Bordeaux et de Nantes, quoi qu'ils soient plus à portée de les tirer des provinces qui en fournissent.

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Le havre et les vases jusqu'à la digue sont comblés à un tel point que les barques mêmes qui font le cabotage et qui portent les eaux-de-vie en Picardie (ce qui rend beaucoup de droits au Roi) ne peuvent plus entrer ni sortir chargées, et, enfin, ce mal est augmenté à un tel excès que si on diffère d'y apporter remède, il deviendra dans un état presque irréparable ou qui coûtera le double.¹⁹

The inadequacies of the port were all the more intolerable since large vessels had to go on to Rochefort for repairs and refitting. The matter was aggravated further when M. de Beauharnois, Intendant of the Marine at Rochefort, received orders that Rochelais ships were no longer to be allowed into the port at Rochefort to be repaired but would have to go beyond Rochefort or even to Charente. In protest, 30 shippers from La Rochelle, with Bonneau who traded with Canada one of the number, signed a petition on January 9, 1722, asking for the right to moor their vessels in a canal leading to Rochefort where they would have no communication with the ships of the King. But the Council of the Marine wrote back to the Intendant of La Rochelle that Rochelais ships would either have to go to

¹⁹ Extrait d'un mémoire rédigé par la Chambre de Commerce de la Rochelle au sujet des travaux à effectuer au port, 8 mai, 1720, cité par Emile Garnault, dans Etablissements maritimes de la Rochelle, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

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their own port or else on to the Charente, that the Council of the Marine acting on advice coming from Rochefort had passed a resolution saying that nothing in common must be allowed between "la marine du Roi et celle du commerce". Merchants requesting in 1721 that their vessels be granted space in the ropery (la corderie) in Rochefort were told that "Le Conseil ne veut rien changer a la resolution qu'il a prise de les separer entierement des vaisseaux du Roy".²⁰

The Chamber of Commerce was tireless in its efforts to get approval for its plans for the improvement of the port. The letter of September 25, 1723,²¹ to M. Maurepas, then head of the Department of the Marine, might be taken as an example of this zeal. This letter pointed out that the condition of the port was continually growing worse and that no vessel could enter the port except on the two days "de la grosse maline", and that for twelve or thirteen days it was impossible for any loaded boat to draw alongside the quay, a thing which caused delays in the discharging of vessels, led to great risks while the ships were in the roadsteads, and caused excessive expenses.

20 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 97, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 17 décembre, 1721.

21 La Chambre de Commerce de la Rochelle à Maurepas, 25 septembre, 1723, citée par Emile Garnault dans Etablissements maritimes de la Rochelle, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

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At the beginning of 1724, although there was a rumour that 3,500 men were ordered to work on the port, nothing came of it. 1724, 1725, and 1726 went by without anything being done for the port of La Rochelle. Early in 1727, the Chamber of Commerce put forward a new plan which spoke only of deepening the harbour and the entrance. M. Moreau gave this scheme very little encouragement because it was an uncertain time with France again on the verge of war. However, M. Maurepas himself visited the port as he was passing through in June of this same year and reported that he was convinced of the utility of the work. M. de Brancas, Archbishop of La Rochelle, tried unsuccessfully to influence Cardinal Fleury. Thus the end of 1727 arrived and nothing had been decided: the Chamber of Commerce had been exerting pressure for seven years without obtaining anything and the port was filling up more every day.²²

In November, 1727, a new memoir was sent as follows:

Ce havre, capable de retirer les plus gros vaisseaux marchands, et dans lequel de mémoire d'homme, on y en voyait de 8 à 900 tonneaux de port, se trouve présentement si rempli, et si comblé de vases, qu'à peine les barques de 100 à 150 tonneaux y peuvent librement entrer: il y a même tout lieu de craindre que, sans un prompt et puissant secours, les plus petites barques n'en pourront plus

22 Garnault, 2^e partie, op. cit., p. 50.

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approcher par l'opposition d'une barre qui se forme entre les deux ports de Saint-Nicolas et de la Chaîne, qui sont à l'entrée du port.

Ce malheur a pour premier principe la négligence et le peu de soin qu'on a eu de son entretien et de remédier de temps en temps aux inconvénients auxquels ce port se trouve exposé et dont il y en a deux principaux:

Le premier est le rapport des vases qui viennent à toutes les marées, qui, se déposant dans l'intérieur du port et s'affaisant les unes sur les autres, ont fait la plus grande partie du désordre où il se trouve.

Le deuxième vient des immondices de la ville qui, par la pente que les principales rues ont naturellement sur le port, y sont entraînées par les pluies, et qui jointes à celles qui viennent du côté de la mer, ont achevé de le combler et l'ont mis dans l'état où il est aujourd'hui.²³

But it would be only under Napoleon I that the work would be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. During the old régime, La Rochelle had to content itself with being a harbour of "running-aground".

The Rochelais merchants were ever on the alert to safeguard the trading interest of their port. They believed, for example, that the Letters Patent of 1717²⁴

²³ Mémoire sur l'état du port de la Rochelle, 8 novembre, 1727, cité par Emile Garnault, Ibid., pp. 52-55.

²⁴ PAC, Charente-Maritime, Amirauté de Guyenne à La Rochelle, B, Vol. 223, pp. 33-49, avril, 1717.

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worked to their advantage. These Letters Patent gave to La Rochelle and a limited number of French ports the right to fit out ships for the French colonies with the obligation, under a fine of ten thousand pounds, of returning to the port of departure unless in case of shipwreck or other unforeseen accident.²⁵

In 1722, in spite of the difficulties earlier explained of navigating ships at the port of La Rochelle, some foreign shippers found certain advantages in unloading there and obtained authorization to do so. This permission was withdrawn when the Chamber of Commerce of La Rochelle protested, basing its case on Article II of the Letters Patent.

Similarly in 1728, the Chamber of Commerce took a vigorous stand against Le Vaudreuil,²⁶ a ship bound for Bordeaux, who, under pretext that it lacked sufficient cables and anchors to continue its voyage to Bordeaux, tried to sell its cargo of sugar in La Rochelle. The Chamber of Commerce wrote to Maurepas to expose the fact that sugar was, at that time, selling in La Rochelle at a better price

25 Lettres Patentés, op. cit., Art. II, p. 35.

26 PAC, Archives Nationales, Fonds des Colonies, Commerce des Colonies, F²B, Carton 1, Les Directeurs de la Chambre de Commerce à La Rochelle à Maurepas, 17 avril, 1728, pp. 24-25.

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than at Bordeaux, and to insist that Article II of the Letters Patent of April 1717 be observed. In the face of such a storm of protest, the captain of the Vaudreuil had to reload his cargo and set out for Bordeaux.

By taking strong and resolute action in cases such as those described above, the Chamber of Commerce protected the merchants of the port from foreign competition and contributed to the growth of the merchant marine of La Rochelle.

Among the great wholesale merchants and ship-owners of La Rochelle, certain ones like Torterue Bonneau, The Garésché brothers, Vivier, Butler, Pascaud, Lapointe, and Bonfils were most active during this period. Those who specialized in fitting out ships for the colonies of New France were nearly all Catholics, while most of the Protestant shippers took up the slave trade, which up until this time had been the privilege of the big companies. But the Letters Patent of January, 1716, gave the freedom to traffic in slaves to five ports: Rouen, Saint-Malo, Nantes, Bordeaux, and La Rochelle. However, the greatest number of Rochelais firms trafficked in supplies of food, clothing, and munitions, although the slave trade while it lasted was an important feature of the activities of the port because of the great amounts of capital involved, the difficulties and dangers of its operations, the great dividends accruing

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from it, and the number of captains engaged in it.

Protestant shippers of La Rochelle formed a power-élite and the city remained, at least to some extent, a centre for them where they engaged honourably and profitably in business. It must be admitted, however, that it was a time when efforts were made to entrench Catholicism and to restrict or weed out Protestantism. In most cases, a very direct approach was used.

La Delle Ester Allaire ayant este remise au couvent des nouvelles Catholiques de Poitiers par ordre de sa Ma^{te} Je ne luy proposeray d'en faire sortir cette fille que sur le Témoignage que vous rendrez de sa bonne conduite a lesgard de la Religion.²⁷

In the case of a Protestant named Chauffat, who, in contravention of His Majesty's orders, had come to Rochefort without permission, and who, was, therefore, to be brought to trial, the directives were as follows:

Cependant il est necessaire que vous fassiez proposer à cet homme de changer de Religion et que vous chargiez quelque Ecclesiastique de le voir pour luy donner les instructions necessaires.²⁸

New converts who cooperated were looked on with approval while others were distrusted and seemed to remain

²⁷ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 17 juillet, 1715.

²⁸ Ibid., Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 21 août, 1715.

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Catholic only under duress. Military detachments were used to "empescher les Evasions des nouveaux convertis".²⁹

Given this atmosphere, it is not surprising that certain lines of demarcation arose between the two religious groups at La Rochelle. Education was under Catholic, even Jesuit control,³⁰ for example, and Protestant children were not enrolled. Also, the President of the Chamber of Commerce had to be a Catholic, Protestants being barred from this office. However, Catholics and Protestants worked together to improve the economic life of the port, as can be seen in 1730 when the merchants of La Rochelle pledged 60,000 pounds towards the improvement of the dock. The list of contributions included 1000 pounds from Protestant ship-owner Vivier, as well as smaller donations from Catholics Pascaud, Bourguine, Butler, and Lapointe.³¹ All of these shippers took pride in a kind of caste system in the order of: shippers (armateurs), dealers (négociants), and merchants (marchands).

Although most goods arrived by water at La Rochelle and were similarly despatched from there, still frequent references to "le carosse de la Rochelle", "la voiture des

²⁹ Ibid., Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 4 août, 1715.

³⁰ PAC, Charente-Maritime, Amirauté de Guyenne à La Rochelle, B225, Extrait des Registres du Conseil d'Etat, 18 octobre, 1732, p. 4.

³¹ Garnault, Etablissements maritimes de la Rochelle, op. cit., p. 69.

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bois", and "les routiers" reveal a certain amount of road traffic as well. The chief connection between La Rochelle and Paris, for example, was by land. This traffic included such articles as the unusual birds (seagulls), animals (wild cats,³² silver foxes,³³ beavers), or plants from the colonies for the King's gardens, or the medicine and surgical instruments³⁴ sent from Paris to M. Belamy, Commissioner of the port, who, in turn, was to see that they were carefully embarked on the King's vessels for the colonies. Manufactured goods such as furniture or material for clothing had to be procured in Paris and were transported to La Rochelle by wagons and carts.³⁵ Chapel decorations destined for the colonies were sent from Paris by a special carrier. Although this land traffic was a necessary part of trade with the interior, especially with Paris, it was, in general, considered slow, unsafe,³⁶ and expensive.³⁷

³² PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 137, Maurepas à Ricouart, 22 février, 1743.

³³ Ibid., Vol. 105, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 27 mars, 1725.

³⁴ Ibid., Vol. 137, Maurepas à Ricouart, 8 mai, 1743.

³⁵ Ibid., Vol. 116, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 6 mai, 1732.

³⁶ Ibid., Vol. 96, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 8 janvier, 1721.

³⁷ Ibid., Vol. 116, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 20 mai, 1732.

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Wood was a basic commodity of this period and was, apparently, scarce in the La Rochelle area. This scarcity is understandable since so much wood was required for ship-building, especially in the nearby naval base of Rochefort, and so much was consumed by the numerous lighthouses in the approaches to these ports. These lighthouses frequently had to use old wood left over when ships were demolished,³⁸ and this practice, in turn drew complaints from ships' captains that the fires were too dim to provide guidance for ships at night.³⁹ The King's officials made a careful survey⁴⁰ of trees and forests surrounding La Rochelle, with action to be taken against individuals who were unwilling to sell their woodlands to the King.

Je compte que vous ferez suivre
l'exécution de l'ordonnance que M.
Amelot a rendu contre les particuliers
qui refusoient de vendre leurs bois au
Roy, et vous engagerez cet Intendant
à régler ce qui concerne ceux qui
n'ont pas comparu.⁴¹

38 Ibid., Vol. 90, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 9 mars, 1718.

39 Ibid., Vol. 97, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 25 août, 1721.

40 Ibid., Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 13 février, 1715.

41 Ibid., Vol. 102, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 14 novembre, 1723.

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M. Belamy's request to M. de Morville, acting President of the Marine, shows the value placed on even a few pieces of lumber.

Le S. de Bellamy m'escrit qu'il a renvoyé à Rochefort 22 pieces de bois provenant du naufrage de la barque l'Elisabeth perie sur lisle d'aix le 6 avril d^{er} et quil a promis une petite gratiffication aux commis garde coste qui ont aidé a les sauver, examinez s'il vous plaist ce qu'il convient de leur donner pour ce service et pressez vous de faire enlever les bois qui peuvent estre a Marans.⁴²

Women had some share in the commercial activities of La Rochelle. In some cases, they bought shares in shipping ventures to the colonies and did not hesitate to engage in legal disputes⁴³ to receive due payment. In others, they themselves owned and operated large business houses.⁴⁴ Mme Pascaud, the best known of these, continued her husband's shipping business after his death in 1717, and is mentioned frequently in commercial transactions⁴⁵ with the colonies during the next twenty-five years.

⁴² Ibid., Morville à Beauharnois, 1 août, 1723.

⁴³ Ibid., Vol. 101, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 20 janvier, 1723.

⁴⁴ Aegidius Fauteux, La Famille Pascaud, op. cit., p. 84.

⁴⁵ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 99, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 9 avril, 1722.

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"La veuve Nordink, marchande de la Rochelle", pursued business interests as far as Conisberg, and brought diplomatic pressure to bear on the Swedish court for the release of a confiscated ship.⁴⁶ La Dame Magnière, who, with another feminine associate,⁴⁷ took on the financial responsibility of le Héros sent to Quebec in 1712, was still being pressed in 1717 for the payment of wages due to officers and crew.⁴⁸

At this time, ports usually provided wooden wharfs suitably placed where people kept watch for incoming ships.⁴⁹ At La Rochelle, women usually did this "watching" and gave the signal to the ship-owner concerned, who paid them a small sum for this service.⁵⁰

On the human side, illness, disease, and hardship, generally, were fairly constant factors. Ships carrying the plague came to port, and even the soldiers who returned from the siege of Louisbourg were full of scurvy when they

⁴⁶ Ibid., Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 29 mai, 1715.

⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol. 85, Théophile Peclavé (inspecteur) à Beauharnois, décembre, 1714.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 19 février, 1715.

⁴⁹ Ibid., Vol. 97, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 9 juillet, 1721.

⁵⁰ Robert, op. cit., p. 39.

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arrived at La Rochelle.⁵¹ Men condemned to the galleys
 passed in chain gangs under "le conducteur de la chaisne".⁵²
 Women of bad life frequented the area, entering into a life
 of debauchery especially with the soldiers of Rochefort,
 the severity of the rod as punishment being ineffectual as
 a deterrent.⁵³ Navigators were imprisoned for error.⁵⁴
 If supplies of food and clothing were scarce and not easily
 obtained,⁵⁵ money was even more so.

La Rochelle, therefore, in 1715 was still undergoing
 a post-war period of financial readjustment and government
 weakness. However, the Treaty of Utrecht signed in 1713
 after the war of the Spanish Succession ushered in a period
 of relative peace which (with the exception of a few divers-
 ions) was to endure during the Regency (Duke of Orléans,
 1714-1723; Duke of Bourbon, 1723-26), as well as under the
 administration of Cardinal Fleury which ended with his death
 in 1743. It was with this peace in sight that La Rochelle

⁵¹ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 140, Maurepas à Ricouart, 14 septembre, 1745.

⁵² Ibid., Vol. 130, Maurepas à Ricouart, 29 décembre, 1739.

⁵³ Ibid., Vol. 124, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 10 août, 1736.

⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 2 janvier, 1715.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 3 juillet, 1715.

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had begun to recoup its forces, to take stock of its facilities and opportunities, and to look for means of improving these in the future. The most important one of these means, taken singly, was, of course, the Chamber of Commerce, whose efforts to make the port more functional have been described in some detail in this chapter. These efforts were always subject to review by government officials, two of whom, Comte Phelypeaux de Maurepas (Secretary of State and Minister of the Marine from 1723 to 1746), and François de Beauharnois (Intendant of the Generalty of La Rochelle from 1710 to 1740) dominated the period. Religious lines were still very clearly drawn but open persecution had ceased and many Protestant financiers emerged from the struggle still in possession of great funds of capital, taking part in the commercial activity of the port on a "business-as usual" basis but still being excluded from appointments to "official" positions.

Having lost Newfoundland and Acadia by the Treaty of Utrecht, France nevertheless, maintained fishing rights on the Grand Banks, and planned to strengthen her position in Ile Royale by building the fortress of Louisbourg, the ships of La Rochelle being associated with both of these activities as part of the colonial commerce of the period. This commerce received greater attention and assumed more importance, since the period under discussion, to a large

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extent, was one of peace, serious hostilities breaking out again only in 1744. Details of this shipping and trade emanating from La Rochelle to New France will be discussed in the ensuing chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

SHIPPING

It is generally conceded, that, during the period under discussion (1715-1745), La Rochelle held first place in trade with Canada, although other ports may have been more active in trade with the southern islands. Since the colonies in Canada, especially that of Ile Royale, depended for their very existence on products coming from France, the role of La Rochelle, therefore, may be considered to have been an essential one. The merchandise so traded -- wine, brandy, salt, dry goods of wool, linen, cotton, and iron products -- comprised staple articles grown or produced in France, and the trading activity was on this account connected with what was basic to French commerce. French officials recognized this, and whether it was a question of levying sailors for other ports, or of establishing a convoy system, took care that shipping out of La Rochelle would not in any way be impeded or retarded.

This shipping out of La Rochelle to New France went either in "les vaisseaux du Roi" or in "les vaisseaux marchands" and there was a very close connection between the two. The King's vessels were careened, made ready for the voyage, armed, and loaded with some of their supplies at Rochefort; the merchants' ships of La Rochelle did a steady

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business in either bringing goods directly to these ships as they lay at anchor in "le Chef de Baye" before La Rochelle, or in carrying supplies to the King's stores at Rochefort. The merchants, of course, had their own ships, large and small, which they sent to the colonies of Quebec and Ile Royale.¹ Although generally smaller than the King's ships, and not so well "porqués",² some of them must have been comparable in size since, on occasion, they were requisitioned by the King. In 1745, for example, the Pascaud brothers of La Rochelle were asked to "lend" their ship for a secret mission (to Quebec). They contracted to fit it out with supplies for six months, and a crew of 100 men.³ Conversely, "la veuve Maignière" of La Rochelle procured the Heros with a crew of 200 men for a private trading venture to Quebec in 1712, a venture which led to many disputes and the confiscation of her goods at Rochefort by Intendant Beauharnois, and was still before the Council of the Marine in 1716.⁴ Ship-

1 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 117, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 8 juillet, 1732.

