

Irene Parlby

“If politics mean...the effort to secure through legislative action better conditions of life for the people, greater opportunities for our children and other people’s children...then it most assuredly is a woman’s job as much as it is a man’s job.”

— Irene Parlby

1868, London, England – 1965, Red Deer, AB

An aristocratic English woman who became a Western Canadian farmer’s wife, Irene Parlby (born Mary Irene Marryat) was a firm advocate for rural farm women of Alberta. She organized and became the first President of the United Farm Women’s Association in 1916.

Elegant, charming and quietly determined, Irene was a reluctant politician. Nevertheless, she was elected to the Alberta Legislature in 1921 as a member of the governing United Farmers of Alberta party. She became the first female cabinet minister in Alberta (and the second in the entire British Empire). Irene used her influence to champion for the rights and welfare of women and their families.



In 1930, she was asked by Prime Minister R.B. Bennett to stand as one of three Canadian delegates to the League of Nations meeting in Geneva.