

POLITICAL ISSUES

- **Louis XVI (16th)** continued to rule France in the same manner as his grandfather Louis XIV (Sun King) – through “**Absolutism**”.
- **Absolutism:**
 - A political system in which a ruler holds total power.
 - The Divine Rights of Kings to rule means that:
 - Rulers received their power from God and were responsible to no one except God.
 - Rulers had the ability to make laws, raise taxes, administer justice, control officials and determine foreign policy.
- This was no longer an effective way to rule France because it had grown too large for a single ruler.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

1789 – the French Government was bankrupt. Why?

1. Poor system for collecting taxes

- Tax collectors took more than they were supposed to and kept some for themselves.
- The people who actually had money (1st and 2nd Estate) were not taxed.

2. Bad Harvests

- Lead to unemployment, food shortages, and inflation (higher prices)

3. Extravagant Spending

- Fought 7 years war with Britain and helped the US in the American Revolution. (Navy and Army)
- Queen Marie Antoinette was HIGH MAINTENANCE (Madame Deficit)

ESTATES GENERAL

- The King called the Estates General (gathering of representatives from all three estates) to meet at Versailles on May 5th, 1789.
- He invited the 3rd Estate to bring a list of complaints (known as the cahiers de doleances)
- He wanted 1st and 2nd Estate to pay taxes
- 1st and 2nd Estate would obviously vote NO, so the 3rd Estate wanted the voting process to be changed before voting on anything.
- 1st and 2nd Estate would not agree.

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

- June 17, 1789: Third Estate declared that it was the **National Assembly** and would draft a constitution that would eliminate Absolutism and create class equality.
- 3 days later, the National Assembly was locked out of their meeting hall.
- They moved to nearby indoor tennis court and swore they would continue meeting until they had a new constitution. (**Tennis Court Oath**)