

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
DEBATES

MONDAY, 12th MARCH, 1934

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OFFICIAL REPORT



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Death of Sir Thomas Ryan.



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Monday, 12th March, 1934.

The Assembly met in the Assembly Chamber of the Council House at Eleven of the Clock, Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Shanmukham Chetty) in the Chair.

DEATH OF SIR THOMAS RYAN.

The Honourable Sir Frank Noyce (Member for Industries and Labour): Sir, the Members of this House will, I am sure, have heard with profound sorrow the news that Sir Thomas Ryan passed away last night. It was only the day before yesterday that we saw him here seemingly in his usual health and spirits, fighting the motions for cuts in the demands for postal grants in that unimitable fashion of his. Sir, the tragedy of his sudden death is deepened by the fact that within a few days he would have been leaving the shores of India to enjoy the retirement that he had so well earned. He was one of the oldest and closest friend I had in India. Our friendship had extended for over twenty years. He was the head of the most important Department under my charge, and I have been in daily contact with him for the last two years. During that time I had learnt to admire more and more his great qualities, and my admiration and affection for him had steadily increased. The House will understand that in these circumstances the tribute that I can pay to his memory this morning can only be utterly inadequate. Few words are, however, necessary. The House has learnt, I am sure, during the last two years to appreciate his eminent qualities as an administrator combined as they were with an unusual charm of manner and a humorous outlook on life. It is very difficult for me to say more. I can only say that Sir Thomas was a tower of strength to every Department in which he served, and above all, to the Department over which he presided during the last two years. The House, as I have said, had learnt to appreciate certain aspects of his character. There were others which could only be known to those under whom he served. He was the most utterly fairminded man I have ever met. No case, however trivial, failed to receive the attention of his unflagging industry, and I am sure, Sir, that he has left a mark on his Department which will last. The staff, especially the subordinate staff, can never know, will never know, the deep interest he took in their welfare. Sir, for him it has been a good end. For those he has left behind the loss is irreparable, and I would ask you, Sir, to convey the deep sympathy which will, I am sure, be forthcoming from all parts of this House to his family in their tragic bereavement.

Sir Cawasji Jehangir (Bombay City: Non-Muhammadan Urban): Mr. President, it was truly a shock to every one of us when we heard only just now of the very tragic and sudden death of a faithful, loyal, energetic and persevering servant of Government who happened to be a Member of this Legislature. I came personally in contact with Sir Thomas Ryan for the first time when I had the privilege of going into the Department of which he was the distinguished head, and I need hardly say that I can corroborate, as far as my knowledge goes, every word that has fallen from his Chief, the Honourable Sir Frank Noyce. It is men of the type of Sir Thomas Ryan which enable the British Government to rule in India.

[Sir Cowasji Jehangir.]

Their fairminded judgment, their sincerity of purpose, and above all, their complete impartiality help the British in India to maintain a predominant position and give India the services of men whose record will ever remain. There have been in the past many Thomas Ryans who have laid down their lives in the service of this country, who have passed the major portion of their lives in this country—some of them like Sir Thomas passed away in this country, and I feel sure that this side of the House can never be too grateful to men of this kind and character. Mr. President, this House has suffered a great loss. It was only on last Saturday that we heard Sir Thomas give a long and lucid explanation to every one of the criticisms raised in this House. I was watching that clock opposite to me as Sir Thomas was speaking,—I believe he spoke for an hour and five minutes. Now, Mr. President, that is a considerable effort, and considering that he had merely the lunch hour in which to get his notes together, personally I thought it was a considerable feat even for a Government official with the experience of Sir Thomas Ryan. It is really a matter of deep regret that a British officer should pass away in this country immediately after having made a most lucid exposition and a complete defence of his own Department in reply to criticisms that fell from this side of the House.

Sir, as Sir Frank Noyce has said, perhaps the staff do not realise what they owe to Sir Thomas Ryan, not only as Director-General, but during the whole time of his connection with the Postal and Telegraph Department. I can speak from personal knowledge, I will repeat, of his impartiality and honesty of purpose. I would like, Mr. President, to associate my Party and myself with the great regret that we all feel at this sudden loss, and may I add that our heartfelt condolences should be conveyed to Lady Ryan, Miss Ryan and Mrs. Coburn, his two daughters who are here in Delhi. Their loss is irreparable, but we all trust that Providence will give them courage to bear the loss of what after all to them is their all.

Mr. K. C. Neogy (Dacca Division: Non-Muhammadian Rural): I desire to associate my friends and myself with all that has fallen from the previous speakers, and I desire to associate wholeheartedly my friends and myself with the tribute that has been so deservedly paid to the memory of such a tried public servant as Sir Thomas Ryan. It was not my good fortune to come into as intimate a contact with him as it was Sir Cowasji Jehangir's, in the domain of administration, but off and on Sir Thomas Ryan has been a Member of this Legislature and we all learnt to appreciate his deep sympathies with the staff that was under him, the indefatigable energy that he always exhibited in the discussions that took place in this House, and above all, the charm of manner that was so characteristic of him. I do not think it is any exaggeration to say that he endeared himself to all with whom he came into contact. There was hardly any Department of any importance in the Government of India with which Sir Thomas Ryan in his long career was not associated in one capacity or another. There have been numerous committees and enquiries with which also he was associated, and he has left his mark everywhere. I would request you to forward a message of condolence from this House to Lady Ryan and her family.

