

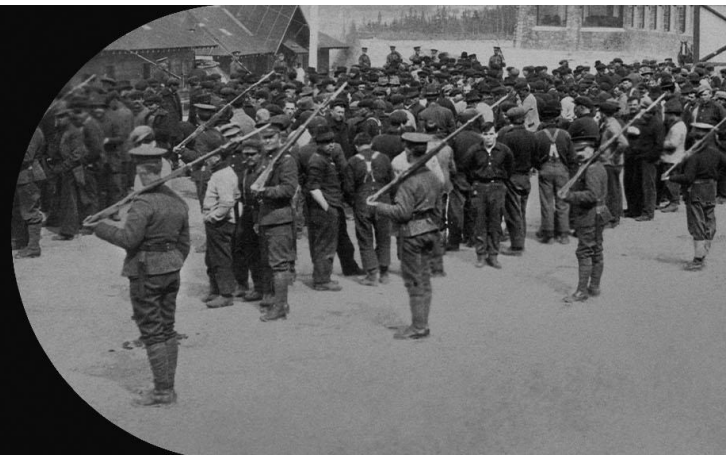


CANADIAN MUSEUM  
OF HISTORY  
-  
MUSÉE CANADIEN  
DE L'HISTOIRE

THE WAR MEASURES ACT

# LOST LIBERTIES

Compliments of Glenbow Archives, NC-54-4336.



## Exhibition Zones

This exhibition explores three crises in Canada. For each of these — the First World War, the Second World War, and the 1970 October Crisis — the federal government invoked the *War Measures Act*. The Act restricted the civil liberties of thousands of people and has marked difficult chapters in our history.

### Civil Liberties

In Western countries, civil liberties date back to the *Magna Carta* of 1215. These liberties include freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, the presumption of innocence, and the right to a fair, balanced and timely trial.

Crises present governments with a dilemma: how can freedom be preserved while also ensuring national security?

### The First World War: Liberty Shattered

From 1914 to 1918, Canada was engaged in the bloodiest conflict in its history. When war broke out, many Canadians asked themselves how this unprecedented crisis should be addressed.

This zone focuses on the consequences of the hastily drawn-up *War Measures Act*, unanimously adopted in August 1914. The Act particularly affected Canadians from countries at war with the British Empire, who were labelled “enemy aliens”. Canadian authorities arrested around 8,500 of them, two-thirds of whom were of Ukrainian origin, and detained them without cause or due process between 1914 and 1920.

## **The Second World War: Liberty Controlled**

On September 10, 1939, Canada entered the war against Germany. The Canadian government was better prepared than it had been in 1914, and this time, it invoked the *War Measures Act* before declaring war. Once again, residents originating from countries at war with Canada were particularly affected.

This zone examines notably the internment of Italian Canadians and the forced relocation and internment of more than 21,000 Japanese Canadians during the Second World War.

## **The 1970 October Crisis: Liberty Repressed**

Beginning on Friday, October 16, 1970, following the imposition of the *War Measures Act*, police launched a series of arrests. More than 500 people were imprisoned — some for several hours, others for several months. Very few were tried, and only a handful were found guilty. The police also carried out more than 30,000 raids.

Everyone lived through the same political crisis, but each experience was deeply personal. The exhibition presents a selection of men and women who lived through these events.

## **Epilogue (1970–2021): A Long Road**

The state of civil liberties in Canada has continued to evolve since 1970. Communities and individuals affected by the *War Measures Act* have helped effect change. These freedoms remain fragile, however, despite solemn pronouncements and new laws marking concrete advances.