

## French Estate System – 1<sup>st</sup> Estate

The first estate totaled about 130,000 people in France, equaling about half of 1% of a total French population. The total population of France at the time was 26 million. Even though their numbers were small, the 1<sup>st</sup> estate owned a combined 10 percent of all land and wealth in France.

All members of the 1<sup>st</sup> estate were part of the clergy (Clergy – Leaders including priests, bishops, and other leaders of the church, in this case the Catholic Church). These members were not required to pay tax or *Taille* in French, according to laws set forth by King Louis XVI. In fact, these leaders of the church were allowed to charge additional taxes from the French people for church fees, leading to a massive amount of wealth

Number of votes given to the 1<sup>st</sup> Estate (.5% of the population): 1

Typical Requests of the 1<sup>st</sup> estate at the meeting of the Estates General (Voting System of France in which each of the three estates has a single vote)

1. That only the Catholic religion be publicly exercised in France.
2. To request proper and effective means of giving young people in town and country an education that will be solid and useful to religion and to the state.
3. People deserve freedom of speech, as long as it does not speak out against the Church or the King, the estate system, or laws of the French government
4. The debt of the church as it stands should be paid by the royal treasuries of France
5. All French Citizens deserve the right to be free
6. The voting system should remain as it is, with each estate getting a single vote, instead of giving votes based on population of each estate

## French Estate System – Second Estate

The second estate included about 350,000 people in France, only about 1.5% of the total French population of 26 million. With very small numbers, the second estate controlled an impressive 25% of all land and wealth in France.

The second estate was made mostly of nobility (nobility – a member of the highest classes of society, typically having extreme wealth that has been passed down from parents or grandparents). These nobles would often make up the head government positions, including leaders of the military, judges, and high church offices that were not considered clergy. These members were not required to pay tax or *Taille* in French, according to laws set forth by King Louis XVI.

Number of votes given to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Estate (1.5% of the population): 1

Typical Requests of the 2<sup>nd</sup> estate at the meeting of the Estates General (Voting System of France in which each of the three estates has a single vote)

1. The voting system should remain as it is, with each estate getting a single vote, instead of giving votes based on population of each estate
2. France should remain a monarchy, with a King in control, with his sons (not daughters) coming into power after him, keeping the ruling bloodline of France in control.
3. No laws should be passed or changed without the approval of the king and the voting of the estates general
4. French citizens should have freedom to write whatever they want, as long as their name is attached. If anything is written that speaks against the King, the government or laws, the Church, or France, they must answer and pay the penalties for these actions.
5. In an effort to assist in the funding of the government of France, we agree to contribute to tax payments. However these taxes should not consider our inheritance from our ancestors, our owning of property, or any wealth that is associated with our noble status in society, or jobs that are absolutely necessary to the operation of France.
6. Taxes on salt should be reduced or even removed.

## French Estates System – 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate included about 98% of the population, totaling up to about 25.4 million of the total population of 26 million of France. Although they made up almost the entire population, this group as a whole controlled only 65% of the land and wealth of France. This estate was divided up into two groups: The Bourgeoisie (the middle class) and the peasants.

The peasants made up 80% of the total population of France, therefore making up the majority of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate. They owned about 30% of the land and wealth in France, making them by far the poorest members of French society. Most peasants owned no land, and still worked in a system similar to serfdom, in which they would farm land for wealthier nobles in exchange for very little pay. The rest of the peasants were most likely skilled craftsmen, shop owners, and other forms of physical labor.

The other part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate, the Bourgeoisie, or middle class, were slightly better off. This group was better off than the peasants, and typically owned small plots of their own land. Their typical jobs included Doctors, Lawyers, merchants, bankers, architects, writers, artists, and other professional jobs that require some education.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> estate was the only group of French society responsible for paying taxes, despite being the poorest members of French society.

Number of votes given to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Estate (98 % of the population): 1

### **Typical Requests of the 3<sup>rd</sup> estate at the meeting of the Estates General (Voting System of France in which each of the three estates has a single vote)**

1. The only religion that should be worshipped in public should be Catholic Christianity. However, those who choose to practice other religions should be allowed to do so, should be given civil rights, and should be considered for all jobs and roles in French society and government, including police, teachers, and judges.
2. To make a more fair system that allows for the voice of the people to be heard, the voting system of the estates should be done by number of people in each estate, giving more votes for more members.
3. All members of society should be responsible to help pay for the burdens and costs of living in France. Taxes should be paid by members of all estates.
4. Tolls on crossing bridges and lanes should be gotten rid of, as they are unfair and harmful to society
5. Charities should be built in each city and village that help feed and clothe the poorest members of society
6. No citizen may be made prisoner nor deprived of his liberty for any reason whatever without having been first taken before his natural judge
7. Judge, military, and government positions should be open to any member of any estate, and should be voted on. These positions should not be reserved for the members of nobility.
8. The end of the estates system
9. Reduction on taxes on corn and other food items, as they are too expensive for many, causing the starvation of many members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> estate.