2 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1R, Liasse 29, pièce 16, Simon Lapointe à Ricouart, 13 avril, 1744.

3 Ibid., Liasse 29, pièce 24, Bigot à Maurepas, 7 décembre, 1745.

4 Ibid., Liasse 25 pièce 4, Veuve La Maignière au Conseil de Marine, 26 octobre, 1716.

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ping and the port, therefore, claimed the attention and energy of the officials, merchants, the average citizens, the poor and unemployed of La Rochelle.

When considered in the light of the greatness and complexity of the operation, the rank of officials concerned with it, and the length of time required to complete it, the enterprise of sending out the King's ships each year must take first place. These undertakings were, in the strict sense, "official" and detailed records were kept of the objectives, the expenditures and personnel, as well as the particulars of navigation connected with each.

The fitting out of the Rubis in 1734 might be taken as a typical example of the activity created in La Rochelle by the King's vessels issuing forth as they did from the nearby naval base of Rochefort into the roadsteads in front of La Rochelle.

Early in January, letters had begun to flow from the pen of Maurepas, Minister of the Marine, to M. de Beauharnois, Intendant of the Marine at Rochefort, and of the Generality of La Rochelle; to M. Belamy, Commissioner of the Port of La Rochelle; and to the captain in charge of the vessel making the trip, in this case M^r de Chaon. M. de Beauharnois, at this very time, was busy with La Charente, which was delayed in the roadsteads of La Rochelle prior to leaving for Louisiana. During this delay, food, water and other

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provisions had to be sent daily from La Rochelle, so that supplies for the ocean voyage would remain intact.⁵ M. Belamy had to provide barges and skiffs from the port for the transportation of these supplies. It was also his duty to draw up lists of the passengers and goods which would be embarked at La Rochelle not only on the King's vessels, but also on those of the merchants of the city. These lists were later sent to M. Maurepas who sent an acknowledgment such as the following direct to M. Belamy.

J'ay receu M. les deux lettres que vous m'avés escrit le 31 du mois dernier, et avec la derniere l'état des vivres et munitions embarqués sur les navires marchands de la Rochelle, expédiés pendant le mois dernier pour des isles; vous aurez soin de m'envoyer exactem^t ces états chaque mois.⁶

In the meantime, Le Profond⁷ arrived from Saint Domingue with a cargo of sugar which M. Belamy was commissioned to sell. Because this ship was in very bad condition, it had gone direct to Rochefort and M. Belamy had to transfer the cargo from there using "des allièges de la Rochelle, afin de prévenir les inconveniens qu'auroient

⁵ PAC, AC, B60, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 19 janvier, 1734, p. 111.

⁶ Ibid., B58, Maurepas à Belamy, 7 avril, 1733, p. 114.

⁷ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 120, Maurepas à Belamy, 9 mars, 1734.

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pû causer dans les Batimens de Rochefort les sucres et les
 sirops".⁸ The result of this sale was mentioned in a des-
 patch from Versailles on April 13, 1734.

M. Belamy m'a envoye l'extrait
 du produit de la vente des sucres bruts
 envoyés de St. Domingue pour le Compte
 du Roy par le v^{au} le Profond montant
 net a 47427 9S. qu'il me marque avoir
 fait remettre au Commis des Tresoriers
 de la marine a la Rochelle ce que j'ay
 approuvé mais comme il y a du
 benefice sur cette vente et qu'il y
 aura de la perte sur celle des sucres
 blancs dont on ne luy avoit offert
 que 30 du quintal il faut attendre
 qu'ils soient vendus et le produit ne
 constaté pour n'expedier qu'une seule
 ordonnance de recette extraord^{re},
 tant des sucres bruts que blancs qui
 composent le mesme envoy.⁹

By February, the enterprise had doubled in scope
 when, at M. Beauharnois' suggestion, it was decided to send
Le Heros to Ile Royale along with the Rubis bound for
 Quebec. A letter from Maurepas approving the suggestion
 reveals considerable concern that supplies might not be
 loaded on time.

⁸ Ibid., Vol. 120, Maurepas à Beauharnois,
 16 février, 1734.

⁹ PAC, AC, B60, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 13 avril,
 1734, pp. 137-138.

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La proposition que vous faites de faire partir en mesme temps les deux vaisseaux le Rubis et le Heros pour se faire voir l'un et l'autre sur le grand Banc, seroit très convenable, si cela pouvait s'executer, sans retarder le depart du Rubis, qu'il est important de faire partir au temps fixé; et si vous pouvés mettre le Heros en etat de faire voile dans le mesme temps, vous me ferés grand plaisir, marqués moy si les fournitures des effets a envoyer à l'isle Royale pouront estre faite assés a temps pour cela, et faites je vous prie, tout ce qui dependra de vous pour y parvenir.¹⁰

The captain of Le Heros also received special notice to have his ship ready on time:

Je compte que vous ferés toute la diligence qui pourra dependre de vous pour vous mettre en etat de partir avec M^r le Ch^{er} de Chaon.¹¹

This concern with time-schedules must have taxed the facilities of La Rochelle to the utmost not only with regard to embarking supplies on the two large ships, but also in receiving supplies coming by land from Paris, in granting congés to merchant vessels who, in connection with the voyage, had business in other ports, and in the drawing up

10 Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 23 février, 1734, p. 118.

11 PAC, AC, B60, Maurepas à Forant, 27 avril, 1734, p. 149.

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of numerous legal contracts -- bills of sale, share-holdings in the venture about to be undertaken, insurance, "engagements" and, in many cases, wills.

M. de Chaon, captain of the Rubis, had orders to take under his protection the merchant ships of La Rochelle. There is reason to believe that the latter did not regard this protection as an unmixed blessing, particularly in this case where the two larger ships were to spend some time on the Grand Banks:

Le Roy souhaiteroit que M.
le Forant qui commande le vaisseau
le Heros destiné pour l'Isle Royale
partit avec vous, pour que vous
puissiez passer ensemble sur le Grand
Banc pour y proteger la pesche et
mettre ordre aux troubles qu'on
pouroit faire avec pescheurs.¹²

While some of the fishing craft on the Grand Banks were probably from La Rochelle, the Rochelais ships in the convoy would have no particular interest in them at this particular time, and would strongly object to "les fausses marches", necessary to them when they were obliged to stay in the convoy. They no doubt looked ahead to the long and dangerous trip up the St. Lawrence and to the difficulty of completing their business at Quebec before being trapped by ice.

¹² Ibid., Maurepas à Chaon, 27 avril, 1734, p. 150.

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M. Belamy, Commissioner of the port, sent official notice to M. Maurepas when the Rubis sailed on May 31, the passengers from La Rochelle, a group of penalized contrabanders, new recruits for the army, a number of priests and the Bishop of Quebec having embarked in the final days of the ship's stand in the bay before La Rochelle.

M. Belamy m'a informé que M. l'Evesque de Quebec et les autres passagers furent embarqués le 29 dans le vau le Rubis et que M. le Cher de Chaon avait appareillé le 31 à 4 heures du matin. J'espère qu'il aura continué sa route. Je suis satisfait de la diligence avec laquelle ce vau a été expédié, mais j'aurois bien souhaité que le Heros eut été en état de partir avec luy, . . .¹³

Even as the Rubis departed, however, the port of La Rochelle was still concerned with le Heros which had to remain behind because funds for Ile Royale had not arrived in time.¹⁴ It might be mentioned here that money for the colonies in the form of gold and silver packed in chests was usually sent by wagon from Paris or Versailles to Rochefort and La Rochelle. This road-route was very slow, and the transferring of these funds to the ship in harbour by means of "la chaloupe" (rowboat) was difficult, especially in the

13 Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 7 juin, 1734, p. 200.

14 Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 7 juin, 1734, p. 201.

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case of stormy seas. In addition to supplying Le Heros with food and water while it waited to set sail, the officials of the port as well as the merchants were engaged in loading, equipping, and manning La Gironde for Louisiana, under the command of M. de Vaudreuil; Le Profond for Martinique, under the command of M. de Rossel; while La Somme was expected to arrive at any time.¹⁵

Since shipping was the very livelihood of La Rochelle, and since so many people both as individuals and as groups such as sailors, recruits and merchants, were concerned with shipping and made ocean voyages, it can be maintained that life at sea was an extension of life at La Rochelle. Therefore some details of navigation and of conditions on board seem in order, for they will help to explain the work, the outlook, the manner of life, as well as the hardiness and ingenuity of "Les Rochelais".

All ships whether from Rochefort or La Rochelle made their way to the ocean through Le Pertuis d'Antioche, that is, the sea-lane between the Island of Ré to the north, and that of Oleron to the south,¹⁶ and navigators marked the

¹⁵ Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 24 mai, 1734, p. 195.

¹⁶ Thomas Jefferys, A Description of the Maritime Parts of France, op. cit., Vol. II, Plate XLVII.

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lighthouses on the outer points of these islands, as well as La tour de la Lanterne in La Rochelle itself, as their "points de quittance". But on return voyages, especially at night or when the weather was not clear, pilots found difficulty in locating Le Pertuis d'Antioche and ran the risk of shipwreck within fairly close range of La Rochelle. M. de Pontmarois returning in command of Le François in December, 1720, felt obliged to call his officers and pilots to a council meeting to advise him on whether he should dare turn the ship toward Le Pertuis. No guidance came from the two outer lighthouses and several cannon blasts "pour faire metre les feus autour" had produced no results. A passage in the ship's journal of navigation described the difficulty and danger as follows:

. . . je pry le party de mouiller lancre pour passer la nuit, le temp et la nuit fort obscure, et embrumée, et nayant auqueune connessance dauqueun des feus des tours des balennes ou chassiron pour pouvoir entrer en le pertuis, en sette insertytude je fy mouiller . . . je fy tirer de momant a autre pendant la nuit plusieurs coups de canon, souvant 2 coup sur coup et quelquezeun a balle pour faire metre les feus autours, desquels on a eu auqueune connoissance, sertene pendant la nuit que se matin a 5h $\frac{1}{2}$ que lon a creus voirs un feu au SE qui na pareu que un momant, nestan pas seur que ce fust de la tour de chassiron, j'ay continué a reste mouille esperant au jour une esclersié pour avoir connoissances dune des 2 illes de ré ou olleron, pour apareiller . . . sepandan

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quelque matelots onst aseure avoir veu
 un momant la tour de chassiron, ausy au
 SE sela joint avecq se que lon a creu
 voirs un feu ausy au SE, sur les 5h $\frac{1}{2}$
 . . . jay jeugé que cestoit suremant
 la tour de chassiron, le pilotte ne
 voulant point prandre sur luy dapareiller
 pour entrer avecq des marques luy
 sembloit il sy insertene, jay assemble
 dans la chambre de conseil les officiers
 . . ., le metre le premier et second
 pilotte, garde de la marine, et les
 officiers mariniers les plus capables
 . . .¹⁷

Ships from La Rochelle who made "le voyage de long
 cours" had also to face dangerous landings at Quebec and
 Louisbourg, especially if weather conditions were not right.
 On the night of October 27, 1721, one such ship unable to
 find the entrance to the harbour of Louisbourg was guided
 by other ships who lit fires to show the way. The captain
 of one of the rescue ships described the operation as
 follows:

Je luy es envoyé ma chaloupe
 avec un officier et le premier pilotte,
 jay fait metre un feu au bout de la
 vergué dartimon et envoyé en le moment
 ordre au bastimants marchans danvoyer
 chaqueun leurs chaloupe aveq chaqueun
 un feu se metre les uns a tribord du
 port et les autre a babord, bordans
 lantrée des 2 bors par se moyen le

¹⁷ PAC, Archives de la Marine, 4 J.J., Liasse 7,
 ptfe. 16, pièce 18, Le Journal du François, 10 décembre,
 1720.

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vaisseau est entré fasilemant gouvernant
les dits feux et mon feu de la vergue
dartimon.¹⁸

Delays in loading or in procuring a crew while ships rested in the bay before the home port of La Rochelle, usually meant that these same ships completed their business in Quebec and Ile Royale very late in the season, so that cold, ice, and snow were added to their inconvenience. A small Rochelais ship at Louisbourg on November 11, 1716, is described in the following passage:

les vents ont continué au NE
avec neige et pluye tres froide. Il
est entré un petit vaisseau quy est
party de Quebec dont le capitaine
s'apelle Mazeau, le vaisseau est
chargé pour la rochelle. Il a trouvé
dehors les vents ESE sy violents et
la mer sy grosse que ses voilles ont
estés emportées il a pensé ce perdre.
Il c'est trouvé a une lieue de terre
et les vents sont venus au NE quy
l'ont amené dans ce port.¹⁹

But the trip back to La Rochelle could not be postponed, and a week later, "le petit vaisseau de la rochelle est party pour France", even though the bay was freezing over and it had to make its way through ice to the open sea.

¹⁸ Ibid., 27 octobre, 1720.

¹⁹ Ibid., Liasse 7, pte. 16, pièce 6, Journal de l'Attalante, 11 novembre, 1716.

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At the very same time, Rochelais sailors serving on the King's ship L'Attalante did duty on a deck covered with two feet of snow, many of them falling ill because of the exposure. The captain was forced to wait for an important passenger, M. de Verville, who had been commissioned to draw up a plan of Louisbourg and who kept the ship waiting while he completed his work. The captain feared for his crew, making the following entry in his journal on November 15, 1716:

les vents sont venus dans la partie du ouest avec neige et glace en sy grande abondance qu'il y en a eu deux pieds sur le pont, et le froid sy grand, que plusieurs de l'equipage en sont tombés evanouys, ce qui m'obligé d'écrire a M^r de Verville de diligenter son ouvrage affin de me mettre en etat de partir, et de ne pas attendre plus longtemps la rigueur de l'yver dans ce pays icy. Il ma mandé en avoir tout au moin pour toute la semaine, ce quy m'inquiette beaucoup par le nombre de mallades de maux de terre et de gros rhumes, causés par le rigueur du temps.²⁰

Even in setting out, the crew did not escape this suffering from the cold. A ship already manned to set out, yet detained in the roadsteads of La Rochelle, drew the following comment from Maurepas in a letter of January 18, 1729.

20 Ibid., 15 novembre, 1716.

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Je suis d'autant plus fâchée du retardement de la flutte la Baleine qu'outre qu'il est prejudiciable aux besoins des colonies, M. de forant qui l'a commandé m'écrit que l'équipage souffre beaucoup du grand froid, il est bien à désirer à tous égards que le temps s'adoucisse.²¹

When smaller ships from La Rochelle took a long time crossing, their supplies of wood, water and food became depleted. For example, Le Duc d'Olonne from La Rochelle was forced into Louisbourg by a crew mutinous because the supply of water was down to not much more than a pint.²² This ship had taken 93 days in crossing and still had the long journey to Quebec ahead of it. Even the larger ships dreaded a scarcity of water. Le Portefaix leaving Ile d'Aix in 1721 took on from 12 to 15 tons of it. In the latter case, the water served as ballast to some extent.

Ships leaving La Rochelle or Rochefort had to be hauled by ropes to get them started or to bring them to port when they were heavily loaded. M. L'Etanduerie, captain of Le Portefaix commented on this in his journal of navigation of 1721:

²¹ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 113, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 18 janvier, 1729.

²² PAC, Archives de la Marine, 4 J.J., Le Journal du François, op. cit., 19 septembre, 1720.

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Nous avons continué a charger presque tout le restant des effets de la colonie apres quoy nous levé l'ancre le mercredy pour aller en rade a Lile daix, Les vents estants contraires, les habitans ont hallé le vaisseau a la cordelle.²³

To all the difficulties just described, must be added the routine work with masts which kept the crew busy day and night. Masts ripped apart with "du bruit comme un coup de mousquet"²⁴; the bars of the helm gave way under²⁵ pressure and had to be chained in place; falling masts²⁶ injured sailors as they came down; heavy chains and guy ropes were constantly in use.

It must not be forgotten that in addition to captains, officers, and crew, each ship leaving from La Rochelle took on many passengers and a motley of other groups who slept in a crowded "Saint Barbara", "une chambre grande comme la Rhétorique de Bordeau" where male and female passengers slept on frame bunks -- everyone crowded "comme des sardines

²³ PAC, Archives de la Marine, 4 J.J. Liasse 7; ptfe. 17, pièce 1, Journal du Portefaix, 25 juin, 1721.

²⁴ Ibid., Journal de l'Attalante, op. cit., 24 novembre, 1716.

²⁵ Ibid., Journal du Portefaix, op. cit., 31 août, 1721.

²⁶ Ibid., Journal de l'Attalante, op. cit., 9 octobre, 1716.

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dans une barrique".²⁷ Vermin and infection were rampant on the Rubis as it travelled from La Rochelle to Quebec in 1734, these having been brought on board by a group of a hundred soldiers recently conscripted in Picardy, as well as by 80 smugglers "qui avoient languì pendant un an dans les prisons". The latter also brought with them a contagious disease which nearly everyone on board caught and which caused the death of twenty men "à la fois". The difficulties of a sea voyage such as this can be more clearly gauged when it is taken into account that this voyage of the Rubis from La Rochelle to Quebec took eighty-one days.

Since the risk for any voyage "de long cours" was great, most La Rochelle merchants and shippers tried to secure their enterprise by some kind of insurance. There did not seem to have been great insurance companies as such in La Rochelle at this time, but rather the insurance of ships on an individual basis was undertaken by the wealthy commercial class of the city, great Protestant amateurs like Alard Belin and Jacques Rasteau, whose trade was chiefly with the southern islands, using their capital to insure shipping ventures going to New France. A record of

²⁷ RAPO, 1926-27, Père Nau au Père Richard, Québec, 20 octobre, 1734, p.267.

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such insurance is preserved in the files of the royal notaries Rivière and Soulard of La Rochelle as follows:

Aujourd'hui dix neuf mars mil sept cens vingt un au requisitoire du Sieur Jean Bruslé marchand et negossiant demeurant en cette ville tant pour luy que pour ses consorts Nous Nofes royaux soubznes nous sommes transportes par devers les personnes des Sieurs Helie dujardin daniel dujardin fils guyon en son nom et pour le Sr Regnault de Beaulieu Marcotte et Odet Jacques Le Clerq avril McIsaac Gabet allard Belin Rasteau et amy Jean Butler Robert Bodkin Vincent bureau Pomier pere et fils pomier le jeune pour le sieur de court de l'le Butler curatrice des Enfans mineurs du sieur Robert Butler, Jacques Whitte, Hoogwers freres et pierre Mazoué tous demeurans en cette ville assureurs aud. Sr Bruslé sur les vins eau de vie toille draperie et generallement sur la cargaison de la corvette Mignonne du port de quatre vingt thonnesaux commandée par louis fourneau pour aller a Quebec et retour en cette ville 28

To this insurance Messieurs Robert Butler, Jacques White and Hoogwers brothers contributed 500 pounds each; Marcotte and Odet, 800 pounds each; and Jacques Rasteau, 1000 pounds.

