

# Sam Jacobs, M.P. (1871-1938)

By  
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THE scene is the House of Commons. The estimates of the Department of Trade and Commerce are under consideration. Sir George Foster, the elderly Minister, is being bombarded with questions of all kinds. Hansard reports the following:

Mr. Power (Quebec): "Who is the Trade Commissioner to the Fiji Islands?"

Sir George Foster (Minister of Trade and Commerce): "We have not appointed anybody there."

Mr. Power: "Yes, we have a commissioner of some kind in the Fiji Islands."

Sir George Foster: "The hon. gentleman will have to accept my statement that we have not appointed a trade commissioner."

Mr. Jacobs: "He may have been eaten by the natives."

The uproarious laughter which followed necessarily terminated the argument. But it was only one of many occasions: Sam Jacobs enlivened the proceedings of the House for twenty years. Elected first in the famous War-time general election of 1917 as member for the new George Etienne Cartier division of Montreal, he was re-elected thereafter by overwhelming majorities without regard to the political fortunes of parties and leaders. Death alone removed him from the scene a few months ago. His passing creates a real void in the public life of Canada.

Sam Jacobs was not long in Parliament before he had "the ear" of the House. The scintillating but kindly wit which marked his public utterances and his private conversation often revived interest in a dull debate or calmed a heated argument. He spoke rarely but when he did, the attendance in the House invariably increased.

He frequently pointed to the peculiar consequences of the immigration regulations of Canada and the United States. The following remarks are typical:

"I suppose a good many members of the Progressive party are unaware of the fact that they could not enter the United States except under the quota law. My good friend from Red Deer (Mr. Speakman), the member for Peace River (Mr. Kennedy), the member for Bow River (Mr. Garland), and

the members for other creeks and rivers—I cannot remember them all—would not be permitted, not one of them, to enter the United States except under the quota law, and in some cases they would have to wait ten years, and in other cases fifteen, before they could get in. So what can these poor people do? They have to run for Parliament and be elected to this House . . ."

And again on immigration laws:

"Michael Angelo, although he built St. Peter's at Rome, could not enter this country, because we do not want architects or carpenters from Latin countries. If he came from Iceland and could build an icehouse, we could use him . . . We heard it stated in the last election: Canada wants a Mussolini. But my friend the Minister of Immigration stands like an angel with a flaming sword at the gate and would not permit him to enter."

In 1918 Sir George Foster introduced a Daylight Saving Bill and attributed its origin to Germany. Sam Jacobs denied this, saying:

"Mr. Speaker, I support this Bill. My only object in rising this afternoon is to correct a slight inaccuracy of the Hon. Minister of Trade and Commerce. In his remarks this afternoon, he stated that this measure, or a measure similar to this, originated in Germany a few years ago. He evidently overlooked the fact—because I know that he is a great Biblical scholar . . . that my great ancestor, Joshua, three thousand years ago, commanded the sun to stand still."

In the course of a discussion on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, Mr. W. S. Fielding, who was a Baptist, suggested that some of the stock was held by London Jewish bankers. Mr. Jacobs replied:

"While it is true, Mr. Speaker, that the Grand Trunk Railway stock was watered to the point of saturation, does my hon. friend from Shelburne and Queen's (Mr. Fielding) think that because it was thus watered to the point of saturation it should be entirely in the hands of Baptists?"

Some years ago Mr. Jacobs and his old friend Andrew McMaster, K.C., an ardent free-trader, travelled together to western Canada. In the course of the trip Mr. Mc-

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