Raja Bahadur G. Krishnamachariar (Tanjore *cum* Trichinopoly: Non-Muhammadian Rural): I have not had the honour of personal acquaintance with the late Sir Thomas Ryan, but from the observation that I had

been making of the way in which he dealt with the several matters that had been brought before him either by way of questions or by way of Resolutions and cut motions, the infallible courtesy with which he treated the Members and the seriousness with which he listened to every argument and tried to meet it as far as he could, appealed to me in a way nothing else could have done, and I entirely agree with what my Honourable friend, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, said, it is men of that type that make the prestige of the British Government go higher and higher. Sir, the last thing that I heard from his lips was when on this side an attack was made on the way the extra departmental agents of the Postal Department were treated, and when Sir Thomas Ryan, although the whole question had been fully and carefully investigated by him, promised that he would again go into that. That, Sir, appealed to me most of all, because that showed that, although the man was perfectly sure of his own decision, yet he did not want to allow a single opportunity to be lost whereby, if possible, he could render justice to the poor employees of his Department. As Sir Frank Noyce said, the officials of the Department never know the great consideration and sympathy with which they were treated by the head of the Department, because he had always to be far and aloof, but, from the practical standpoint of view, I do hope they will all appreciate the great services that he rendered to that Department and the great loss that the country and his Department in particular have suffered by this sudden and tragic end of his career. Sir, I associate myself and my Party with everything that my Honourable friend, Sir Cowasji Jehangir, has said, and I request that our heartfelt sympathy and condolences be conveyed to those near and dear to him whom he has left behind.

Raja Sir Vasudeva Rajah (Madras: Landholders): Mr. President, on behalf of the Nationalist Party and on my own, I wish to join the other Members who have preceded me in the expression of their deep sorrow at the very unfortunate and sudden death of Sir Thomas Ryan. The shock caused to us on account of this tragic event is too much for words, and I need only say that we mourn very deeply the loss that this House and the country has sustained by his sudden death. We all knew him to be a very painstaking and conscientious officer who had a great deal of sympathy with the officers and men who worked under him, and, I am sure, not only the Department, but the whole country will share in the deep sense of sorrow that we all feel at his loss. We all sympathise with his family, and I request you to convey our deep and sincere condolences to them.

Sir Leslie Hudson (Bombay: European): Mr. President, I wish to associate myself and my friends behind me with everything that has fallen from my Honourable friends who have already spoken. Sir Thomas Ryan was a personal friend of most of us, and certainly of mine. We have known of his work for India during the past decades, his qualities of head and heart are well known to us and to the House and, I may say, to a very great part of India. I hope I shall not be considered to be detracting at all from the records of his predecessors when I say that during the time Sir Thomas Ryan was at the head of the Postal and Telegraph and Telephone systems of India, the efficiency of that Department had considerably increased, and we cannot but acknowledge the great personal responsibility that has brought about this in the person of Sir Thomas Ryan. Sir, this sudden and tragic event is a great shock to all of us, and I am sure that the sympathy of the whole of India will go out to Lady Ryan and her family. I hope you will convey with the rest

[Sir Leslie Hudson.]

of the House the sentiments of the European Group—sentiments of sorrow and sympathy at his decease.

Sir Muhammad Yakub (Rohilkund and Kumaon Divisions: Muhammadan Rural): I wish also to join in mourning the loss of one who was one of the greatest sympathisers of the Department to which he belonged. Sir Thomas Ryan's sudden death has made our grief still more severe, and the shock is so much that it is very difficult to express it in words. On Saturday last, when he was addressing this House in the course of the Budget debates, it was never thought that Sir Thomas Ryan was so soon going to leave us for ever. His death, specially on the eve of his retirement, makes it still more shocking. His memory will always be cherished with gratefulness in this country. Our hearts go forth in sympathy to his bereaved wife, Lady Ryan and his daughters, and I wish to associate myself with the desire that our sincere condolences should be conveyed to them.

Mr. Muhammad Yamin Khan (Agra Division: Muhammadan Rural): I came to know Sir Thomas Ryan and his qualities for the first time when I sat on the Retrenchment Committee on the Posts and Telegraphs Department. It was the Ryan Report which gave us the greatest help in coming to the many conclusions to which the Posts and Telegraphs Retrenchment Committee arrived. After reading that Report, we found what capacity and capability Sir Thomas Ryan had in grasping the facts which came up before him. In social matters, Sir Thomas Ryan was equally a great friend of the people with whom he came in contact. I have known him for a long time but these sterling qualities had been found only during the last four or five years. I have got great sympathy for Lady Ryan and the daughters of the late Sir Thomas Ryan, and I associate myself with every word that has fallen from other quarters.

Mr. President (The Honourable Sir Shanmukham Chetty): The Chair wishes to associate itself with the tribute that has been paid to the memory of our colleague, Sir Thomas Ryan. The tragedy has overtaken us with such a shocking suddenness that it is difficult to give expression to our feelings on an occasion of this nature. It was my privilege to have known Sir Thomas Ryan rather intimately. He was one of those few men for whom one always cherished a feeling, not merely of regard, but of the deepest affection. He was an intensely human personality. Even though his membership of this House has been only for short intervals, during those short periods he created in the House an atmosphere of good humour and of affection to him. None of us realised that when he made his valedictory speech in this House only the day before yesterday that he was making his last pronouncement in this world. The tragedy is heightened by reason of the fact that within the next few days he was to have gone back to his native home to live in peaceful retirement. It would be my duty to convey to Lady Ryan and the other members of his family the deep sense of sorrow of every section of this House. I think I shall be acting according to the wishes of every section of the House if, as a mark of respect to his memory, I adjourn the House for today.

I have instructed the Notice Office to find out the time of the funeral, and Honourable Members who would like to attend the funeral would get the information from the Notice Office.

The Assembly then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock on Tuesday, the 13th March, 1934.