The interest rates for such insurance varied according to the circumstances. If merchant ships travelled in

28 PAC, Charente-Maritime, La Rochelle, Rivière et Soulard, 9 mars, 1721, p. 10.

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convoy, the risk of being lost or attacked was less, and insurance rates were lowered accordingly. On the other hand, the Pascaud brothers were unable to get anyone to insure La Diesse in 1745, because its destination was "unknown" and it was so late in the season.

. . . . le dit navire couroit grand
risque de perir par les glaces ou
d'estre pris par l'ennemy que ne
pouvant faire des assureurs par raport
au secret de la destination outre
quils auroient grand peine a trouver
des asseureurs dans cette saison pour
le Canada.²⁹

For any shipper undertaking an overseas trading venture, a considerable outlay of capital was required and the procuring of a ship which could withstand the journey across the North Atlantic was of prime consideration. When it was a question of buying a new boat, many shippers preferred to buy in shares so that risks also might be shared. Thus the great "armateurs" of La Rochelle owned shares in many different ships. However, many shippers and merchants were satisfied to buy their ship second-hand. La Marie Joseph, a ship of 130 tons, was sold in La Rochelle by Martin Dassance to Joseph Ovide de Brouillan, for 7000 pounds, the sale being recorded by the royal notary,

²⁹ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1R, Liasse 29, pièce 24, Bigot à Maurepas, 7 décembre, 1745.

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Soulard, on June 25, 1722.³⁰ Sieur Fleury of the Company of Ile St. Jean purchased La Suzanne (150 tons) from Jacques Cherpentreau, its captain, for 15000 pounds, the sale likewise being registered by Soulard of La Rochelle.³¹ Merchants of La Rochelle often found it convenient to buy a small boat in Ile Royale with which to take care of their local business for the time that they were there. For example, the Pascaud brothers bought La petite Sultane (20 tons) for 2000 pounds in December, 1737.³² Jean Dupré of La Rochelle, who traded considerably with Ile Royale, bought a small boat of 30 or 40 tons every year that he needed one (1731, 1733, 1735).³³ The records seem to suggest that his business increased during this time because his payment for the first boat took the form of "150 veltes deau de vie", while in 1735, he paid 2800 pounds for one of 40 tons. Michel Coussard of La Rochelle, who, in 1732, bought a ship of 50 tons for 4400 pounds, arranged that

30 PAC, Minutes Rivière et Soulard, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

31 Ibid., pp. 143-144.

32 PAC, Charente-Maritime, Amirauté de Louisbourg à La Rochelle, B267, pp. 197-198

33 Ibid., B266, pp. 35-37, pp. 154-156; B267, pp. 101-104.

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almost half of this amount would be in the form of goods taken from the storehouse which he maintained in Ile Royale.³⁴

Since the success of their undertaking depended on the completion of their business in Quebec and Ile Royale, and since the voyage itself took up so much time, La Rochelle merchants had to work diligently during the short time that remained to them. Many of them maintained their own warehouses as a kind of headquarters for their business which took some of them as far as Montreal.³⁵ Some of the bigger firms maintained agents in Quebec who spent the winter and spring months preparing return cargo and soliciting orders for supplies in order to expedite business when ships arrived. This "preparedness" was a very important item, because foodstuffs and other supplies were expensive in the colonies and if a ship with a large crew had to delay indefinitely, it would "depense plus en solde et en vivres quil ne gagne en fret".³⁶ Some "armateurs" shipped goods on the King's vessels in addition to what they carried on their own. In such cases, they had to respond to "le coup

34 Ibid., B266, p. 87.

35 PAC, AC, B61:1, Maurepas à Beauharnois et Hocquart, 12 mai, 1734, p. 206.

36 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1R, Liasse 24, pièce 5, Réponse du Conseil de Marine à Mad^e de la Maignière, 1716.

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de canon" which summoned them to claim their cargo. Many seem to have had regular customers who depended on them to bring textiles, and articles of lead and iron every year.³⁷

Since their trading season in the colonies was so short and they had so much business to attend to, La Rochelle merchants objected to being summoned to assist in the loading or unloading of the king's vessels. Yet this type of "corvée" had become a regular practice, and when "la flame d'ordre"³⁸ appeared on the king's ship, the captain of each merchant ship was obliged to despatch his row-boat (chaloupe) and crew members to some work which might last a few days, or, in other cases, a couple of weeks. This work frequently had to do with the loading or unloading of ballast and most of the time, tons of ballast were involved.

The Jason, for example, carried 60 tons of stones as well as two large anchors weighing 6 tons.³⁹ When a ship was poorly constructed and when it "se couchoit trop facilement" as in the case of Le Portefaix,⁴⁰ the amount of ballast rose to about 190 tons, referred to by the captain

³⁷ Ibid., 1E, Vol. 105, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 6 février, 1725.

³⁸ PAC, Archives de la Marine, 4 J.J., Liasse 7, ptfe. 17, pièce 7, Journal du Paon, 22 octobre, 1722.

³⁹ Ibid., ptfe. 19, pièce 6, Journal du Jazon, 1738.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Journal du Portefaix, op. cit., May 12, 1721.

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himself as "une furieuse quantité de lest". To help unload this in small boats not made for the purpose was hard going for the merchant men, and a cause of delay and expense to their enterprise. To make matters worse, this ballast had to be moved not only once, but had to be put into the ship or taken out of it, according to the ship's needs as it transferred supplies from Port Dauphin to Louisbourg, this in addition to the work connected with arrival and departure. For example, the merchant vessels were obliged to lend "chaloupes" and men to the captain of Le Francois in 1720, for two weeks' work at Port Dauphin, loading among other things 22000 shingles as well as lumber and planks, the captain making an entry as follows:

Jay finy danbarquer ce que j'ay
 peu prandre de pierre a chau, et j'ay
 esté moy maisme dans le canot accompagné
 de la chaloupe du vaisseau et autre
 chaloupe faire prendre 22000 milliers
 de bardeau, et des planches et madriers
 qui estoit en le baraschouer de M^r
 beaucour, pour finir mon chargement qui
 a finy aujourdhuy.⁴¹

It goes without saying that this forced labour was very unpopular and that the Chamber of Commerce of La Rochelle complained to the Minister of the Marine. Later

⁴¹ Ibid., Journal du Francois, op. cit.,
 14 octobre, 1720.

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when the convoy system was enforced, officers were instructed to avoid using it; otherwise merchant ships would not be persuaded to join the convoy. Thus S^r de Macnemara, about to set out for Saint Domingue in 1745, received the following instructions:

Mais S.M. desire qu'en tenant la main avec la fermeté nécessaire à ce que les capitaines m^ds se conforment aux dispositions de Reglem^t qu'elle a fait pour ces convoys, il use leur egard de tout la douceur et de tous les menagemens possibles; et Elle lui recommande sur tout d'avoir attention que leurs equipages ne soient pas vexés; qu'on ne les fasse servir à aucune sortes de corvées pour les v^s de S.M. que dans les cas d'une nécessité absolue; et que lorsqu'on sera forcé d'en faire usage, cela se passe de maniere qu'ils n'ayent pas lieu de s'en plaindre.⁴²

The loading or unloading of heavy goods always presented serious problems in the port of La Rochelle since ships could not be loaded close to the quay but instead goods had to be put on to smaller row boats or barges and then transferred to the ocean-going ship anchored in the bay. M. Belamy, Commissioner of the port, was not always able to supply sufficient barges for the loading of ballast, for example, and if the work was not done when the tide was in, a further delay was inevitable. The amount of ballast

⁴² PAC, AC, B82:2, Mémoire du Roy à S^r Macnemara, 9 juin, 1745.

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vis-à-vis the amount of cargo had to be carefully balanced, and even after setting out, some captains found that they had not gauged correctly, that their ship was in danger because it was insufficiently weighted, and therefore, they stopped at the Island of Ré to take on extra ballast of salt.

The loading and unloading of cannon was also very difficult, yet every ship of any size was well equipped with cannon even in time of peace, these being used for a variety of signals and salutes in the absence of other means of communication. For example, M. de Pontmarois, captain of Le François when setting out from the roadsteads of La Rochelle for Ile Royale in July, 1720, fired off a cannon to notify the port that he was going to set sail and to recall his row boat which had gone to La Rochelle for water.

Le vand pendant la nuit estant venu
au NE, a 2h. du matin, j'ay fait
tirer un coup de canon, tant pour
avertir jalois apareiller que pour
apeler ma chaloupe qui estoit aller
faire de leau.⁴³

This same captain, on arriving at Louisbourg on September 17, saluted the fort with cannon fire from 9 to 11 times while to each salute "le dit fort a randeau coup pour coup."⁴⁴

⁴³ PAC, Archives de la Marine, 4 J.J., Journal du François, op. cit., 30 juillet, 1720.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 17 septembre, 1720.

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Merchant vessels from La Rochelle considered cannons a standard piece of equipment and observed the protocol of salutes. This must have necessitated carrying a considerable amount of ammunition. A merchant vessel from La Rochelle in distress at night about a mile from the port of Louisbourg "ayant tiré quelque coups de canon" alerted a ship in the port to send aid.⁴⁵

Sailors from La Rochelle formed part of the crew of Le Paon in 1722 and assisted in the difficult task of unloading cannons and carrying them to high ground on shore at Louisbourg. The ship's captain made several references to the difficulty of the task which he tried to accomplish by having the carpenters fit up a special barge.

Nous avons esté au carennage avec la gabarre et noltre chaloupe et canot avec presque toutte noltre esquipage et les officiers pour le transept du canon et pour lenbarquement et desbarquement nous avons porté 6 piesses deux par voiage.⁴⁶

On the completion of the task, the captain wrote:

Sur les 5h. du matain nous avons esté sur lisle de lantrée avec notre chaloupe et du monde pour faire monter les canons sur la hauteur ce que nous avons fait ce nat pas esté sans penne.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Ibid., 27 octobre, 1720.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Journal du Paon, op. cit., 24 août, 1722.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 26 août, 1722.

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In view of such experiences, it is not surprising that ship-owners and captains of La Rochelle were very conscious of the strain which extra cannon placed on ship and crew as stipulations in the following arrangements show. Simon Lapointe when asked to carry 288 tons of supplies to Quebec as freight for the King reminded Ricouart (successor to Beauharnois at Rochefort):

que nos navires n'estant pas porqéz
ne peuvent porter une si grande
quantité d'artillerie sans courir
risque de perte de navire entierge.⁴⁸

L'abbé L'Aisé would have liked to receive 160^f for every ton of freight he was carrying to Quebec in his ship L'Atlas of La Rochelle. In the end, he agreed to accept only 150 per ton provided that "il n'est pas ques-⁴⁹tion de charger dans mon dit navire aucun canon.

The study of navigation in as much as it concerned the sea-route of the North Atlantic and the St. Lawrence was of special importance to Rochelais mariners and to this study they made significant contributions. M. Dupré, a navigator of La Rochelle, who had narrowly escaped shipwreck on a hidden rock at the approaches to Louisbourg, had checked the exact location and had notified other pilots and sailors.

⁴⁸ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1R, Liasse 29, pièce 16, Simon Lapointe à Ricouart, 13 avril, 1744.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pièce 18, L'abbé L'Aisé à Ricouart, 3 mai, 1744.

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M. de Conteneuil referred to M. Dupré's warning in the account of his return voyage in 1728.

appareillé de Louisbourg, a 8 heures du matin nous étions dehors, et fait route au S.E.¹/₄E. pour passer dans le Sud d'une roche ou bas fond sous l'eau, qui est a E.S.E. de la pointe du S.O. de Scatary distance de 8 à 9 lieues ou environ, suivant que le nommé Dupré de la rochelle nous a dit avoir passé dessus et avoir vû le fond et des morues dessus, sans avoir touché mais ayant eû grand peur a ce quil nous a dit aussi bien que tout son equipage qui en perdit la tramontane.⁵⁰

The following year, M. de Pardaillant captain of the same ship wrote:

à 9 h. jay fait servir Le Cap au S.E. pour passer à une bonne distance dans Le Sud de la roche au haut fond que Le Sieur Dupré a desclaré avoir veu.⁵¹

So exact an account was kept of every one of these rocks that, although the approaches to Louisbourg were considered "affreuses et dangereuses", M. de Caylus, Captain of Le Heros in 1732 could write, "Il n'y a point de roches

⁵⁰ PAC, Archives de la Marine, 4 J.J., Liasse 8, ptfe. 18, pièce 8, Journal de la Dromadaire, 11 novembre, 1728.

⁵¹ Ibid., pièce 13, Journal de la Dromadaire, 21 septembre, 1730.

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dans le Port de Louisbourg qui ne soient connues a tous les marins qui viennent".⁵²

For the ocean voyage, most mariners of La Rochelle used the map of Pieter Gros in favour at that time. But once they had arrived at this side of the ocean, they preferred "les cartes manuscrites" drawn up by local pilots of the St. Lawrence. One of the best of these had been drawn up by M. de la Richardière, captain of the port at Quebec, and the Chaviteau brothers, pilots of the St. Lawrence. It was described as "une carte qui prend depuis le Grand Banc jusqu'a l'Isle royale, cette carte comprend aussi toute la riviere jusqu'a Quebec, et que j'ay trouvé très juste et tres exacte, tant a la mer quaux atterages."⁵³

Since La Rochelle was the headquarters for one "des cinq gros fermes", ships returning to La Rochelle were obliged to allow "les gardes des fermes" to come on board to inspect the cargo, the unloading, and the activity of the small boats which took passengers or goods ashore. Included in the official directions to every ship's captain was an item similar to the following:

⁵² Ibid., Liasse 8, pte. 18, pièce 16, Journal du Heros, 1732.

⁵³ Ibid.

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S.M. veut qu'a son retour de france il recoive dans les Rades de la Rochelle les Gardes des fermes qui se presenteront pour visiter s'il y a des m^{ses} dans le v^{au} sans qu'il soit necessaire un ordre du commandant de la Marine dans le port, que les Gardes ayent la liberte de visiter les chambres des off^{ers} lesquelles seront ouvertes a la p^{re} requisition; que la chaloupe ou canot qui ira a terre p^r porter des passagers ou pour d'autres services soit visité en presence de l'off^{er} qui le commandera pourvu que ce soit de jour et non pendant la nuit, et que les gardes des fermes puissent rester dans le v^{au} tout le tems q^{ils} jugeront a propos et jusqu'au dechargement des effets qu'il aportera. Le S^r de Conteneuil chargera un off^{er} d'estre present a ces visites pour empecher que les Gardes ne soient insultés par des gens de l'equipage.⁵⁴

This regulation suggests a spirit of animosity towards the farm guards. This might be because they represented the Farmers General who, in the minds of the lower classes, used their office to enrich themselves, and were sometimes unworthy of holding such a high position, "ordinairement quelque valet de chambre du contrôleur général, dont le nom, ignoré la veille, devenait célèbre le lendemain".⁵⁵ Then, too, the guards themselves who

⁵⁴ PAC, AC, B75, Mémoire du Roi au S^r de Conteneuil, 20 avril, 1742, p. 288.

⁵⁵ Marcel Marion, Dictionnaire des Institutions de la France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe Siècles, Paris, Picard (ed.), 1923, p. 233.

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actually came on board to see that taxes were collected and that no goods were brought illegally into France through the port of La Rochelle were allowed to bear arms to carry out their duties. They were frequently of a very low calibre and crew and officers alike resented their "official business" at the time of docking into harbour after a long and difficult crossing. "Les gardes des gabelles" might be taken as examples.

Les gardes ou archers des gabelles étaient les plus mal recrutés et les moins considérés des commis de la ferme générale: mal armés, couverts de haillons, payés de 260 à 300 livres par an, avec une part dans les saisies qu'ils faisaient mal leur service, pénible et dangereux.⁵⁶

In assessing the role of the farm guards, however, it must not be forgotten that they carried out their duties in the midst of a widespread practice of fraud.

If, as sometimes happened, a ship sailed straight to Ile d'Aix or Rochefort and unloaded saleable cargo such as sugar, an "écrivain" had to be sent immediately to notify the Farmers General at La Rochelle.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 253.

⁵⁷ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 116, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 20 mai, 1732.

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All shipping out of La Rochelle had to conform to the ordinances. Some of these will be described here in order to show the legal structure within which ship-owners and their crews operated.

The Admiral of France had power and jurisdiction over everything that concerned shipping. No one could equip or man a ship without his authorization. He was to have a tenth part of confiscated goods or ships seized. It was he who named the officers of the different admiralties of the kingdom: interpreters, ship-brokers, instructors of the knowledge of the sea, those who could gauge tonnage and capacity, privateers, captains, surgeons and pilots.⁵⁸

The jurisdiction assigned to the high Admiral of France was exercised by his special lieutenants and by his lieutenant generals. There were in all fifty-two seats of Admiralty, the Admiralty of France being located in Paris. La Rochelle was designated as a seat of the Admiralty in 1631, and in 1711 the number of officials had been increased to include a criminal lieutenant, a superintendent of investigations, an examiner and keeper of the seal, and six officers to serve as councillors.

⁵⁸ Louis-Marie Meschinet de Richemonde, Inventaire Sommaire des Archives antérieures à 1790, La Rochelle, Martin, 1900, pp. I-II.

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A considerable flow of traffic and business came to La Rochelle, therefore, because it was designated as a centre for the Admiralty. This office of the Admiralty issued passports to ship-owners and captains who were fitting out vessels for the colonies; it gave ships permission to travel to other ports if they were engaged in the carrying trade, and at the same time to make exact declarations of cargo, to allow the official visits of officers on their arrival, and to pay the charge required by the tariffs. The admiralty office also handled official requests from ships of other ports of France or from foreign ships wishing to land at La Rochelle because of damage or bad weather.

The ordinances and regulations were not just "dead letters" but affected the merchants of La Rochelle in a variety of ways in their practical business dealings. For example, when La Rochelle merchants purchased smaller ships in Louisbourg, they frequently did so from English ship-owners or captains who had come to Ile Royale from Boston. Yet, to purchase a ship from "un Anglais" was contrary to the Ordinance of 1716. Therefore, in order to be allowed to make the purchase, the buyer had to give suitable reasons. A special branch of the Admiralty of La Rochelle was set up at Louisbourg to handle the records for this kind of purchase, as well as to grant "congés" for various kinds of shipping adventures in the colonies.

