

France After the Calling for an Estates-General

- Poor harvests and a dire financial situation gripped the country**
- Upwards of 25% of Paris was unemployed (in a city of 600,000), grain prices were high and tension was rising**
- The underground press and the pamphleteers were working overtime to express views about the pending meeting of the Estates-General**

Abbe Sieyes

Biographical Overview

- Full name was Emmanuel Joseph Sieyes
- Lived from 1748 to 1836
- Born in the South of France, educated in theology and studied the thinkers of the Enlightenment
- Was an ordained Catholic priest
- Wrote “What is the 3rd Estate?” a document akin to “Common Sense” for the American war of Independence
- Served in the Estates-General representing the 3rd Estate for Paris
- Helped Napoleon in his overthrow of the Directory in 1799



The Meeting of the Estates General

- **By the summer of 1789 the Estates General was meeting in Versailles**
- **Each estate met separately and efforts by 3rd Estate members to meet together and to alter voting rules were thwarted (each estate had one vote)**
- **On June 17th, 1789 the Tennis Court Oath occurred - 3rd Estate declares itself the "National Assembly" and pledges to meet until a constitution is adopted**
- **King's initially allows it - but then moves to crack down on the new National Assembly**

David's "*Tennis Court Oath*"
1791



Sieyes "What is the 3rd Estate?"

1. According to Sieyes, "what is necessary that a nation should subsist and prosper"?
2. Discuss his examination of the second question ("Who puts them forth") about the efforts of the 3rd estate to sustain society.
3. Describe and discuss how Sieyes views the nobility?
4. Discuss Sieyes views on what constitutes a nation. How does this compare to what you know about absolute France prior to the Revolution?
5. Explain how do you think this essay was received by the king, the nobility (2nd estate) and the 3rd estate. Include specifics from the text to support your analysis.