



◀ **Thomas Joseph Byrnes**
(Courtesy Oxley Library)



Thomas Joseph Ryan ▶
(Courtesy Oxley Library)

THE TWO TJs

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Introduction

They both had the same Christian names, Thomas Joseph. They were both respected barristers and Premiers of Queensland—Byrnes the 12th and Ryan the 19th; both were active Roman Catholics; and both died of pneumonia before reaching their 50th birthdays.

In this paper, I propose to outline the careers of both of these statesmen, before drawing some conclusions as to the significance of both in Queensland life.

THOMAS JOSEPH BYRNES (11.11.1860 - 27.9.1898)

Thomas Joseph Byrnes was born in Leichardt Street, Spring Hill on 11 November 1860 into the poor Irish immigrant family of Anna (Tighe) and Patrick Byrnes. T.J. was the eighth of their eleven children.¹

When Byrnes reached school age, the family moved north to Bowen, to join some of his extended family. Before and after school he used to deliver milk, as a way of increasing the family income. But in doing this he did not neglect his studies; indeed, from the small Bowen Primary School he managed to top the State in the Scholarship examination.²

With the State Scholarship in hand, he began his secondary education, in 1874, at Brisbane Grammar School. There, he won the Lilley Medal each year from 1875 to 1877. The medal was awarded for studies in Greek, Latin and English; and provided him with a scholarship of one pound a week.³ In 1876, he won the University of Sydney prize in the Junior Public Examination. This enabled him to complete his secondary education at Brisbane Boys' Grammar School.

In 1879, he won a scholarship to study Arts-Law at the University of Melbourne, and graduated with honours in both: Arts in 1882; Law in 1884. To assist him financially during his student years, he served as a teacher at Xavier College, Kew (1882-1883). Admission to the Bar was the next step in his legal career. This came in Victoria on 8 July 1884 and was followed shortly afterward by admission to the Queensland Bar on 5 August the same year.

Thus began a successful career as a barrister. Between 1884 and 1885, he read Law in the Chambers of Patrick Real; then he built up his own large successful practice in Brisbane.⁴ His defence in the *Queensland Investment Co. V. Grimley* case, before the Supreme Court of Queensland, saw his emergence as one of the top legal minds of the State.⁵

To add attractiveness to his high educational qualities Byrnes possessed a charming manner which endeared him to a wide circle of friends, and in addition he had that best of all qualities—a strongly developed domestic affection for his parents and other relatives which made him an ideal son and brother. He was a clever raconteur and genial companion.⁶

Byrnes never married. He explained this affection for his parents as his way of repaying them for the sacrifices they had made to give him his chance.⁷

On 12 August 1890, Sir Samuel Griffith, then Queensland Premier, had him appointed Solicitor-General [Minister for Justice] with a nominated seat in the Legislative Council. This office established Byrnes' leadership within the Council.⁸

As Solicitor-General, Byrnes opposed the 1891 Shearers' Strike which gave rise to the emergence of the Australian Labor Party. He pronounced on the seditious nature of speeches made by certain leaders of the Movement, and supplied the grounds for criminal charges to be laid against those leaders. He invoked 'an archaic conspiracy law' to

meet the situation and subsequently a number of prominent strikers were convicted.

On one level, Byrnes' action can be viewed as one which was consonant with his role as a Minister on a Coalition Government, some of whose members saw unionism as a disruptive force within society; a force which needed to be forcefully suppressed. But things went further than that. On a personal level, it emerges that Thomas Byrnes was prepared to go to any lengths within the law to achieve his desired purpose. 'One can but remark that it is frequently a slender line of principle that separates determination from ruthlessness.'⁹

Inclusion within the coalition Ministry did not hinder or prevent Byrnes from pursuing his legal career as well. This was common amongst politicians at the time; but circumstances were changing. In 1892, Byrnes assisted Griffith, who was leading counsel in the Robb arbitration case before the Supreme Court of Queensland. The case was a protracted one and the public objected to both the high fees paid to Griffith and Byrnes, as well as to the diversion of the Parliamentary leaders from their political responsibilities.¹⁰ The contentious Full Court case over the railway line from Cairns to Herberton (October 1892-March 1893), in which Griffith was involved as Attorney-General and Byrnes as Solicitor-General,¹¹ merely aggravated matters even further. Byrnes was required to make a career-decision: was he to practice Law or politics?