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As a further example, the case of Rochelais ship-owner Alard Belin who had lost several sailors on a voyage in 1734 might be cited. According to regulations, wages due to persons who died at sea were to be paid to their heirs and their effects which they had embarked were to be sold and the returns added to their "estate". The sailors of whom it is a question here had left very meagre belongings, such things as old stockings and handkerchiefs, as well as worn out vests and shirts.⁵⁹ Yet these had to be sold, and the process of dispersing the amount realized by this sale was long and complex so that Alard Belin, ship-owner of La Rochelle, was still in the process of discharging his duty two years later, since "les veuves et herittiers" of five of those who died had not yet come forward to claim their inheritance. Among other things, the deceased sailors mentioned above had left small amounts of money which had to be accounted for, and since this was hard money of silver and copper, it was not easily taken care of. Finally, appearing before "Nicollas Regnaud Con.^{er} du Roy au siège de l'amirauté de la Rochelle" he obtained a legal discharge drawn up by royal notaries. He was acquitted of his obligation for each effect individually in such terms as the following:

59 PAC, Charente-Maritime, Amirauté de Guyenne à la Rochelle, B240, pp. 2-4.

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Comme aussy ledit. S^r Belin a remis les neuf petites pieces d'argent monnay d'hollande et les vingt six pieces monnoy de cuivre des Cours d'hollande, dont du tout le dit S^r Belin demeure bien et vallablement deschargé.⁶⁰

There is some evidence that the regulation requiring that chaplains be embarked on all ocean-going vessels with crews of 40 men or more gave the captains and ship-owners of La Rochelle a certain amount of difficulty.

It was often hard to find chaplains; they were reluctant to embark;⁶¹ and frequently entered into altercations with captain and crew.⁶² In spite of these difficulties, however, Vespers were chanted daily and Mass was celebrated, Jesuits, Sulpicians, and other priests travelling to New France as passengers assuming the role of chaplain in case of need. Thus Father Nau's account of his voyage from La Rochelle to Quebec on board the Rubis in 1734 refers not only to the three pious Sulpicians and the priests on board who were busy day and night looking after the sick ("deux cents malades ou convalescents"), but also to a dozen "abbés" brought on board by the Bishop of Quebec who had

60 Ibid., p. 10.

61 PAC, Archives de la Marine, Journal du Paon, op. cit., 26 mai, 1722.

62 Ibid., Journal du Portefaix, op. cit., 16 novembre, 1721.

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recruited them from the streets of Paris,⁶³ the implication being that they had been priestly vagabonds, for the most part ignorant, uneducated, and so quarrelsome that they attacked the ship's officers.

In conclusion, this chapter would like to focus final attention again on the ships which sailed from the roadsteads of La Rochelle. Le Heros, which has been mentioned several times in this chapter, statistically, was pictured as follows:

Length	-	125'
Width	-	35' 4"
Weight	-	700 - 750 tons
Cannon	-	Holes cut for 48
Crew	-	250 men
Supplies	-	For 7½ months
Ballast	-	48 tons ⁶⁴

Sailing straight from Ile d'Aix on June 10, 1737, to Louisbourg in 37 days, it was able to make the return voyage in 29 days. Both trips were unusually swift, the speed of the return voyage showing the influence of the prevailing westerlies. Merchant shipping was an important part of this Atlantic traffic out of La Rochelle, and merchant ships were in demand as the following letter from M. Belamy to the Pascaud brothers shows:

63 RAPQ, Père Nau au Père Richard, op. cit., p. 267.

64 PAC, Archives de la Marine, Journal du Heros, op. cit., 1737.

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Les Srs. Pascaud negs. a La Rochelle qui ont, M. esté chargez de la fourniture de la pluspart des munons necessaires dans les magasins du Roy en Canada, ay. besoin de leur navire La Sultane pour le transport de quelques unes de ces munons, l'intention du Roy est qu'il ne soit point desarmé à son retour de Dunkerque à La Rochelle afin de n'estre pas obligé d'en changer l'equipage et qu'il puisse tout de suite suivre sa destination p. le Canada.⁶⁵

Wholesale dealers, ship-owners and merchants of La Rochelle tried to make the short season count and protested vigorously against anything which affected their interests. For example, they complained to the King that M. Hocquart, Intendant of Quebec, was in the habit of allowing the Superior Council of Quebec to go on leave while the ships from France were in port and since the business which these ships carried on frequently led to legal disputes, and these could not be settled in the absence of the Council, the La Rochelle merchants frequently saw their ships detained at Quebec during the winter.⁶⁶

On another occasion, Sr Jean Butler, a wholesale merchant and trader of La Rochelle, and one of the Directors

⁶⁵ PAC, AC, B79, Maurepas à Belamy, 6 mai, 1744, pp. 240-241.

⁶⁶ Ibid., B60, Maurepas à la Chambre de Commerce de La Rochelle, 28 décembre, 1734, p. 256.

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of the Chamber of Commerce of that city, laid a complaint against S^r Foucher, the King's attorney in Montreal, claiming that the latter had not paid for merchandise which Butler had shipped to him. Maurepas' directive to M^{rs} Beauharnois and Hocquart upheld the merchant of La Rochelle and rebuked S^r Foucher.

Si le S^r foucher n'est pas plus juste dans les affaires qui regardent le public que dans celle cy, il paroist qu'il pouroit ne pas convenir de la maintenir dans son employ, Je vous prie de vous faire rendre bonne et prompte justice au S^r Butler et de m'informer de la conduite du S^r foucher dans les fonctions de procureur du Roy.⁶⁷

In conclusion, it might be said that there was no "slack season" in the port of La Rochelle since preparations for ships going to Canada began in January, and these ships returned during late November, December, and even in January. Ships going to or returning from the southern islands kept the port busy at all seasons of the year. Wholesale shippers from La Rochelle formed an integral part of this activity -- Jacques Rasteau, La Bourguine, and Alard Belin being leaders in the southern island trade, while Lapointe, Bonneau, and the firm of Pascaud directed most of their activity to

⁶⁷ Ibid., 61:1, Maurepas à Beauharnois et Hocquart, 21 mai, 1734, p. 207.

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Canada. La Rochelle as the headquarters of one of the Five Farms of France, with the right of stamping money, with its leading ship-owners and dealers organized by Letters Patent into an active Chambre of Commerce, and with the advantage of being linked geographically and commercially with the naval base at Rochefort, supported between 1715 and 1745 a shipping activity that was varied, steady, progressive, and far-reaching.

CHAPTER THREE

GROUP EMIGRATION: LES ENGAGÉS ET LES FAUXSAUNIER

This chapter will confine itself to group emigration to Canada from the port of La Rochelle, more precisely the emigration of engagés and fauxsauniers.

Before proceeding to a clarification of these terms, it might be explained that one of the reasons for this narrow selection lies in the difficulties of obtaining lists of passengers who paid their fare. Gabriel Debien referred to this difficulty when he said: "Mais il s'y est trouvé peu de listes de 'passagers' payant leur passage, c'est-à-dire partant avec des capitaux, du crédit et des protections."¹ That lists of passengers on board ship were not properly kept can be further proved by Maurepas' rebuke to Beauharnois of Rochefort and La Rochelle at the time of the sinking of Le Chameau.

La perte du Chameau causant beaucoup d'embaras aux milles de passagers qui y étoient embarquez faute d'avoir marqué les noms de la plus grande partie de ces passagers.²

¹ RHAF, G. Debien, Engagés pour le Canada au XVIIe siècle vus de La Rochelle, Vol. VI, No. 2, septembre, 1952, p. 178.

² PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 107, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 11 juin, 1726.

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When it is a question of engagés, on the other hand, contracts were entered into, signed and sealed before notaries, whose records are in many cases still extant. Also, since ships were obliged to embark a certain number of engagés on each voyage to Canada, La Rochelle became a centre of engagé activity since it was there at the seat of the Admiralty that ships' captains made their declarations, passports for the trading expedition being refused if the required number of engagés had not been embarked.

The fauxsauniers, or salt smugglers, likewise formed a special and important type of emigration. The king's vessels regularly carried groups of salt smugglers to Canada and Ile Royale, and the handling of this emigration involved the officials of La Rochelle, especially M. François de Beauharnois, Intendant of Rochefort and La Rochelle; M. Barentin, Intendant of La Rochelle; and M. Belamy, Commissionaire and Intendant of the port.

Les engagés:

A new ruling on the subject of engagés was drawn up in 1716. It reaffirmed earlier and similar ordinances from which captains had gradually dispensed themselves since, during war time, the necessity of large numbers of recruits for the army made it difficult for merchants and shipowners to procure engagés. In addition, the ruling was an attempt to people the French colonies, especially those of New France,

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where the scarcity of workers made every enterprise fail, and where Intendant Bégon was suggesting the importation of negroes.³ Vaudreuil and Bégon refer to this scarcity in the following letter to the Council of the Marine in 1717:

Le peu d'habitans qu'il y a en Canada fait echouer toutes les entreprises par la difficulté d'y trouver des ouvriers et journaliers qui y sont a un prix excessif.⁴

Abbé Lepage writing to Beauharnois in 1730 expresses the same idea:

Ce qui fait, qu'en Canada, on trouve aujourd'huy tant de difficulté pour reussir dans les différentes entreprises qui s'y font, ne vient que de rareté de l'argent, et, des hommes.⁵

By this new ordinance, every captain of a merchant vessel going to the French colonies, with the exception of fishing vessels or those engaged in the slave trade, had to carry engagés: 3 for vessels of 60 tons and under; 4 for ships of between 60 and 100 tons; and 6 for those of over a hundred tons. These engagés had to be at least 18 years of

³ PAC, C11A, Vol. 37, Vaudreuil et Begon au Conseil, 7 janvier, 1717, p. 37.

⁴ Ibid., p. 36.

⁵ Ibid., Vol. 53, Lepage à Beauharnois, 20 octobre, 1730, p. 118.

⁶ PAC, Charente-Maritime, Amirauté de La Rochelle, B223, Règlement au sujet des engagés, 16 novembre, 1716, pp. 7-10.

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age but not over 40; of at least 4 feet in height, and able to work out the 3-year term of their engagement. Officers of the Admiralty in each port were to inspect the engagés before embarkation, rejecting those not of prescribed age or stature as well as those who did not appear to be "de bonne complexion." Presumably, the last phrase might be considered in the light of "la peste" or "la petite vérole" - paramount threats to the lives of passengers and crew as ships' captains were keenly aware. In any case, only healthy looking individuals were to be accepted.

To encourage captains to recruit skilled workmen and not simply the vagabonds of the port, a special heading, No. VI, within the Ordinance provided that anyone with a trade would count for two.

Les engagez qui sauront les metiers de masson, tailleur de pierres, forgeron, serruriers, menuisier, tonnelier, charpentier, calfat et autres métiers qui peuvent estre utiles dans les colonies seront passez pour deux et il sera mention du metier qu'ils sauront dans leurs signalement.⁷

However, it must not be supposed that this ordinance went into effect immediately, for there is some evidence to show that merchants from La Rochelle and other French ports

7 Ibid., p. 9.

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were, on the plea of ignorance, still exempting themselves from the ruling six years later as the following letter to François Beauharnois shows:

M^{rs}. de St. Ovide et de Mesy Gouverneur et Commissaire Ordonnateur a l'Isle Royale, Monsieur, ont informé le Conseil que tous les navires qui ont esté l'année dernière dans cette colonie, il n'y en a eu qu'un seul de Nantes qui y ait porté des engagez les capitaines des autres navires s'estant excusés sur ce q^{u'}ils n'avoient pas eu connoissance du Reglement qui les y oblige n'y de l'ordonnance du 20 May 1721 qui les en dispense en payant 60^l pour chaque engagé q^{u'}ils n'embarqueront point.⁸

Shifting now from the need for the engagé, and the "cadre" of official regulations surrounding him, this chapter must now turn to the engagé himself, and more specifically to the engagé at the port of La Rochelle.

Basically, an engagé was an emigrant without financial resources and without credit who wished to find work in the colonies. In many cases, he hoped to establish himself permanently in the colonies and to own land. Since he could not pay the expenses of his trip across the ocean, he signed a contract and bound himself to a contractor, an engagiste who advanced him the funds for the voyage or in

⁸ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 99, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 9 avril, 1722.

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some way guaranteed his passage.⁹ The engagé in return pledged himself to enter the service of the contractor or the one to whom the contractor transferred, or perhaps more exactly, delivered him.

The records of royal notaries¹⁰ show that nearly all engagés who signed up at La Rochelle for Canada were men. In the lists of these engagements preserved, it would be difficult to find any reference to wives, children, or family, and examples of wives and children being sent out afterwards are quite rare. On the other hand, M. Belamy, Intendant of the port of La Rochelle, was frequently asked to arrange passage for the wives and children of engagés located in Saint-Domingue or the southern islands.¹¹ But with regard to Canada, there is even some evidence to show that ships' captains and recruiting officers were directed to choose unmarried men, especially if the engagés were destined for Ile Royale where there was always danger of supplies sinking below the subsistence level. Thus François Beauharnois was rebuked in 1720 by the Council of the Marine:

9 RHAF, G. Debien, op. cit., p. 178.

10 PAC, Charente-Maritime, Minutes Rivière et Soulard, pp. 67-182; pp. 194-197; pp. 207-209; pp. 214-216; RHAF, Vol. 4, pp. 106-114, Vol. 13, pp. 406-418, pp. 551-557; Vol. 14, pp. 87-108; pp. 246-258; pp. 430-432.

11 PAC, Port de Rochefort, Série 1E, Vol. 109, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 21 janvier, 1727.

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. . . mais le Conseil n'approuve point que vous y destiniés par preference des gens mariés, et que vous fassiés passer leurs femmes et enfans, ce n'est point dans cette colonie qu'il faut envoyer ces sortes de familles qui courroient risque d'y mourir de faim, et il convient mieux d'y envoyer des gens qui n'ayent point de suite.¹²

One of the few examples to the contrary was that of Elizabeth Gatineau, 20 years of age, who lived in the suburbs of La Rochelle. Entering into a direct engagement with Sieur Jacques Richart, Receiver of the Admiral in Canada, she bound herself on May 3, 1722 to the following:

aller servir en qualité de servente domestique audit pays de Canada en toutes choses raisonnables qui lui seront commandées pendant trois années consecutives qui commenceront au moment que la dite Gatineau arrivera audit pays de Canada.¹³

Her board and lodging until the time of departure from La Rochelle, as well as the cost of her ocean-crossing, were to be at the expense of Sieur Richart, who advanced fifty pounds of her wages so that she could provide herself with "des habits, linges, et commodités", necessary to make the trip and to carry out her duties. Richart agreed to pay her 100 pounds a year, payable half-yearly "en argent de

¹² Ibid., Vol. 95, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 10 juillet, 1720.

¹³ PAC, Charente-Maritime, Minutes Rivière et Soulard, op. cit., pp. 117-118.

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France", a much firmer arrangement than the "300 livres de sucre brut" found in many engagements, and even in some of these it was to be paid only at the end of the three years' service. Should Elizabeth Gatineau wish to leave Sieur Richart after her arrival in Canada, she would have to reimburse him for all the expenses he had incurred on her behalf. Like so many other engagés listed in the records of La Rochelle, Elizabeth Gatineau "déclaré ne scavoir signer", when it came time to sign her engagement before the royal notary, Soulard.

It must be pointed out, however, that the series of engagements for Ile Saint-Jean made by Sieur Charles Deschambault Fleury, merchant and ship-owner of La Rochelle, show a certain humanity and an interest in family life, qualities singularly lacking in the engagements for Canada made by ships' captains and their backers. Acting in his capacity as Director of the Company of Ile Saint-Jean, he seems to have been the protector of the engagé and even arranged for marriages between engagés to take place, prior to embarkation, in his own home in La Rochelle. It was in this way that Pierre Poittevin, 18 years of age, a carpenter and a native of Paris, married Françoise Souillet, 24 years of age, and an inhabitant of La Rochelle, Sieur Fleury himself being present on March 3, 1720. A few weeks later, Pierre Poittevin signed an engagement binding himself and his

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spouse to work in Ile Saint-Jean for three years, Sieur Fleury pledging himself to pay 200 pounds a year for the two of them.¹⁴

Other engagements made with Sieur Fleury at La Rochelle contained a marriage clause permitting the engagé to break the engagement should he marry in Ile Saint-Jean. Several are "family engagements", of which the following made in the spring of 1720 might serve as examples:

René Barreau, 36 ans, laboureur, de Laleu, près La Rochelle, avec Marguerite Barreau, sa fille, âgée de 12 ans: 130 livres par an pour tous les deux.¹⁵

Jacques Larousse, 25 ans, maçon et tailleur de pierre, de La Rochelle, avec Jeanne Chesneau, sa femme et leurs enfants, une fille de 7 ans et un garçon de 6: 200 livres par an.¹⁶

Engagements such as these suggest that Sieur Fleury took a long-range view of the Ile Saint-Jean project and that as Director of the Company of Ile Saint-Jean, it was to his advantage to have an eye to the stability and permanence of family settlements. However, he was not averse to taking advantage of the many young people who came to La Rochelle seeking engagements. Nicolas Pepinn, one of those who

¹⁴ RHAF, Gaucher, Delafosse, Debien, Les engagés pour le Canada au XVIII^e siècle, Vol. 13, No. 3, décembre, 1959, p. 408.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 412.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 413.

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engaged himself as a "garçon de service" at 50 pounds a year,
 was only 14 years of age.¹⁷ Sieur Fleury's ship Les Quatre
Frères, anchored in the bay in front of La Rochelle, provided¹⁸
 the locale for the signing of many of these engagements.

The wage most frequently entered in the engagement contracts for Canada drawn up at La Rochelle was that of "300 livres de sucre brut", offered, no doubt, because the warehouses at La Rochelle were filled with surplus sugar. This wage was regarded as a miserable one, yet it was accepted at La Rochelle over many years by engagés of very diverse trades: domestic servant (1716); sail-maker, wool-teaser, maker of flour-bins, tailors, bakers, wig-makers (1718), sail-weavers (1720); gardeners (1722); carpenters for building main walls and foundations ("charpentiers de gros oeuvres"), boiler-makers (chaudronnier) (1723); arquebusiers (1725); stove-setters (poêliers) (1727); carriers and stonemasons (1731);²⁰ river dredgers and lock-makers (1732); tapestry-workers and pastry cooks (1733); blacksmiths and surgeons (1737);²¹ glovers and ploughshare-makers (1738). Since so

17 PAC, Minutes Rivière et Soulard, op. cit., p. 123.

18 Ibid., pp. 120-122.

19 RHAf, Marc Gaucher, Carnet d'un Abertain, Vol. 4, No. 1, juin, 1950, pp. 106-108.

20 Ibid., pp. 105-108.

21 Ibid., Gaucher, Delafosse, Debien, op. cit., Vol. 14, No. 2, septembre, 1960, pp. 246-255.

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many skilled workers accepted such poor remuneration, it must be concluded that they were unemployed, without resources, and in a weak bargaining position at the time of signing their engagement. It seems also, that ships' captains were interested only in fulfilling the ordinances with as little expense as possible, and that they looked on the engagés as a source of speculation from which some profit might be made in the colonies if they were careful to arrange that the initial outlay demanded of the engagiste be a very minimal one.

