

THAT'S NOT FAIR!

Things were very different when our rights and freedoms weren't guaranteed.

Imagine you were treated unfairly because of your skin colour, religion, gender or disability. Before the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, governments could decide — and change — who had what rights. People who tried to fight back against injustice rarely won. Here are just a few examples.

In 1975, Ontario's Racing Commission fired jockey (professional horse rider) John Damien because he was gay. Two years later, the Canadian Armed Forces fired Barbara Thornborrow for being a lesbian.



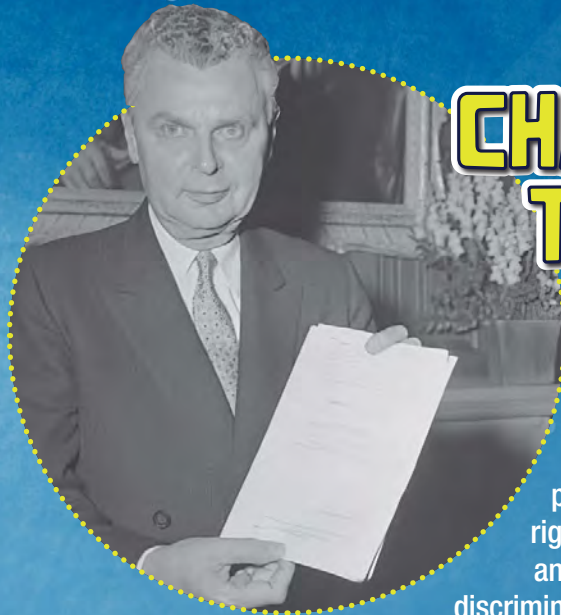
Many women who worked outside the home, as teachers or flight attendants, say, or for the government had to quit their jobs when they got married. The marriage bar, as it was known, lasted until the 1970s in some places.

From the 1930s to the 1970s people in mental health institutions in Alberta and B.C. could be forced by law to have an operation that would leave them unable to have children.

The Supreme Court of Canada ruled against Fred Christie, a Black man in 1940. It said that a Montreal bar didn't have to serve him.

People (known as pacifists) who refused to fight in wars because it was against their religion weren't allowed to vote in federal elections for much of the first half of the twentieth century.

By the late 1970s, people in power started to think about a way to protect rights for all Canadians — something that would give them a way to stand up for justice.



CHANGING TIMES ...

Laws started changing in the 1930s. In 1944, Ontario passed the *Racial Discrimination Act*. Three years later, Saskatchewan passed the country's first bill of rights, which protected freedoms and outlawed certain kinds of discrimination. When John Diefenbaker — who was from Saskatchewan — became prime minister, he pushed for the Canadian Bill of Rights. (That's him in the photo). It became law in 1960.

...DIDN'T CHANGE ENOUGH

Even though it was a big step, the Canadian Bill of Rights was treated like a guideline instead of a law that ensured fairness for all. In 1970, Jeannette Corbiere Lavell, an Anishinaabe woman from Ontario, married a non-Indigenous man. The *Indian Act* said that meant she lost her status as an Indigenous person and couldn't pass it on to any children. She fought back. But in 1973, the Supreme Court of Canada said the Bill of Rights didn't guarantee the rights the *Indian Act* had taken from her.



Jeannette Lavell with her son in 1971