He chose politics. But as leader of the Legislative Council, he would occupy only a subordinate political position. The Premier of the State came from the Lower House. Accordingly, early in 1893, Byrnes stood down from the Legislative Council to stand for the electorate of Cairns in the Legislative Assembly. The seat was a safe one for Byrnes to contest, bearing as it did the soubriquet 'Sir Charles Lilley's pocket borough.'¹² To assist in his campaign he espoused policies which were popular in far north Queensland: Northern Development¹³ and

the continued use of South-Sea Island labour (Kanakas). He won the seat and served as Member for Cairns from April 1893 to April 1896.

On his election, Premier Thomas McIlwraith appointed him Attorney-General in what became known as the Continuous Ministry. Byrnes was the youngest member of that Ministry by a large margin. He held the office of Attorney-General until his death.

Byrnes was a supporter of Federation and represented Queensland at the meetings of the Federal Council of Australasia, held in 1895 and 1897. One should realize, however, that his espousal of the federal cause arose from purely political motives, as his campaign platform as Member for Cairns had done. He simply made a pragmatic appraisal of factors such as Queensland's security *vis-à-vis* the other colonies and possible foreign aggression, and threw in his lot with Federation accordingly.¹⁴

In April 1896, he nominated for the electorate of North Brisbane. He was unpopular in the capital, however, due to a perception that he was using the office of Attorney General to further his own personal interests in his legal career. He had been unable to shake off the old issue of the Law or Politics, it seems. Despite this setback, he speedily nominated for the seat of Warwick. The previous incumbent, Arthur Morgan, owner-editor of the Warwick *Argus*, stood aside from the seat for Byrnes' benefit.¹⁵ The electorate also contained a large number of Irish-Catholics, for whom Byrnes, the self-made man, represented what could be achieved in Queensland, their land of opportunity. He was returned handsomely as the local MLA, and repaid their confidence in him handsomely, promoting his electorate as far afield as London itself.¹⁶

On 13 April 1898, Premier Hugh Muir Nelson resigned as Queensland Premier and was nominated as President of the Legislative Council of the State. Thomas Joseph Byrnes succeeded him as the twelfth

Premier of the State and the first to be Queensland-born. In addition, he occupied the posts of Chief Secretary and Attorney-General.

Byrnes' time as Premier lasted a mere five months before his death. Opinions are divided in their estimate of his achievement. One biographer commented:

In his public life he scorned all class and religious prejudices, but personally he would go out of his way to manifest his own faith. He was foremost at all Catholic demonstrations, and on the eve of his appointment to the Premiership he lectured to a Catholic audience on one of the Fathers of the Church.¹⁷

Another was effulgent with praise:

It is impossible to say how much our political history would have changed its course if this brilliant man had lived. Parliament can never be the worse off for containing brainy men, and whether in power or in opposition it is certain that Byrnes would always have been a force in politics.¹⁸

But there is also a contrary argument:

An examination of his actual performance as Premier produces a sense of anti-climax, for Byrnes did little more than reiterate earlier opinions and strategies that had sprung from his political programme. Certainly, the young man's career was drastically truncated by his premature death, but one cannot avoid an impression that virtually nothing was achieved, or even decided upon during Byrnes's Premiership. Even the then vital question of federation was allowed to lapse.¹⁹

This last assessment may be a little harsh. How much can one achieve in five months after all? On the issue of Federation at least, Byrnes revealed himself to be no mere cipher for others' stances. When George Reid sought to convene a Premiers' Conference to discuss the issue Byrnes refused to attend.²⁰

Death came to Byrnes suddenly and unexpectedly. On 16 September 1898, his mentor Griffith visited him at his Yeronga home and found him ill with measles. He obviously saw nothing to be alarmed at, for at the end of his visit, Griffith left the State on business.²¹ He, like the rest of the State, was shocked when he was informed that at ‘ten minutes to midnight on Tuesday, 27 September’²² he was dead from pneumonia, aged 37.

When the Legislative Assembly met to present a Condolence Motion, the Labor Leader of the Opposition, Andrew Dawson, rose to second the motion. He rose slowly, uttered two words: ‘Mr. Speaker’—hesitated for a moment—and rushed out of the Chamber sobbing. ‘It was the finest tribute that could be paid to a man whom the people adored.’²³

On Thursday, 29 September 1898, he was given a State Funeral at St Stephen’s Cathedral and buried in Toowong Cemetery. As the events of that day were significant in both the civic and religious life of the community, it is appropriate to spend some time relating what took place. The *Courier Mail* of the next day²⁴ reported the presence of honour guards of the Military and Friendly Societies outside the Cathedral.