A number of contracts contain a "covering clause" protecting the ship's captain or engagiste. Such a clause suggests the exploitation of the engage since it precluded the idea of his seeking further (and perhaps more just) remuneration at a later date. When Pierre Bonfils, commander of La Marie Joseph of La Rochelle, engaged Jean Lesterre, a mason, for "300 sucre brut" in 1723, the contract of engagement contained the type of clause mentioned above: "sans recours contre ledit Sieur Bonfils qu'il decharge des a
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present".

When it was a question of recruiting engagés at La Rochelle, the captains of merchant vessels usually took the

22 PAC, Minutes Rivière et Soulard, op. cit., p. 161.

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responsibility, as can be seen in the following contract of May 3, 1718:

A François Gaillard capitaine de
La Providence de La Rochelle, s'engagent
pour le Canada, pour 3 ans, à raison de
300 livres brut (Soulard, notaire à La
Rochelle)

Jacques Lestren ou Lestreu, voillier
demeurant en cette ville, natif de
Vouvan en Poitou, âgé de 18 ans,
qui ne signe. (April 27, 1718)
René Girard tireur de laine, natif
de Coulonges les Royaux en Poitou,
âgé de 41 ans, qui ne signe.
(May 3, 1718).²³

Yet the owner of La Providence, and the one who in all probability paid the notary's fee, was Dame Marguerite Bouat, widow of Antoine Pascaud. Throughout the period under discussion, the Pascaud ships of La Rochelle are listed as carrying engagés to Canada. Whether Mme Pascaud recruited directly as she sometimes did, or whether she used the captains of her employe as intermediaries, the wages paid were usually among the lowest. In the opening year, 1715, M. Dufay, captain of La Providence engaged four young men at 50 pounds a year. No stipulation was made as to how the fifty pounds were to be paid. It could be paid in the paper money of the colony, for example. A contract of engagements with Bernard Veyrès, commander of L'Heureux of Bayonne, made just

²³ RHAF, Marc Gaucher, Vol. 4, No. 1, op. cit., p. 108.

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a month earlier at La Rochelle might be studied in comparison. Of the three young men engaged by Veyrès, one was a wheel-cutter; another, a labourer; and the third, a domestic servant. Yet they were to be paid 50 pounds a year, "argent du pays".²⁴ A further example shows that in May, 1717, Mme Pascaud, in consort with her brother Jean Bouat of Montreal, signed three engagés at one of the lowest wages on record, namely 25 pounds a year.²⁵ Apart from two instances in 1720 where a "pas de salaire" clause is included in the contract, existing sources point to only one example of a wage lower than the 25 pounds just cited: that paid by Mme Pascaud's sons, the Pascaud brothers who, by 1730, operated their own business at La Rochelle. In May of that year, they signed Jean-Louis Minart, 28 years of age, a weaver by trade, and Joseph de la Chapelle, 18 years of age, a gardener, for 20 pounds a year each.²⁶ Small wonder then that Mme Pascaud was referred to by the somewhat derogatory epithet of "marchande d'hommes", while Sieur Fleury, whose wages to engagés were consistently good, was called "le grand recruteur".

24 RHAF, Gaucher, Delafosse, Debien, op. cit., Vol. 13, No. 2, septembre, 1959, pp. 247-261.

25 Ibid., p. 256.

26 Ibid., Vol. 14, No. 2, op. cit., p. 248.

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Certain establishments or institutions made a regular practice of signing up engagés at La Rochelle. The Charron Brothers of the Montreal General Hospital, for example, sent a representative nearly every year for over a decade to obtain not only school teachers but also workers. In a letter to Intendant Beauharnois, Comte de Morville, acting Minister of the Marine, refers to Brother Chrétien, Superior, and five workers brought from La Rochelle in 1722.²⁷ In 1734, reference is made to Brother Gervais, Procurator of the Charron Brothers, at La Rochelle again asking for free passage for four workers.²⁸ Chief engineers leaving for Louisbourg were active not only in recruiting large groups of engagés for work on the fortifications, but they also engaged a few workers at their own expense, such workers to be their own men on the job. In one instance, these engagés were sailors who were to look after the engineer's small boat and row him from place to place as he made selections of wood.²⁹ Some engagés signed for work in the outposts of Fort Frontenac, Detroit, "le pays d'en haut" or in the frontier areas north of Quebec. In the following example, it was the

27 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 101, Morville à Beauharnois, 3 juin, 1723.

28 Ibid., Vol. 120, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 23 mars, 1734.

29 Ibid., Vol. 97, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 9 juillet, 1721.

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Farmers General of La Rochelle who acted as the agent for recruiting a group of workers whose ages ranged from 17 to 38.

M. le Contrôleur general, Monsieur, m'a demandé le passage sur la flutte du Roy l'Elephant destiné pour quebec pour cinq laboureurs et un meusnier que les fermiers generaux destinent pour l'exploitation de la Terre de Malbaye acquisé par le Domaine d'Occident.³⁰

Mme Pascaud and the Pascaud brothers, for whom Montreal was a trading stronghold and who shipped goods as far west as Detroit, no doubt procured engagés for these outposts where they are referred to in documents as a distinct group.³¹ Mme Pascaud's brother, Marie François Bouat, sometimes came in person to La Rochelle to recruit engagés. At other times, he recruited under the name of his sister. Since he himself sometimes undertook trading ventures to the west by freight canoe, and engaged workers in Montreal to accompany him,³² it may reasonably be supposed that his engagé activity in La Rochelle was connected with his trading interests in "le pays d'en haut".

François Bouat was only one of several Canadians or Canadian residents who signed up engagés in La Rochelle.

³⁰ Ibid., Vol. 109, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 29 avril, 1727.

³¹ PAC, C¹¹A, Vol. 64, Hocquart à Maurepas, 14 octobre, 1735, pp. 30-31.

³² PAC, Ibid., Vol. 41, Le Conseil sur le S^r Bouat, 23 mai, 1719, p. 28.

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either personally or through intermediaries. Sieur Deschambault de La Gorgendière, a "farmer" of "la Compagnie d'Occident" at Temiskamingue was, between 1720 and 1725, an important engagiste at La Rochelle, always offering attractive terms and acting through his brother, Sieur Deschambault Fleury.³³ For the most part, the Canadians who looked for men in La Rochelle were prepared to offer good wages. For example, Sieur de La Garenne Latour of Nihaniche, Ile Royale, through Allard Belin, a merchant of La Rochelle, as intermediary, engaged Jean Riffault, a cooper, for one year at 300 pounds of real money of France, and he would be fed "à pain et vin de France".³⁴

The trades of engagés listed in contracts reflect the skills which La Rochelle and the surrounding districts had to offer. While some of these might better be called "non-skills" and are grouped anonymously under the vague term of "garçon de service", others are singled out for exceptional remuneration. The latter is true of two workers, François Trébuchet and Jean Godard engaged to work in the smelters, in all likelihood those of Saint-Maurice. Engaged by a Montreal merchant acting through an intermediary in La

33 RHAF, M. Gaucher, op. cit., Vol. 4, No. 1, p. 113.

34 Ibid., Gaucher, M. Delafosse et G. Debien, Vol. 14, No. 1, op. cit., p. 108.

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Rochelle, these men bound themselves for four years and were to receive 500 pounds a year as well as the fringe benefits of wearing apparel, hunting knife and rifle, and transportation back to La Rochelle at the end of the term of their

³⁵ engagement. Rope-makers were in considerable demand at La Rochelle because they were easily placed in the colonies.

Gilles Hocquart, Intendant of New France, commented in a letter of the Minister of the Marine in October, 1732, that "Les cordiers qui sont venus cette année ont commencé d'employer de ces chanvres", and that "les deux cordiers de la Rochelle me paroissent estre de bons ouvriers et labor-

³⁶ ieux". Cannoneers were scarce and very well paid.

Beauharnois was rebuked by M. Maurepas because he was unable to procure three for Ile Royale which had only one cannoneer at Louisbourg.

Je suis bien fâché que vous n'ayés pû
exécuter l'ordre que je vous avois
donné d'engager trois canoniers pour
l'Isle Royale.³⁷

Although the engagé movement from La Rochelle during this period when considered numerically may appear to be of

³⁵ Ibid., p. 250.

³⁶ PAC, C¹¹A, Vol. 58, Hocquart à Maurepas, 1 octobre 1732, pp. 5-6.

³⁷ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 122, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 24 mai, 1735.

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very small consequence, yet, it becomes significant when considered in the light of the needs of the colonies in Canada where workers were scarce and skills rare. This view is supported by letters such as the following which records a protest against any tampering with the expected number of engagés:

M^{rs}. Beauharnois et Dupuy se sont plaints qu'au moyen des soldats de recrue qui furent embarqués l'année dernière sur les navires marchands de la Rochelle, la colonie avoit esté privée du nombre d'engagés que ces navires auroient porté, et ils ont demandé qu'il ne soit plus envoyé des soldats a la place des engagés dont le pays est dépourveu et dont il a un extreme besoin.³⁸

The importance of the engagé is further shown in a letter from M. D'Auteuil to the Council of the Marine in 1717. After retiring from his position as procurator general of the Superior Council of Quebec, he had spent some time in France. When he was on the point of returning to Canada with a view to engaging in private enterprise, he asked for free passage on one of the King's vessels leaving from La Rochelle for seven workers whom he had engaged. His letter petitioning this favour shows the essential value of the engagé in the following comment: ". . . il est impossible d'y tenter

³⁸ Ibid., Vol. 111, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 6 avril, 1728.

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aucune entreprise sans avoir des hommes engagés en France pour
trois ans".³⁹

Les fauxsauniers:

Before dealing with the salt-smugglers as a type of emigration out of La Rochelle, this section of Chapter III will attempt to set forth the political and economic background which gave rise to salt smuggling, especially in the La Rochelle area.

La Rochelle was at the centre of salt production in France: geographically because of the great salt marshes in the provinces of Aunis and Saintonge, in the region of Brouage and Ile de Ré;⁴⁰ and politically because since 1694,⁴¹ it was the headquarters of a new Generality. The method used to get salt from the marshes in the environs of La Rochelle was basically that of simple evaporation, and although the salt was grey in appearance, other processes eventually succeeded in whitening it. Since salt was a common product, not rare nor inaccessible, and since the method of production was so simple, in the natural order of things, it should have sold cheaply. But as early as 1340 (under

³⁹ RAPQ, 1922-23, Bourbon à D'Auteuil, 27 avril, 1717, p. 79.

⁴⁰ Charles de la Morandière, Histoire de la Pêche Francoise de la Morue Dans l'Amérique Septentrionale, Tome 1, Maisonneuve et Larose, Paris, 1962, p. 59.

⁴¹ La Rochelle, Edition du Syndicat d'Initiative, Texte de Marcel DeLafosse, La Rochelle, Sadag, 1955, p. 9.

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Philippe VI of Valois), it had been made a state monopoly, a monopoly governing both production and sale and known under the name of gabelle. The duty or tax (impôt) placed on salt by this system was very heavy, and the revenue accruing therefrom to the state constituted about one quarter of its income under the Old Régime. ". . . l'impôt du sel, qui a eu pendant toute la durée de l'ancien régime une importance capitale et toujours croissante dans notre histoire fiscale."⁴²

Louis XIV reinforced this closed state system by which the price of salt, from when it left the marshes to the time it was delivered to the consumer, was increased many times over. One of the few exceptions to this heavy duty was granted to fishermen going to Newfoundland "au prix de fabrication sans être frappé d'aucun impôt."⁴³ The system was further codified under Colbert, the kingdom being divided into six divisions "au point de vue des gabelles",⁴⁴ with severe prescriptions for dealing with abuses and fraud.

This system was still in force until 1789 since some of the cahiers on the eve of the Revolution complained of it. Not only was salt highly taxed but, in addition, it was

⁴² M. Marion, Dictionnaire des Institutions de la France aux XVII^e Siècle, Paris, Picard (ed.), 1923, p. 247.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

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mandatory that each adult be responsible for the consumption of a set amount, a distinction being made between salt used directly on food as seasoning and that used for curing food, the latter being more expensive. These laws applied to everyone over eight years of age. Salt granaries under the control of "le fermier des gabelles", stored the salt brought in four times a year by collectors or officers of the farm. The largest division or "farm" included Ile de France, Orléanais, Champagne, Picardie, Normandie, Maine, and Anjou -- twelve provinces in all, which were known as "des pays de grande gabelle".

Not all divisions of France had the same regulations. La Rochelle and surrounding districts of Poitou, Aunis, Saintonge, and Angoumois were known as "les pays rédimés", and were at the same time frontier areas of "les pays de grande gabelle", thus very restricted in the use of salt, in order to prevent the transporting of large quantities which might be stored and later smuggled into "les pays de grande gabelle". Bretagne, where commerce in salt was entirely free, might be given as a final example of diversity.

Given this wide diversity in salt tax, price, and regulations of minimum and maximum consumption, fraudulent sales and smuggling thrived with châteaux, cottages and even convents sheltering salt smugglers. The very clerks of the farms who were supposed to help enforce regulations sometimes

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could be included among les fauxsauniers. There were even whole convoys of smugglers, highly organized. Punishments for smuggling were severe and varied: fines, imprisonment, branding, the galleys, the whip, perpetual banishment, and death in the case of a second offense.⁴⁵

The Marquis de Vaudreuil recognized very early that the number of salt-smugglers, being so considerable, exceeded the needs of the galleys and that it was a waste of man-power to continue to send them there. Instead, he proposed to the Regent as early as 1716 that these smugglers could be effectively placed in the colonies where they could serve as labourers, recruits, and settlers. He wrote at length on this topic to the Duke of Orléans, his letter reading in part as follows:

A lesgard des habitans dont il est indispensable d'augmenter le nombre le Marquis de Vaudreuil à l'honneur de proposer a Votre Altesse Royale un expedient pour en procurer suffisamment sans depeupler le Royaume d'hommes qui y soient utiles, et sans qu'il en coute rien a sa Majesté.

Il y a tous les ans un nombre considerable de fauxsauniers condamnés aux galeres, qui deviennent inutiles a la culture des terres, et qui ne servent point sur point sur les galeres, parce que le Roy n'en arme point ou peu, et que quand sa Majesté en armeroit il y auroit suffisamment de forçats sans ceux la pour former les chiourmes. La depense de ces fauxsauniers est payée par les fermiers generaux.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 250.

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Le Marquis de Vaudreuil demande que Votre Altesse Royale veuille bien accorder à la colonie de Canada cent cinquante de ces fauxsauniers tous les ans depuis l'âge de quinze ans jusqu'à quarante, pour chacun desquels il demande que les fermiers généraux, qui les feront conduire à La Rochelle à leurs dépens, payent cent cinquante livres moyennant quoy ils en seront deschargez pour toujours.⁴⁶

His letter specifically points to La Rochelle as the port of embarkation for these smugglers, and to the role of the Farmers General in providing for their maintenance up until the time when they were embarked. When, at the close of the next decade, it was decided to implement Vaudreuil's suggestion and to actually send salt-smugglers to Canada, La Rochelle became a real terminus for them and they were brought to this port from Paris, Rheims, Vannes, and other parts of the kingdom as the following letters show:

Les fauxsauniers destinés pour le Canada partiront de Paris le 10. de ce mois, et comme ils n'arriveront à la Rochelle que le 20 au plus-tôt, j'espere que M^r L'etandière sera en estat de les recevoir et qu'ils pourront estre embarqués le même jour de leur arrivée, cela est de consequence.⁴⁷

S.M. voulant que le N^e Mathurin le Pen contrebandier soit transferé

⁴⁶ PAC, Correspondance Générale, C¹¹A, Vol. 36, Vaudreuil au Duc d'Orléans, , 1716, pp. 110-112.

⁴⁷ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 116, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 6 mai, 1732.

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aux Colonies. Il est enjoint au Geollier au concierge des prisons de Vannes ou il est actuellement detenu de l'y garder jusqu'à ce que les ordres qui en seront donnés par S.M. il puisse etre conduit au port de l'embarquement.⁴⁸

The officials and inhabitants of the towns and villages en route were obliged to contribute to the upkeep of these prisoners as they passed through. A memoir from the king in April, 1734 makes this point clear:

Il est ordonné à (espace en blanc) de conduire sous bonne et seure garde dans les prisons de la Rochelle les prisonniers destinés a passer en Canada par ordre de S.M. Ordonne a cet Effet S.M. aux Geoliers ou concierges des prisons où led. (---) passera de recevra lesd prisonniers par forme de dépost, enjoint aux Commissaires départis dans les provinces où passeront lesd prisonniers de tenir la main à l'execution du present ordre, et aux maires, consuls, echevins, sindics et habitans des villes, bourgs, villages où ils passeront de faire fournir en payant les vivres necessaires pour la nourriture ded. prisonniers, ensemble les chevaux, charettes, et aud. voitures qu'il conviendra pour les porter, aux prix que S.M. a taxé pour ses troupes a raison de 20s par cheval et sans retour, mande en outre S.M. a tous gouverneurs desd. villes et places, baillifs, senechaux, prevosts ou leur lieutenants et à tous autres

p. 5.

⁴⁸ PAC, AC, B75, Mémoire du Roi, 6 janvier, 1742,

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off^{rs} et justiciers qu'il appartiendra
de donner aud. toute protection et
main forte en cas de besoin pour
l'execution du present ordre.⁴⁹

Similarly, upon arrival at La Rochelle, there was always a question as to how and where they would be lodged and fed. If they arrived in daylight and in good weather, they could be put immediately on the king's vessel anchored ready for departure in the roadsteads of La Rochelle. Once fauxsauniers went on board, they came under the surveillance of the ship's captain and he was censured if any escaped, as the following letter shows:

. . . lorsque les Capitaines
veilleront comme il convient sur la
conduite des personnes qui leur seront
recommandées, je suis persuadé qu'elles
ne pourront point s'evader.⁵⁰

The officials of La Rochelle usually received advance notices in March or April concerning the number of smugglers which might be expected to arrive for embarkation in May or early June. Subsequent letters provided exact dates. When the fauxsauniers arrived in La Rochelle, it was the duty of M. Belamy, Commissionnaire of the Marine in the port, to decide whether they would be put in prison, sent to Ile d'Aix

⁴⁹ PAC, AC, B61:2, Mémoire du Roi, 20 avril 1734, pp. 255-256.

⁵⁰ Ibid., B:75, Maurepas à Teillay, 22 janvier, 1742, p. 14.

