

Parliamentary Politics Runs In The Family: The Squires

In 1930, Sir Richard Squires was halfway through his second, non-consecutive term as Prime Minister of Newfoundland when his wife, Lady Helena Squires, was elected as the Member of the House of Assembly for the district of Lewisporte.



Not only was this the first time a woman was ever voted into the House of Assembly of Newfoundland, it was also the first instance of the spouse of any sitting Prime Minister in the British Empire being elected to the legislature and sitting beside their partner.

During Sir Richard's first term as PM (1919-1923), both he and Lady Helena, proved to be obstacles to the Woman's Suffrage League. It wasn't until Squires was ousted from office that his predecessor, Sir Frederick Alderice, introduced and passed legislation that granted women the right to vote in 1925. It is quite ironic that the first woman to be sworn in as a MHA was Squires' wife.

Lady Squires was rather quiet during her short time in the House and only a few instances of her speaking have been recorded in Hansard. Her husband's time in politics, however, proved far more contentious. A combination of the Great Depression, allegations of corruption, and a subsequent riot in April 1932 forced the Prime Minister to dissolve his government. In the ensuing 1932 General Election, both Sir and Lady Squires lost their seats. Neither returned to active politics after being defeated.

Sir Richard died in St. John's on March 26, 1940. Lady Helena passed away in Toronto on March 21, 1959.

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