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Period 5

Causes of the French Revolution

There were many factors leading to the French Revolution. Most third estates men couldn't afford bread. Nobles were lazy and unwilling to do anything. The country had enormous debt. The main causes of the French Revolution were tensions between the second and third estates, and the economy.

One could argue that bread, of all things, was a factor leading to the French Revolution. In Document Six Jean Marie-Roland states that it is bread which causes the riot. An interesting observation from one fortunate enough to afford it considering he is a government inspector. M. Reveillon gives the setting in Document Seventeen of the struggles of the average Frenchmen. Again, it is odd that one of his title, "Wealthy wallpaper factory owner" is worried about this. If anything he just wanted to keep wages low so the credibility is questionable. Necker in Document Eighteen, states that if the harvest is as was projected riots and acts of violence are unavoidable. He is Louis XVI's "Financial Minister so I dare say he would not lie to him therefore securing the documents credibility. An anonymous priest in Document Nineteen recounts to Paris of the life of a commoner, stating that "The millions of poor in France spend between one-third and one-half of their income on bread. He is a commoner just as those he speaks of are. He is right there with him securing credibility.

France's Nobles hardly deserved the title. They are vain, proud, and lazy as documented by Tobais Smollett in Document One. He also describes them as unwilling to work and only caring of social status. He has no bias on the topic because he is English and not tied up in the tensions of the estates. In Document Four Dóc de Arlés states that, "Taxes mark inferior status." and that, "To be tax exempt is a noble privilege." He is obviously biased being that he himself is a Noblemen and doesn't want his image ruined and his comfort zone breached. Document Nine paints the image of growing tensions between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. There is no bias being that it is written by a Dutchmen. This depicts a perfect scenario of a cause of the Revolution. Growing tensions must always meet a breaking points.

The countries own financial instability was a cause to the revolution. Document three clearly states that "the next gunshot" will bankrupt France. It also informs that all persons will be taxed. Document Ten details all the specifics of the costs that France has; however, it also eludes to taxing everyone, even the nobility which put them up in arms. This was written by the financial minister who was making a recovery plan for France and had no reason to lie. Document Fourteen gives us insight into where Frances income is distributed to. Nearly half of it is used for paying off the debt and a portion goes Versailles. This would outrage any commoner to know that a large portion of their taxes goes to a palace. Again there is little room for dishonesty being that it was a finance statement for Louis from his financial minister. In Document Sixteen Brienne recommended two unpleasant solution to their current financial status to Louis. Either declare bankruptcy which is not an option, or get the approval of the estates-generals for taxes. These caused the Revolution because one is a bomb waiting to devastate France and the other is a shot in the dark waiting to cause the public to explode, in short the people won't go for it. It is credible because Louis' financial minister is advising him solutions to keep his job.

When all is said and done it was the nobility and peasant tensions, and the economy which sparked the war. Bread, unlikely as it is, made the third estate act to be able to provide for their families basic needs. The nobles did not want to do anything but flaunt and defend their tax exempt status sparking conflict. The countries own problem of currency made it all possible, straining everyone and pushing them to their breaking points.