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to recuperate after their long trip en route to La Rochelle, or put on board immediately. The following letter to the official charged with conducting the salt-smugglers to La Rochelle shows the importance of M. Belamy's role:

A son arrivée a la Rochelle, il en informera M. Belamy Commre. de la Marine qui luy prescrira si ces prisonniers doivent etre remis dans les prisons ou etre conduits sur le champ dans le Vau du Roy ou ils doivent etre embarquez.⁵¹

M. Belamy felt that an open-air location in Ile d'Aix was more propitious than confinement in the prisons of the city. Maurepas, Secretary of State, and Minister of the Marine, approved of Ile d'Aix as a prisoners' depôt as can be seen from his dispatches where he said "pour leur donner le tems de se rafraichir avant leur embarquement, on pourra les faire passer en arrivant, à l'Ile d'Aix."⁵² He also wrote to M. Deslandes, Commissionnaire of Ile d'Aix, to arrange accommodations for the fauxsauniers:

Et il convient que de votre coté vous donniés les ordres necessaires pour faire placer quelques tentes dans l'endroit de cette Isle ou l'on en avoit mis l'année dre pour les particuliers de cette espece qui

⁵¹ PAC, AC, B60, Ordre du Roi au conducteur des prisonniers, 20 avril, 1734, p. 256.

⁵² Ibid., B75, Maurepas à Barentin, 15 mars, 1742, p. 256.

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furent envoy  en Canada et a l'Isle
Royalle.⁵³

However, the maintenance costs for the fauksauniers before embarkation were always a matter for concern and although the Ile d'Aix locale was suitable, it was also somewhat costly, and the Farmers General who paid for supplies would have liked to see the contrabanders placed in prisons where lack of exercise and fresh air left appetites unwhetted so that the men could subsist on a very meagre diet.

In a despatch to M. Deslandes, Commissionaire of Ile d'Aix and the one responsible for immediate outlays of money upon the arrival of the smugglers, M. Maurepas made a clear statement as to where financial onus lay:

Ce sont les fermiers g n raux qui doivent fournir a la depense de la sub^{ce} des fauksauniers pendant le sejour qu'ils feront a l'Isle d'Aix; Et vous pouv s vous entendre avec M. Belamy pour en faire le remboursement par le directeur des fermes a La Rochelle.⁵⁴

But lengthy delays in getting the ship ready to set sail (see Chapter II), and the great uncertainty in establishing the exact date of embarkation, made the gauging of supplies very difficult for the Farmers General, and this difficulty was increased when the smugglers were lodged in a

53 Ibid., Maurepas   Deslandes, 12 mars, 1742, p. 249.

54 Ibid., Maurepas   Deslandes, 14 mai, 1742, p. 315.

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makeshift depot in Ile d'Aix. Their complaints to Maurepas, therefore, caused him to write to M. Barentin, Intendant of La Rochelle, with a view to looking into the alternative solution suggested by the Farmers General.

Les fers g^x ont trouvé que les depes occasionnées par le séjour a l'Isle d'Aix des dep^s contrebandiers envoyés à l'Isle Royale ont esté considerables, Et ils proposent que ceux qui seront a l'avenir destinés p^r les Colonies soient remis en attendant leur embque^t a la Charité de la Rochelle, ou l'on pretend qu'il seront mieux qu'a l'Isle d'Aix, et sans de si grands frais. Je vous prie de vouloir bien examiner si cette proposition peut avoir lieu, et comment elle pourroit estre ex^é; Et je mande a M. Belamy de vous voir sur cela.⁵⁵

For a time, the suggestion of the Farmers General was implemented, and fauxsauniers were billeted in the Charity Hospital in La Rochelle. But the religious brothers, administrators of the hospital, made such protests to M. Belamy and to M. de Barentin that this method of providing for the fauxsauniers had to be discontinued, and the Ile d'Aix depôt again set up as a temporary base.

Through the port officials just mentioned, M. Maurepas acknowledged the protests of the religious brothers

⁵⁵ Ibid., Maurepas à Barentin, 16 juillet, 1742, p. 375.

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in charge of the hospital.

Puisque vous ne jugés pas qu'on puisse engager les freres de la Charité a continuer de recevoir dans leur hopital les fauxsauniers qui pourront estre destinés pour les Colonies, il faudra necessairement prendre d'autres arrangemens pour mettre ces particuliers a portée de recevoir les secours dont ils auront besoin avant leur embarque^{mt}. Et j'examinerai si la proposition que vous faites de prendre pour cela un terrain a l'Isle d'Aix peut avoir lieu.⁵⁶

J'ay reçu, M., vostre Lettre du 7 de ce mois. M. de Barentin m'a informé des difficultés qu'avoient fait les freres de la charité, de recevoir dans leur hopital, les fauxsauniers qui doivent estre envoyés en Canada. Mais comme il n'en doit point estre transferé cette année à l'Isle Royale, on aura le tems d'examiner les arrangemens qu'il peut y avoir a prendre pour pouvoir placer ces sortes de particuliers en attendant leur embarquement.⁵⁷

In the months of October and November, "la rigueur de la saison", "la saison trop avancée", put the smugglers on Ile d'Aix in a sorry plight. Escapes were frequent, despite the fact that regular guards were supplemented by troops and that official dispatches issued constant warnings.

M. de Mercy Commandant à l'Isle d'Aix n'ayant point M. des troupes pour faire garder les fauxsauniers destinés pour le Canada pendant le séjour qu'ils

⁵⁶ Ibid., B77, Maurepas à Barentin, 21 mai, 1743, p. 208.

⁵⁷ Ibid., Maurepas à Belamy, 21 mai, 1743, p. 206.

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feront dans cette Isle en attendant leur embarquement.⁵⁸

Je vous prie de faire veiller de votre côté a ce qu'il ne s'en puisse evader aucun; et je compte sur votre attention a cet egard.⁵⁹

In fact, keeping the salt-smugglers in custody during the time that they were in the La Rochelle area was a major task for the officials concerned, since many prisoners felt that this was their last chance to make a break for freedom. Escapes from prison were rare enough, but those from the hospital could be simply but effectively contrived as the following letter explains:

Je vois par là derniere que de 5 fauxsauniers qui étoient à l'hopital 4 se sont sauvés pendant la nuit par le moyen des draps de leurs lits dont ils se sont servis p^r descendre par l'une des fenêtrés de la salle ou ils étoient.⁶⁰

Families who would like to be rid of some member of ill repute sometimes requested that he be included in the salt-smuggler-group leaving La Rochelle, and thus dispatched to the colonies. References to final lists submitted makes this clear in letters such as the following:

⁵⁸ Ibid., B75, Maurepas à Conteneuil, 20 avril, 1742, p. 291.

⁵⁹ Ibid., Maurepas à Conteneuil, 12 mars, 1742, p. 25.

⁶⁰ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 124, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 21 juin, 1736.

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M. Belamy m'a envoyé la liste des fauxsauniers qu'il fait embarquer au nombre de 53 y compris deux jeunes gens de famille qui sont envoyés par correction.⁶¹

Great care had to be taken that those who were infirm, aged or ill should not be embarked. Anyone incapable of heavy manual, "hors d'état de gagner sa vie" would not be able to support himself in the colony and, to put it simply, would merely deplete colonial supplies, already scarce, and would "ne subsiste que par le secours qui lui sont delivrés des ⁶²magazins du Roy."

M. Belamy had the responsibility of screening the salt-smugglers when they arrived at La Rochelle and of having them escorted on board ship. In some cases, this screening was not carefully done and colonial officials would protest later that they had on their hands people incapable of performing any useful service. In such cases, the salt-smugglers were returned to La Rochelle where M. Belamy would incarcerate them in the prisons of La Rochelle.

. . . il s'en est trouvé deux agés de plus de 70 ans, et qu'on est obligé de faire repasser cette année en france.⁶³

61 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 120, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 1 juin, 1734.

62 PAC, AC, B77, Maurepas à Fagon, 13 février, 1743, p. 34.

63 Ibid., B75, Maurepas à Belamy, 1 novembre, 1742, p. 415.

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Although the salt-smugglers prior to capture may have been men of some means, family men with considerable resourcefulness and skill, nevertheless, months in prison, and the effects of a long trek across the kingdom, left them worn out and often ill when they arrived for embarkation at La Rochelle. If time did not permit them to spend some days recuperating in the open air at Ile d'Aix, they would go on board in a very weakened condition and were often designated as the source of communicable diseases which raged on board ship during the crossing and claimed members of passengers, officers, and crew as victims.

. . . M. de Letanduere qui a esté obligé de relacher a Louisbourg, la maladie s'etant mise parmi les soldats de nouvelle levée et les fauxsauniers et communiquée ensuite a son equipage, en sorte qu'a son arrivée dans ce port il avoit 300 malades M. de Letanduere atribue la maladie a l'etat dans lequel ont esté embarquez les fauxsauniers et les soldats de recrue.⁶⁴

Father Nau who travelled to Quebec on the Rubis in 1734 described les fauxsauniers as follows:

Ils étoient demi-nuds, couverts d'ulcères, et quelques uns même rongés tous vifs par les vers. Nous nous cottisâmes et fîmes une quête dans le vaisseau, pour leur acheter des chemises des matelots, que en avoient de reste; nos soins ne les

⁶⁴ PAC, C¹¹A, Vol. 57, Beauharnois et Hoquart au Ministre, 15 octobre, 1732, p. 89.

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empêchèrent pas de mettre dans le navire, une espèce de peste dont tout le monde a été attaqué, et qui nous a fait mourir vingt hommes à la fois.⁶⁵

However, since the salt-smugglers were so well received in the colonies, it must be concluded that they were basically strong and capable for the most part. Thus Beauharnois and Hocquart reported favourably to Maurepas in 1731:

Nous vous avons Mgr. amplement écrit dans notre reponse au memoire du Roy sur les fauxsauniers qui ont este envoyez par le Heros. Ils reussissent tres bien en ce pays et nous vous suplions de continuer a nous envoyer 100 l'annee prochaine.⁶⁶

Earlier they had written that "y en eust-il 400, nous n'en serions pas embarasses".

The coadjuteur bishop of Quebec requested six in the following letter:

Si vous continuez, Monsieur, d'entrer dans ce pais-ci des fauconniers qui y sont tres utiles, je vous prie de me permettre d'en choisir six pour mettre sur la domaine que je veux etablir.⁶⁷

The captain of the ship which received the salt-smugglers at La Rochelle in each case received explicit

⁶⁵ RAPQ, 1926-27, Père Nau au Père Richard, octobre, 1834, p. 267.

⁶⁶ PAC, C11A, Vol. 55, Beauharnois et Hocquart à Maurepas, 12 octobre, 1731, p. 37.

⁶⁷ Ibid., Vol. 56, M. le Coadjuteur de Quebec à Maurepas, 14 octobre, 1731, p. 102.

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directions that he was to deliver the prisoners into the hands of the Governor and Intendant of the colony concerned and, in turn, to receive from them a receipt formally signed and sealed. The following might be taken as an example:

Sa Ma^{té} ayant destiné par ses ordres les nommez . . . a estre transférés en Canada pour y demeurer le reste de leurs jours, et l'intention de S.M. étant qu'ils soient embarqués sur le V^{au} le Rubis quelle fait armer a Rochefort pour cette Colonie. Elle mande et ordonne au Sr. de Chaon commandant led Vau de s'en charger et de les remettre a son arrivée avec le present ordre aux srs M^{rs} de Beauharnois Gouverneur et Lieutenant general, et Hocquart Intendant qui luy en donneront la decharge.⁶⁸

After the long voyage from La Rochelle, the fauxsauniers upon their arrival in the colonies were incorporated into the troops or else entered into engagements with various kinds of inhabitants. The following letter from Governor Beauharnois and Intendant Hocquart shows that these smugglers were well received, that they were capable workers, and that they were to form part of the permanent settlement of the colony since their wives and children were to be sent out later.

⁶⁸ PAC, AC, B61:2, Mémoire du Roi au Sr. Chaon, 20 avril, 1734, p. 253.

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Tous ces fauxsauniers (81 personnes) a l'exception de 5 qui ont été incorporés dans les troupes, ont été distribués sur le champ a differens particuliers et communautés ils se sont trouvés tous de fort bon service. M. le Coadjuteur en a fait choisir six sur la totalité, nous vous supplions d'en faire envoyer toutes les années une pareille quantité.⁶⁹

A further letter shows that the salt-smuggler was not always "attached" to an employer, but that he might eventually become independent and establish himself in his own right:

Le nommé Estienne Gochereau qui a esté envoyé il y a quelques années en Canada pour contrebande estant parvenu a faire un petit etablissement dans la colonie, il m'a fait demander passage sur le vaisseau du Roy qui doit y aller cette année pour sa femme et ses enfans.⁷⁰

Finally, it might be pointed out that the total number of salt-smugglers arriving in La Rochelle seems to have been large enough to put considerable strain on the accommodations available (the prison, the hospital, the tower of Saint Nicholas). From the year 1730, when the salt-smugglers are first mentioned as a distinct group of emigrants, the numbers setting out each year are approximately as follows:

69 PAC, AC, B58, Maurepas à Fagon, 27 janvier, 1733, p. 12.

70 Ibid., B82:1, Maurepas à St. Contest, 16 mars, 1745.

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<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u> ⁷¹
1730	26
1731	64
1732	85
1733	92
1734	53
1735	60
1736	61
1737	69
1738	none (a year of poor harvest in Quebec)
1739	98
1740	92
1741	96
1742	71
1743	25
1744	none (war, a year of poor harvest in Quebec)
1745	4

These figures must always be approximations since the number mentioned in official dispatches in March or April usually differs somewhat from that quoted in final listings at the time of embarkation or on arrival in the colonies. However, the above citations have been checked against avail-

⁷¹ These figures have been compiled from a wide range of documents found in the following volumes: PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vols. 98-138; AC, B58; C¹¹A, Vol. 54.

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able references to escapees or other "drop-outs".

In concluding this chapter on emigration from the port of La Rochelle during this period, it must be pointed out that in any consideration of the terms "hired man" (engagé), "recruit", "prisoner", or "salt smuggler" (le fauxsaunier), the line of distinction largely disappears. For example, a letter from Comte de Maurepas to François Beauharnois in 1725 shows that engagés and prisoners were grouped alike.

Il doit estre aussi embarqué sur la flutte le Dromadaire en qualité d'engagés les nommés Nicholas Masson chirurgien, Antoine Sion et Jean Gaillard qui ont esté envoyés a la Rochelle avec 40 prisonniers destinés pour le Canada.⁷²

Workers needed for government undertakings in the colonies were recruited or "levied" and in this sense resembled recruits for the army; yet they were usually bound for three years and received a pre-arranged wage, and in this sense resembled the engagés. But they were kept under guard in La Rochelle prior to embarkation, and in this way were treated like prisoners as the following letter indicates:

Il ne peut point differer comme vous le demandés la levée des ouvriers pour l'Isle Royale par la difficulté qu'il

⁷² PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 105, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 29 mai, 1725.

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y a d'en trouver, s'ils arrivent de trop bonne heure à Rochefort il faudra les envoyer à l'Isle d'oleron afin qu'ils ne puissent s'évader.⁷³

The salt smuggler who arrived in La Rochelle received the same allotment of supplies as did the soldiers of the new levy. Both smugglers and soldiers received into their ranks the "prodigal sons" of the area. Both prisoners and salt smugglers were, on occasion, sent to the colonies by merchant ships of La Rochelle, taking the place of engagés.

J'ai approuvé que vous ayés fait conduire à l'hospital les fauxsauniers malades qui ont été débarqués de ces deux vaisseaux. J'approuveray aussy que, lorsqu'ils seront guéris, vous les fassiés embarquer, comme vous le proposés, en place d'engages, sur des vaisseaux marchands de la Rochelle pour Quebec, puisqu'il n'y a point de vaisseaux pour l'Isle Royale.⁷⁴

When salt-smugglers were sent from La Rochelle to the colonies in 1730, this did not mean the initiation of a new policy, but rather the reinforcement of an old one, since for many years, the king's ships had carried groups of prisoners every year.

This chapter has dealt chiefly with the emigration of indentured servants or hired men, and that of the salt-

73 Ibid., Vol. 96, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 22 janvier, 1721.

74 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 4 juin, 1736.

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smugglers, although other types of recruits, of workers, and prisoners have been introduced by way of comparison. From this study, La Rochelle, the seaport of the province of Aunis, closely connected with the great artery of the Charente River, the headquarters of a new generality, an integral part of naval traffic and naval planning out of the naval base of Rochefort, emerges as a port of embarkation during this period.

CHAPTER FOUR

COMMERCE, MERCHANTS, FRAUD, PRODUCTSCommerce:

In any study of the flow of trade from La Rochelle to the colonies, three things emerge rather clearly and consistently: the role of the merchants, the difficulties involved, and the process by which products were obtained and dispatched. These three considerations are closely connected one with the other.

First, it must be recognized that the merchants of La Rochelle were forced to work within a system which was very closely controlled by the government of France, that is, by the King's officials. These officials were in receipt of correspondence from colonial officials and, therefore, in touch with what supplies were needed. These supplies were to be stored in the King's stores at Rochefort and would be carried to the colonies chiefly in the King's vessels. However, within the narrow and rigid confines of this system, La Rochelle merchants managed to operate effectively. They were aggressive, competitive, and government officials, even M. de Beauharnois, Intendant of Rochefort and La Rochelle, often found it difficult to maintain the upper hand.

The big shippers who traded chiefly with Louisiana and "île de Saint Domingue" were the hardest to handle and

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seemed most frequently to have M. de Beauharnois and even M. de Maurepas at their mercy, or at least to cause them considerable uneasiness, either because the price of transport was too high, the merchant ships were considered to be in poor condition, or the goods which the merchants had contracted to supply were suspected of being of poor quality.

M. le Comte de Maurepas frequently brushed off the demands of the merchants as preposterous. In writing to M. de la Croix (who briefly replaced M. de Beauharnois as Intendant of Rochefort and La Rochelle at this time), M. de Maurepas expressed himself as follows:

A l'égard de l'avance de 10 m.* qui vous a été demandée par le S^r Bourguine chargé de l'armement du Raudot a compte de fret des effets et de la nourriture des soldats qui doivent estre embarqués, elle me parroit inutile.¹

In similar vein, he wrote to M. de Beauharnois in March, 1739.

A l'égard du dedomagement de 1200* que demande le S^r Rasteau, il paroît, comme vous le dites, quil n'est pas en droit d'en demander aucun.²

1 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 126, Maurepas à la Croix, 16 avril, 1737.

2 Ibid., Vol. 129, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 5 mars, 1739.

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He was conscious that the merchants of La Rochelle were shrewd, driving a hard bargain, and he was constantly reminding his representatives at Rochefort and La Rochelle to try to counterbalance the strength of the merchants. A letter written to M. de Beauharnois in September 1737 expresses this view:

Je vous renvoye approuvé les traités que vous avés passé avec les S^rs Bonneau et Belin négocians à la Rochelle pour le passage a St. Domingue des soldats de nouvelle levée qui sont à l'Isle d'Oleron. Et j'ai donné l'ordre pour la remise des 5000^l que vous demandés a compte de la depense de ce passage. J'aurois souhaité cependant que vous eussies pû faire ces traités a de meilleures conditions, car les prix de 100^l pour chaque soldat et de 120^l pour chaque officier soldat sont bien forts.)

