

## THE JUDICIARY REFORMS

### The Ilbert Bill Controversy (1883-1884)

Before 1883, judicial disqualification was based on racial distinction. Indian judges were not allowed to try European, and especially English, criminals. Ripon appointed Law Member Sir C. P. Ilbert to draft a bill on the principle of equality of humans of all classes and colour distinction before the law. As per the Ilbert Bill, Indian judges were granted the same powers and status as any 'of their European counterparts. The Bill landed in a controversy when the British residing in India severely criticized the Bill and agitated against the viceroy. The controversy dwelled into a very big issue when it received a severe response from the British press and was also criticized in the British Parliament. Resistance to the adoption of the Bill increased as Ripon appointed an Indian judge. Justice Mitra, as acting Supreme Court Judge when the regular judges was on leave. In 1884. Ripon had to make suitable amendments in which he gave special privileges to European criminals, who were to be tried only in special courts that had a majority of European judges.

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