Maurepas' letters abound with hints of disapproval and suspicion expressed in such terms as the following:

Les proportions de ces négocians m'ont paru d'autant plus extraordinaires que ce qu'ils demandent excéderoit de pres 100m^l ce qui fut accordé en 1731 et 1732 pour le passage des troupes qui y furent envoyées, et que les vivres ne sont pas plus chers qu'ils étoient alors

3 Ibid., Vol. 127, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 10 septembre, 1737.

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Vous avez bien fait d'expliquer que les traittés n'auroient lieu qu'après que je les aurois approuvés. Je suis bien éloigné de donner une pareille aprobation, et je vous les renvoye afin qu'ils soient annullés.⁴

But invariably the King's vessels were not able to carry all the goods ear-marked for the colonies on any given trip. When this was known in advance, and La Rochelle merchants competed with each other for the contract of carrying the surplus, then M. de Beauharnois was free to choose the best offer. But when, through miscalculation, goods were left over, and the officials had to find transportation at the last moment, with the season wearing on, they were at a disadvantage. Maurepas' letter to Beauharnois in June, 1738 explains this situation:

J'avois lieu de croire que M. de Chavagnac embarqueroit sur le Jazon tous les effets destinés pour l'Isle Royale; et je n'ay pas été peu surprise d'apprendre par votre dernière lettre qu'il en laissera pour près de 90 ton^x. . . . Mais dans l'état ou sont les choses, il ne reste pas d'autre party a prendre que d'envoyer par un vaisseau marchand ce que le Jazon ne peut point emporter. Le prix de 90th que l'on vous demande par tonneau est bien considerable, et je n'est pas douteaux que si l'on eut pû prendre

⁴ Ibid., Vol. 125, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 6 novembre, 1736.

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des mesures a l'avenir pour ce fret
on ne l'eut au a meilleur marché.
Quoy qu'il en soit, il faut que vous
le regliés au plus bas prix que vous
pourrés.⁵

Yet, it could also be a disadvantage to government officials if the agreement with the merchants for supplying and shipping goods was drawn up too early. However, the merchants of La Rochelle were very much on the alert and eager for contracts either to supply the King's stores at Rochefort with goods that would be carried in the King's vessels, or to undertake transportation of goods on order from the Colony. They, therefore, pressed for early contracts at high prices, and were often successful in obtaining these before their counterparts in other ports arrived on the scene. A letter from L.A. de Bourbon in Paris in January 1722 to M. de Beauharnois, shows the government bureaucracy operating with a certain dullness in comparison with the enterprising merchants who were keenly aware of the benefits of clever timing in closing business deals.

Le Conseil vous envoie, Monsieur les
états des vivres et munitions qu'il
est nécessaire d'envoyer cette année
a Quebec et a l'Isle Royale, il
souhaite que vous en fassiez faire les
adjudications au meilleur marché qu'il
sera possible et pour livrer dans tout
le courant du mois de mars prochain,

5 Ibid., Vol. 128, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 2 juin, 1738.

comme les marchands de Rochefort se lient le plus souvent ensemble pour avoir les fournitures a un prix beaucoup au dessus de leur valeur quoiqu'ils soient exactement payés en argent, et qu'il est arrivé les années precedentes que des marchands de Bordeaux ont offert des rabais considerables particulierement sur le plomb que le Conseil n'a pas accepté a cause que les adjudications avoient esté ratifiées, pour ne point tomber cette année dans le même cas il envoie copies de ces etats a M. Bigot de la Mothe a Nantes et a M. Michel a Bordeaux avec ordre de les rendre public a la Bourse, afin que s'il y a des marchands dans ces ports qui se soient dans le dessein de faire ces fournitures ils puissent se presenter avec adjudications et faire leurs offres, et pour qu'ils ayent le temps necessaires l'intention du conseil est que vous n'en fassiez la cloture que le cinq du mois prochain.⁶

This desire to curb the power of the merchants became a matter of government policy and in 1739 when Comte de Maurepas was Secretary of the Marine, efforts were still being made to find ways of breaking the government's dependence on the La Rochelle merchants for goods and ships. M. de Maurepas was determined to share government contracts with merchants from other ports in order to make La Rochelle shippers more reasonable. Thus, in March 1739, he wrote to

⁶ Ibid., Vol. 99, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 3 janvier, 1722.

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M. de Beauharnois as follows:

Et je suis si rebuté de l'avidité des armateurs de la Rochelle qui abusent des conjonctures ou l'on se trouve pour ces sortes de marchez, qu'a l'avenir je prendray des mesures avec des autres ports dans des occasions semblables.⁷

Similarly, when it was a question of the voyage of Le Jazon to Ile Royale in June of 1739, Maurepas advised M. de Beauharnois as follows:

Et s'il se trouve trop d'effets, vous prendrés des mesures pour embarquer le surplus sur un vaisseau marchand. Vous pourrés pour cela écrire a M. Du Teillay d'en chercher un a Nantes, afin de ne pas se trouver a la mercy des armateurs de la Rochelle qui ne manqueroient pas d'abuser, comme ils ont toujours fait.⁸

Fraud:

Fraud was also a constant matter of concern especially to the higher echelons of administration. Sometimes, it was simply a case of vigilance that goods supplied by La Rochelle merchants either to the King's stores at Rochefort or to the King's ships going to the colonies be not defective in quality or quantity. When, for example, a

7 Ibid., Vol. 129, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 20 mars, 1739.

8 Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 11 juin, 1739.

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contract for 3000 quintals of flour had been awarded to "les S^{rs} Bonneau" (frequent shippers to Saint Domingue and Martinique, as well as to Canada), Maurepas advised Beauharnois to have "un renouvellement d'attention sur la qualité de ces farines, cela est de la dernière consequence."⁹

On another occasion, although the Bonneau firm itself was commended, the neglect and fraudulent intent of shippers and keepers of the granaries were revealed when Bonneau of La Rochelle reported that there were at Niort and at Marans 4 to 5000 sacks of bad grain which wallowed in filth in the storehouses in the hope that some contractor would be able to get rid of it to the colonies.¹⁰ Maurepas hoped that a ruling correcting such abuses would soon be issued so that "la bonne foy soit retablie dans le commerce des minots."¹¹

Local officials often tried to trace bad produce to its source as in the case of the merchants Bonneau, when complaints were received about the flour which they had sent to Ile Royale. Upon investigation their mills were found to be in bad condition, rotting kernels of wheat having been

9 Ibid., Vol. 109, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 7 janvier, 1727.

10 Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 18 février, 1727.

11 Ibid.

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allowed to accumulate. Maurepas shows his concern in a letter to Beauharnois relative to this matter:

M. d'hericourt m'a rendu compte de ce qu'il avoit remarqué dans la visite qu'il a fait des grains qui se sont trouvés dans les moulins desd. S^{rs} Bonneau, ce qui me confirme de plus en plus qu'il faut un reglement pour remedier aux abus, j'espere qu'il sera rendu incesamment, je ne doute point que vous n'ayés fait sentir aux S^{rs} vôtre mecontentement sur les derniers envois qu'ils ont fait et les suspicions que vous devés avoir par raport au mauvais bleds qui ont esté trouvés dans leurs moulins, vous ne pouvez trop de severité dans l'examen des farines et vous devés absolument refuser celles qui ne seront pas la premiere qualité parce qu'il vaut encore mieux que le depart des vaisseaux soit retardé que d'envoyer des mauvaises farines aux colonies ainsi je vous prie de n'avoir sur cela aucune complaisance.¹²

However, fraud in tobacco or furs was, in a sense more deliberate, and some of the most important officials of ships, ports, and colonies were engaged in it. For example, 154 pounds of tobacco were unloaded at night from the ship Le Heros but were later seized by the customs officers of the tobacco custom ship at La Rochelle. The two men involved were apprehended by "des lettres de cachet" and their punishment was to serve as an example, "afin de

¹² Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 18 mars, 1727.

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contenir ceux qui a locassion de leurs emplois dans la marine ont plus de facilitez a en commettre de pareilles."¹³

But in some instances, the customs' officials of La Rochelle had to give way before the strength and physical violence of smugglers. Such was the case when Count Vaudreuil and his associates were discovered at Fort Vergerou, near Rochefort with 30 bales of beaver pelts and other mixed peltry which they had unloaded fraudulently from Le Chameau coming from Quebec. Vaudreuil, assisted by about fourteen sailors and as many more soldiers, defended their "cache", threatening the farm clerks with rifles to which bayonets were attached. The officers of the ship as well as the pilot, Chaviteau, prevented the farm clerks from coming on board during the five days that the ship was in the bay. In the face of such opposition, it is not surprising that the customs' officials were unable to confiscate the contraband goods. What is surprising, is that when a full report¹⁴ had been made both by the Director of Farms at La Rochelle, by the Company of the Indies (who had special rights in the fur trade), and by M. de la Houssaye, Controller General of finances, the Council of the Marine decided to absolve

¹³ Ibid., Vol. 102, Dodun à Maurepas, 1 novembre, 1723.

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. 96, Memoire de la Compagnie des Indes à M. de la Houssaye, janvier, 1721.

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Vaudreuil of all blame as the following letter shows:

Il a esté satisfait des eclaircissemens que vous lui avés donné sur les plaintes qui avoient esté faites contre M. le Comte de Vaudreuil, c'est une affaire finie dont il ne doit plus estre question, a l'égard du fret des 693^{de} de castor qu'il a débarqué il ne faut point en exiger puisqu'il l'avoit mis dans sa chambre.¹⁵

There is even a strong suggestion that François Beauharnois himself was implicated in fraudulent practises at Rochefort and La Rochelle. Maurepas was forced to rebuke him for not having reported that certain officials on the king's ships L'Elephant and Le Heros were arrested for fraud in 1723. Maurepas' letter reads, in part, as follows:

Je suis très fâché que l'on ne puisse empêcher ces sortes de fraudes a Rochefort; . . . je n'ay pas lieu d'estre content de les aprendre par d'autres que vous . . . En me laissant ignorer de pareilles aventures qui se passent sous vos yeux vous m'exposez aux reproches que S.A.R. auroit de me faire que la marine favorise les fraudes.¹⁶

Beauharnois was instructed to give the tobacco farm guards full opportunity to carry out their duties when ships returned from the colonies:

. . . ils seront receus a l'avenir a bords des vaisseaux du Roy venant des

¹⁵ Ibid., Bourbon à Beauharnois, 19 février, 1721.

¹⁶ Ibid., Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 102, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 7 novembre, 1723.

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Colonies au moment de leur atterrage aux rades de la Rochelle en tel nombre qu'ils voudront y entrer pour y rester jusqu'a ce que le v^{eu} soit a Rochefort et depuis le débarquement des effets jusqu'a la fin si cela leur convient de maniere qu'ils puissent veiller jour et nuit a tout ce qui sortira du bastiment.¹⁷

Yet in 1740, fraud was still prevalent and Maurepas wrote to Intendant Ricouart (Beauharnois' successor) as follows:

Je suis informé, Monsieur, que malgré les deffenses plusieurs fois renouvelées, il se fait une contrebande presque publique par les vaisseaux du Roy et dans le port de Rochefort . . . l'intention du Roy est de faire punir avec la d^{re} severité même les officiers qui se trouveront avoir donné les mains a quelque sorte de fraude ce soit, ou y avoir autrement participé.¹⁸

A report on a shipment of butter sent to Ile Royale in 1744 advised that the butter was good but "les barils remplis de morceaux de bois et de fer afin d'en augmenter le poids".¹⁹ In 1741, 5 women were detained in the prisons²⁰ of Rochefort for fraud in wine and tobacco.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. 108, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 29 décembre, 1726.

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. 131, Maurepas à Ricouart, 31 mai, 1740.

¹⁹ PAC, AC, B79, Maurepas à Ricouart, 13 janvier, 1744, pp. 142-143.

²⁰ PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 134, Maurepas à Deslandes, 13 septembre, 1741.

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Thus it can be said that the practise of fraud in the La Rochelle area was ingenious and widespread, involving high-ranking officials, large-scale business practises, lesser clerks, and even women.

Products:

The comprehensive term "vivres, munitions, et²¹ marchandises" seems to have been the standard method of referring in a general way to everything that went into ships for the colonies. The munition depot and king's stores at Rochefort were the headquarters for these supplies, government contracts being let by M. de Beauharnois, Intendant of Rochefort and La Rochelle. La Rochelle merchants participated in this activity by supplying goods (under contract) to the King's stores, by engaging in the carrying trade and transporting to the colonies products which could not be carried in the king's ships, and by sending ships under their own auspices on trading ventures to the colonies.

The products sent were chiefly concerned with sub-²²sistence--of the crew, passengers, and troops on the long

21 Ibid., Vol. 96, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 15 janvier, 1721.

22 Ibid., Extrait de la du munitionnaire à Rochefort, 15 mars, 1721.

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sea voyage as well as during their sojourn in the colony. Therefore, flour, biscuit, salt pork, salt beef, vegetables (usually beans and peas) were staples. Some of these goods were sent by land from La Rochelle to Rochefort. Thus the munitionnaire of Rochefort wrote in March, 1721, "Il y à a la Rochelle qu'on voiture actuellement à Rochefort 200 quint d'excellent boeuf sallé."²³ Business was tight, the merchants being unwilling to give up their foodstuffs for anything except hard money, "argent comptant."²⁴ This attitude of the merchants is not surprising, since a government account with "le S. Butler marchand à la Rochelle" for goods delivered to Ile Royale in 1715, was still outstanding in July, 1720.²⁵

Contracts for the types of staple foods just mentioned had to be awarded well in advance. In the case of beef and pork, for example, this meat had to be salted in the king's stores at Rochefort under supervision.²⁶ La Rochelle merchants found this regulation inconvenient and when they succeeded in circumventing it, government officials were

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., Vol. 95, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 10 juillet, 1720.

26 Ibid., Vol. 92, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 31 mai, 1720.

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urged to inspect carefully the meat supplied as the following letter from the Council of the Marine to Beauharnois shows:

Il a approuvé par rapport aux inconveniens que vous marqués quil y auroit a present de faire des salaisons que de concert avec M. le Marquis de la Gallissonnière, vous ayés permis à l'adjudicataire des 255 quintaux de lard pour l'Isle Royale de les acheter a la Rochelle en observant de les faire examiner avec precaution avant de les recevoir.²⁷

When, however, local officials, without authorization, permitted the seasoning to be done in La Rochelle rather than under supervision in the King's stores at Rochefort, they could expect to be called on to render an account to the Council of the Marine if the meat was not up to standard. M. de Beauharnois, for example, received the following letter from the Council in July, 1918:

Le Conseil a été informé qu'on a porté de la Rochelle a bord de cette flute 120 barils de lard que le S^r de Gand n'a pas voulu recevoir etant entierement gastez, le Conseil est surpris que vous ne luy en ayés rien mandé, il auroit cependant été bien aisé de scavoir de vous ce qui a été fait sur cela, pourquoi cette fourniture se faisait directement de la Rochelle puisque cetoit le munitionnaire qui était chargé de la faire a Rochefort et si ces 120 barils de lard

²⁷ Ibid., Bourbon à Beauharnois, 3 mai, 1719.

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ont été remplacés par d'autres des dernières salaisons et de bonne qualité c'est ce que vous aurez soin d'expliquer s'il vous plait.²⁸

Salt beef was so scarce in France, that merchants were allowed to procure it in Ireland. In fact, for a time, Ireland was the only source of supply and Maurepas speaks of "l'impossibilité d'en fournir que de celui d'Irlande."²⁹ La Rochelle merchants usually supplied about half of the total quantity of salt beef and pork sent to the colony. Thus, of the 720 quintals sent to Quebec and Port Royal in 1720, La Rochelle merchants provided 320.³⁰

When it was a question of supplying flour to the colonies, whether to Louisiana, Saint Domingue, Martinique, Ile Royale, or Quebec, the Bonneau brothers of La Rochelle were the big contractors. They frequently contracted to supply 3000 quintals³¹ of flour (about 300 tons) and in 1730, the amount of flour which their contract stipulated they were to provide and transport to the colonies was 7435 quintals and 50 pounds.³² In bargaining for contracts such

28 Ibid., Vol. 91, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 27 juillet, 1718.

29 Ibid., Vol. 109, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 4 mars, 1727.

30 Ibid., Vol. 92, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 8 mai, 1720.

31 Ibid., Vol. 113, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 15 mars, 1729.

32 Ibid., Vol. 115, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 10 novembre, 1730.

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as this, the Bonneau firm quoted a price of 18 pounds per quintal.³³ Bourguine,³⁴ another merchant of La Rochelle operated on almost as large a scale as the Bonneau firm. When the king's vessels failed, these merchant vessels brought supplies to the colonies, especially to Ile Royale, in times of emergency.³⁵ Also, since the sea voyage was so uncertain, it was considered wise policy to split the cargo, so that in the event of shipwreck, the colonies would not be destitute. The flour was shipped in sacks or barrels and, in either case, frequently went bad because of being loaded in the rain or else stored in damp warehouses or ships.³⁶

Supplies of biscuit were likewise basic, and 610 quintals were considered adequate for two vessels making a seven months' trip to Quebec and Ile Royale respectively.³⁷

33 Ibid., Vol. 94, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 28 février, 1720.

34 Ibid., Vol. 128, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 14 mars, 1738.

35 Ibid., Vol. 109, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 19 mai, 1727.

36 Ibid., Vol. 119, Maurepas à la Croix, 8 décembre, 1733.

37 Ibid., Vol. 96, Extrait de la lettre du munitionnaire, op. cit., 15 mars, 1721.

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The task of making the biscuits began months in advance in special ovens at Rochefort which were closed when the work was completed.³⁸ The biscuits were stored on board ship in bunkers which were sealed off when filled. Even with the greatest precautions, corruption or even worms were all too frequent,³⁹ and officials, looking for the source of the trouble, felt that there was "quelque vice dans la farine ou dans la façon."⁴⁰

The merchants of La Rochelle do not seem to have been interested to any great extent in securing contracts to supply vegetables to the colonies, possibly because only a rather meagre supply was sent. When vegetables were requested by Ile Royale, they were frequently sent direct from St. Malo.⁴¹ Clothes for the troops were sent from Paris to La Rochelle for shipment to the colonies.⁴²

However, gunpowder, another essential, a quantity of which was sent on nearly every vessel, was usually provided

38 Ibid., Vol. 127, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 6 avril, 1728.

39 Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 10 septembre, 1737.

40 Ibid.

41 PAC, AC, B79, Maurepas à Ricouart, 22 janvier, 1744, p. 146.

42 PAC, Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 93, Bourbon à Beauharnois, 25 juin, 1719.

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by the merchants of La Rochelle. For example, early in 1715, when the king's ships were not in condition to make the trip to Canada, a ship of Bonfils of La Rochelle carried all supplies to Canada. These included 35 thousand pounds of fine gunpowder.⁴³ This same quantity was still being sent in 1726, and again, it was being carried in the ships of La Rochelle merchants, as the following letter shows:

Je vous renvoye approuvés les deux
traittés que vous avez fait avec la
veuve Pascaud et le Sr. Bourguine
pour le fret de 35 m^{rs} de poudre
que vous devez faire charger sur les
navires pour quebec.⁴⁴

The Indians showed a preference for French gunpowder, the only product from France which they found superior to what the English from Orange had to offer. Officials in the colony therefore, placed great importance on having a good supply on hand. In 1716, Vaudreuil wrote as follows about this item:

La poudre est la seule de nos
marchandises que les sauvages
preferent a celle des Anglois, et
l'engager fort a venir commercer
avec nous, . . . ils consomment
vingt a vingt cinq milliers de
poudre tous les ans, le surplus
servira a faire un fonds crainte

⁴³ Ibid., Vol. 86, Pontchartrain à Beauharnois, 10 juillet, 1715.

⁴⁴ Ibid., Vol. 107, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 30 avril, 1726.

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d'en manquer et affin de ne s'en pas
trouver denue si venions avoir la
guerre avec les Anglois.⁴⁵

Since La Rochelle was a centre for sugar coming from Saint Domingue, the merchants often contracted to supply molasses to ships going to Quebec and Ile Royale. This commodity, although popular as the base of refreshing drinks for the crew during the crossing, was nevertheless difficult to store and transport, and sometimes the ship's captain refused to accept it as cargo when the merchants had not packed it with sufficient care. The following letter may be cited as an example of such a refusal, and also throws some light on the difficulties of shipping molasses during this period:

Le S^r de Pontmarois qui commande le
françois a escrit au Conseil qu'il
ne pouvait pas embarquer la melasse
destinée pour l'isle Royale en
l'état ou alle étoit, sans s'exposer
a en perdre une partie, parce que le
fournisseur au lieu de la mettre en
quarts comme il y est obligé par
l'adjudicatiôn, l'a livrée en barriques
la plupart très mauvaises et qui
couloient actuellement.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ PAC, C¹¹A, Vol. 36, Vaudreuil à Bontchartrain,
14 octobre, 1716, p. 119.

⁴⁶ PAC, Port de Rochefort, Série E, Vol. 94, Bourbon
à Beauharnois, 25 juin, 1720.

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Wood and masts were carried to the colonies in the ships of La Rochelle and had to be painfully loaded through a cargo door in the rear.⁴⁷ Canvas for wrapping⁴⁸ such produce as beaver skins, slate for roofing houses in Quebec⁴⁹ as a means of reducing fire hazards, and scarlet woollen fabrics for trading with the Indians, were important items of La Rochelle commerce. With regard to the last item, merchants were granted special passports⁵⁰ to procure woollen goods from England, since the Indians found these preferable to those coming from France. Madame Pascaud dealt in this traffic; in fact, there were times when the colonies depended almost solely on her for British woollens.⁵¹ Nails were frequently listed in colonial requisitions and were important enough to be a source of fraud to those merchants⁵² who supplied the King's stores at Rochefort.

47 Ibid., Vol. 88 Bourbon à Beauharnois, 12 avril, 1717.

48 Ibid., Bourbon à Beauharnois, 13 juin, 1717.

49 Ibid., Maurepas à Beauharnois, 15 février, 1735.

50 Ibid., Vol. 97, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 28 décembre, 1721.

51 PAC, AC, B45, Bourbon à Houssaye, 4 janvier, 1722, pp. 166-167.

52 PAC..., Port de Rochefort, 1E, Vol. 128, Maurepas à Beauharnois, 3 mars, 1738.

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Ships returning to La Rochelle from Canada and Ile Royale regularly carried shingles, planks, and lumber. Masts were also loaded when the ship was equipped with a cargo door capable of receiving them. When this was not the case, the lumber had to be sawed into shorter pieces and was, therefore, much less useful for ship-building or repair. Fish oil, rope, hemp, and pitch or tar were standard features of return cargo.⁵³

However, the one product which, more than any other, activated merchants and ships from La Rochelle, was that of beaver. It was the only article from Canada which was in real demand not only in France but throughout Europe as well, and it was basically the one thing which attached the Indians to the French and enabled them to push profitably farther to the west and north. La Rochelle was a depot for this trade: her warehouses received the beaver mass arriving from New France; and from here much of it was dispatched by wagon to the great hat-making firm of Paris ("les chapeliers de Paris").

In 1715, the beaver trade was controlled by the firm of Néret and Gayot who used Pascaud and Leclerc of La

⁵³ PAC, C¹¹A, Vol. 37, Vaudreuil et Bégon à Bourbon, 19 janvier, 1717, pp. 22-27.

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Rochelle as "king-pins" in the exploitation of this commerce.⁵⁴ These La Rochelle merchants used their own ships for transporting beaver pelts to La Rochelle, and to Spain, Holland, and other countries of Europe. However, they eventually came into conflict with Quebec merchants who felt that Pascaud and Leclerc were taking an unfair advantage of their position by trading directly with the Indians and selling merchandise in the interior of the colony. In 1716, Gorgendière, Guillemin, and others of their associates signed a letter of protest against Pascaud and Leclerc, claiming that their activities were, in effect, illegal, and were killing local commerce.

Or cette preference accordée au Srs Pascaud et Leclerc est tout a fait injuste et entierement ruineuze pour tous les negotians et habittans de Canada quy nont point pour correspondant les Sieurs Pascaud et Leclerc car estant maistres des ventes et du produit des castors et ayant la liberte de prendre tout le produit des castors ventes soit en remizes ou argent comptant en remettant au Sieur Custol caissier pareilles sommes en lettres de changes en lui payant seulement demy pour cent des compte par mois ils arrogent la faculte de faire seuls le commerce de ce pays aussy voit on qu'en la presente année 1716 il nest venu des marchandizes

⁵⁴ Ibid., Vol. 36, Contract entre Néret, Gayot, et Pascaud, Leclerc, 10 avril, 1716, pp. 393-396.

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qu'aux commis desd. Sieurs Pascaud et Leclerc ayant este impossible a tous les autres commercians den avoir parce que lon n'a pu trouver a escompter leurs lettres de change.

. . . ils y ont envoyés des cargaisons de toutes especes de marchandises qu'ils y font vendre sous des noms empruntés et ont des magasins jusques a Michilimakinac en sorte qu'ils font la traite et le commerce des castors pour les retours des marchandises qu'ils envoient font tirer sur eux mesmes des lettres de changes qui sont toujours les premieres escomptées au moyen de quoy ils augmentent leur commerce et empeschent tous ceux qui ne sont point lié avec eux ou leurs commis.⁵⁵

La Rochelle remained the headquarters of the beaver trade under the Company of the Indies which was set up by Letters Patent after the bankruptcy of Néret and Gayot in 1716.⁵⁶ However, the merchants kept trying to avoid paying the duty, and fraud was rampant in this trade, no matter what changes were made in its official administration. Antoine Pascaud, for example, was accused of being implicated in the contraband activities of Governor Vaudreuil. In a complaint against Vaudreuil's traffic with "toutes les nations d'en haut", the merchants of Montreal indicted

⁵⁵ Ibid., Delagorgendière, Guillemin et autres à Pontchartrain, 15 octobre, 1716, pp. 326-332.

⁵⁶ Ibid., les négociants de Québec à Bégon, 9 octobre, 1716, pp. 293-309.

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Pascaud by saying: "C'est lui qui fournit a Montreal toutes les marchandises pour les commerces de Monsieur de Vaudreuil."⁵⁷ At another time, M^{me} Pascaud's brother, Francois Bouat, a provost officer of Montreal, with the connivance of Governor Vaudreuil, transported illicit goods by canoe to Detroit in 1719 and traded with the "coureurs de bois", an offense for which he was later censored after having spent one month in prison.⁵⁸

Thus, it can be said that La Rochelle merchants operated on both the large and small scale in the matter of colonial trade. They formed an essential part of the commercial service by which France sustained the colonies of Quebec and Ile Royale. Not the least of this service was the lending of capital to Quebec "entrepreneurs". This capital enabled some to lease "farms" (like Temiscamingue) in the outposts, and others to outfit trading expeditions to the upper country where the voyages of Pierre Gauthier de la Vérendrye had opened up contacts with new Indian tribes such as the Crees and the Assiniboines. La Rochelle merchants and bankers usually lent this capital at the

⁵⁷ RAPQ, 1922-23, Mémoire de Pontchartrain sur les commerce de Vaudreuil avec les sauvages et les anglais, 1715, p. 53.

⁵⁸ PAC, C¹¹A, Vol. 41, Le Conseil sur le S^r Bouat, 11 mars, 1720, p. 87.

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interest rate of 8 per cent per annum and made use of their Chamber of Commerce to uphold claims when these were challenged. A letter from the merchants to the Chamber of Commerce in 1734 throws some light on the relationship between La Rochelle creditors (Bourguine, Simon Lapointe, Mme Pascaud, Jean Butler, the Pascaud brothers) and their debtors in Quebec and Montreal. This letter reads in part as follows:

Les negociants de la Rochelle soussignés qui font le commerce du Canada, vous exposent Messieurs qu'il est nottoire que les marchands habitans de cette colonie doivent l'agrandissement de leur negoce en partie au crédit qu'ils ont trouvé depuis son établissement chez les negociants de France, et particulièrement chez eux de la Rochelle qui leurs ont toujours fait, et font encore de grosses avances, et dont quelqu'un y ont formez des engagements soussignature privée pour des envoys de marchandises de compte a moitié.

Il est aussy nottoire que les marchands tant de Québec que de Montreal persuadez qu'ils ne pouvoient étendre leur commerce que par le credit qu'ils pouroient avoir en France étoient convenus depuis un tems immemorial de payer huit pour cent par an pour la demeure des avances qu'on leur feroit de sorte que cette convention avoit passé en un usage qu'on peut dire aussi ancien que l'établissement de la colonie.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ PAC, Archives Nationales, Fond des Colonies, F²B, Carton 1, Les négociants aux Directeurs et Syndics de la Chambre du Commerce de la Rochelle, 25 décembre, 1734.

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Even officials from the colony obtained money from La Rochelle. M. de Ramezay, Governor of Montreal, for example, had borrowed from nine to ten thousand pounds from Mme Pascaud -- a sum which she was trying to collect between 1718 and 1720.⁶⁰ In fact, the collecting of debts was always a matter of serious concern to the merchants of La Rochelle, and debtors in the colonies often delayed, hoping that they could evade payment since ships had to leave when the winter season set in. At the request of the Chamber of Commerce of La Rochelle, Maurepas directed Beauharnois and Hocquart to provide bailiffs and other types of protection and assistance so that the merchants or their agents could regulate their accounts before leaving.⁶¹

In general, however, business connections with the colonies were profitable for the merchants of La Rochelle. This can be seen from the consternation with which they viewed the re-opening of the war which by 1744 seriously affected colonial trade. They speak of "ces fonds immense que la paix avait accumul  et qui composent toute la fortune des negocians du Royaume". They refer to the complexity of their commercial activities when they request Maurepas to

60 PAC, C¹¹A, Vol. 41, Bourbon   Dupuy, 11 mars, 1720, p. 28.

61 PAC, Archives Nationales, Fonds des Colonies, F²B, Carton 1, Les directeurs et syndics de la Chambre du Commerce de la Rochelle   Maurepas, 15 janvier, 1735, p. 42.

make diplomatic arrangements with England to have the papers and documents of seized ships preserved and returned.

Une des pertes les plus sensible pour le commerce dans la prise de nos vaisseaux, c'est celle des lettres et des papiers qui nous viennent de l'Amerique.

Les progrès de nos établissemens et de nôtre negoce dans les colonies étoient portés a un tel point que nous recevons par tous les navires, des lettres, des comptes de nos corespondans, des connoissemens et factures, des reconnoissances de nos debiteurs, des etats deregie des habitations etc. La prise de nos navires jette dans toute cette corespondance une si étrange confusion qu'il n'est plus possible de sçavoir ou l'on en est avec qui que ce soit de l'Amerique, ni même de reclamer contre les assureurs la perte des effets qui passent entre les mains des ennemis.⁶²

The difficulties of 1744 and 1745 only serve to highlight the importance of La Rochelle trade with the colonies during this period. The merchants worked closely with royal officials and the latter came to rely on them as adjuncts for transporting goods to the colonies. They not only transported goods, but they were actively engaged in obtaining them, and sometimes they were the only source of supply. Sensitive to the details which contributed to the ebb and flow of prosperity, they used the Chamber of Commerce to request, to protest, and sometimes (in the style of a modern public

⁶² Ibid., Carton 7, Les négociants aux directeurs de la Chambre du Commerce de La Rochelle, 17 août, 1744, pp. 15-18.

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relations' office) to congratulate.⁶³ Their hardiness and ingenuity allowed private enterprise to survive, expand, and prosper in the midst of royal monopolies, centralization, and paternalism.

⁶³ Ibid., Carton 1, Les directeurs et syndics de la Chambre du Commerce de La Rochelle à Maurepas, 15 janvier, 1735, p. 41.

CONCLUSION

The time between the years 1715 and 1745 provided the last lengthy period of peace for the colonies under the French régime. Although Louis XV was reigning monarch for the entire span, for most of it (until 1743), he did not rule. So far as diplomacy was concerned, therefore, the dominant statesman during these years was Cardinal Fleury who, if not an out-and-out pacifist, was, at least, reluctant to go to war. His period of influence coincided with that of Robert Walpole of England, a man of rather similar views. This interim has made it possible to see the activity of the colonial port of La Rochelle under "normal" conditions, as well as to evaluate the great disruption of commerce even during the opening years of the war.

Jean-Frédéric Phéliepeaux, Comte de Maurepas, as Secretary of State for the Marine, presided over official correspondence with the ports of France, the navy, and the colonies during this period. In a time of written communication, often sent in duplicate or triplicate, his role raises interesting questions as to the physical pressures of his work. The Beauharnois family of La Rochelle are seen to have figured actively in the administration of Rochefort and La Rochelle, as well as in that of the colonies.

CONCLUSION

François Beauharnois, to whom much of the correspondence cited in this thesis is addressed, was, during almost the entire period (until 1740) the intendant of justice, police, and finances in the generality of La Rochelle, and he also had jurisdiction over adjacent islands. His brother, Charles Beauharnois, was Governor of New France from 1726 to 1746.

Although La Rochelle was a small city, it played a key-role vis-à-vis the French colonies in Canada. This role, at once complex and demanding, called for courage, physical sturdiness, and business acumen. From the distance of over two centuries, it is with some amazement and admiration that the people of La Rochelle are observed in the process of making tight business deals, taking out insurance, providing capital loans, and bargaining successfully with officials of high rank. Their attention to shipping equipment, to maps and routes extended their commerce and influence to distant colonies in Canada and the southern islands. In all of this activity, the human element has stood out clearly: the navigators who took their positions from the last sight of the lighthouses of La Rochelle; the engagés who signed up for Canada in the hope of a better life; the salt smugglers and other prisoners who survived the harsh

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penal code of the period and lived to find freedom and even prosperity in Quebec and Ile Royale; the commercial firms of La Rochelle - - Butler, Bonneau, Lapointe, and Pascaud - - who improved on individual effort by founding the Chamber of Commerce. Finally, in the study of La Rochelle, Madame Pascaud has emerged as an outstanding figure throughout the entire period: although her business sense may have appeared at times as somewhat too sharp, this does not detract from her ability to finance, manage, and defend extensive commercial ventures.

In conclusion, it must be acknowledged that La Rochelle finds its place in this era, not only in a flat, general kind of way, but with the particular qualities of an active commercial port in touch with colonies which greatly depended on her. As a distributing centre, her commerce followed the great voyages of discovery of La Vérendrye and the opening up of new trade connections with the Indian tribes of the West. The study of La Rochelle has revealed the practical problems, the ambitions, the human needs of the era.

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The Port of La Rochelle, 1715-1745
by Helen Margaret Nolan

Abstract

In this study, the Port of La Rochelle emerges as a centre of human activity, shipping, and commerce. The point is not so much to establish the relative greatness (or relative insignificance) of La Rochelle, but rather to show that it hummed with real people, people with names, who hustled about their business, driving hard bargains, taking out insurance, and year in and year out setting out on the great voyage "de long cours".

Their approach to life was, in many ways, sophisticated whether we consider the urbanity of the letters which came from the pen of Maurepas, or the complexity of commercial transactions which required outlays of huge sums, joint ownership, and long-range planning.

For all their spirited enterprise, however, the old port "stood" in decadence for the entire period, and the best solution they had to a shipping crisis during storms at sea was to "couper les mâts". Lack of technology makes their efforts to set things (harbour, ships, flour) right seem painful and even heroic. They had not yet conquered disease, and small-pox and the plague aroused real fears. Goods were damaged easily - - by water, by worms, by wooden storage bins and barrels which saw constant use of a variety

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of products. Yet La Rochelle merchants were very conscious of money values, of profit and loss, and in the pursuit of commercial benefits, there arose an élite group of "armateurs" who had controlling interests in a diversity of capitalistic ventures. Jacques Rasteau, Robert Butler, the Pascaud's, were among the great names of La Rochelle, and in their business exchanges, religious interests were to some extent, obliterated. However these differences formed part of the prevailing stream of consciousness and played an important part in "official" decisions.

Smugglers, recruits, sailors, and vagabonds were regular features of La Rochelle, and towers, hospitals, and prisons seem to have had a circulating clientele. The Intendant of La Rochelle was often at some pains to arrange "housing", food, and clothing for recruits and smugglers who arrived from distant points of the kingdom. The galleys, the chained gangs of prisoners exemplify the severity and harshness meted out to offenders during this era.

Women were part of the commercial activity of La Rochelle. They owned ships, loaned money, sued and were sued. Madame Pascaud emerges as one of the most powerful of these and her house in La Rochelle is frequently mentioned in the records of the port. Madame Vaudreuil stayed here (on rather lengthy sojourns) on her return from Quebec. Brother Turc, Superior of the General Hospital of

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Montreal did likewise.

La Rochelle merchants engaged in an active trade with Quebec and Ile Royale, so much so, that Quebec merchants complained that they were engaging illicitly in retail trade in the interior of the colonies. While this was true, to some extent, it was also true that the colonies frequently depended on La Rochelle for essential products.

The era was one of relative peace, with Cardinal Fleury and Robert Walpole leading statesmen in France and England respectively. Both men were to some extent pacifists. However, the war of the Austrian Succession brought France and England into conflict by 1744, and threw the commercial interests of La Rochelle into disarray.