Official mourners included the Governor, Lord Lamington; Sir William MacGregor, Lieutenant-Governor of New Guinea; James Robert Dickson (Acting Premier and Byrnes’ successor); W.H. Wilson, Postmaster-General; Robert Philp, Treasurer; J.G. Foxton, Minister for Lands; D.H. Dalrymple, Minister for Public Instruction; J.V. Chataway, Minister for Agriculture; J. Murray, Minister for Railways; Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Walter Griffith; Mr. Justice Real; Sir Hugh Muir Nelson, President of the Legislative Council; A.S. Cowley, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly; A.J. Thynne; various MM.L.C. and MM.L.As, and Public Servants.

Inside the Cathedral, the high altar was draped in black, as were the pillars on either side of the sanctuary. To these were fixed white crosses and wreaths. Above the altar in gold lettering was the Latin text: 'Eternal rest grant to him, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine on him.' The front of the choir gallery was also draped in black.

People began arriving at 8.30am and the cathedral filled quickly. The hearse containing the body of the deceased arrived a little before 9am. The administrator, Fr. O'Reilly, together with Fr. Fouhy, met the bier at the entrance and it was taken to a black-draped catafalque, on either side of which were three lighted candelabra. Wreaths were then placed in position.

Requiem mass commenced almost immediately after this. The Archbishop presided, attended by Fr J. Horan, of Warwick, and Fr Dorrigan, of South Brisbane. The celebrant of the mass was Fr Dunham, assisted by Fr Byrne as deacon, and Fr Lee as sub-deacon, while the masters of ceremony were Frs J. O'Reilly and Baldwin. The choir's chanting of the ordinary Gregorian Mass enhanced the spirituality of the occasion. At the close of the mass the Archbishop, dressed in a black cope and wearing a plain white mitre, left the sanctuary, and, standing near the bier, pronounced the final absolutions. Immediately afterward, the Dead March in *Saul* was played; Messrs Peter Vallely and Horace Burge (cornet and violin) assisting, by special request.

The coffin was lifted from the catafalque and taken from the Cathedral by eight members of the Catholic Young Men's Society. It was then covered with the Union Jack and a few fine wreaths and placed on a gun carriage drawn by six horses. The procession then moved slowly off in the direction of Toowong Cemetery.

Crowds had gathered in Elizabeth Street outside the cathedral even before the commencement of the requiem mass at 9am. The procession moved off at exactly 11.25, led by the Police Band, which struck up the soul-stirring strains of the Dead March. The silence which overcame the crowd was almost overpowering.

At the head of course was a contingent of twelve mounted constables, under the command of Sub-Inspector Durham, closely followed by twenty-six Mounted Infantry men and eighteen members of the Police Band, with muffled drums, and wearing purple plumes on their helmets. The next place of honour was accorded the newly-formed corps of State School Cadets, 182 strong, They were supported by fifty-six members of the Grammar School Cadet Corps under Major Roe, and these were followed by the Q.V.R. Band, the Teachers' Corps, Volunteer Rifles, and other military. Then came the gun carriage, drawn by six horses, and bearing the mortal remains of the man who was head of all civil and military institutions of the colony. Six mourning coaches succeeded, and then a continuous line of private and public vehicles,

The procession took an hour and twenty minutes to pass. The head of it had almost reached the cemetery gates (a distance of three miles) before the tail had passed the Treasury Building, viewed from which the cortege was seen to pass through a long, deep fringe of sorrowing humanity.

The grave site was in a spot on the second hill of Toowong Cemetery, to the right of the gateway. The body was placed in the family plot, alongside the deceased's mother, who died in 1894, and his brother Michael V., who died in 1890. The short burial service of the Roman Catholic Church was read by Archbishop Dunne, assisted by Frs Morris, Hegarty, Lee, Hayes, and Horan (Warwick). The coffin likewise bore this simple inscription: 'Thomas Joseph Byrnes. Died 28th September 1898. Aged 37 years. R.I.P.'

At the beginning of October, the Mayor of Warwick, Mr. J. Allman proposed the establishment of a citizens committee to administer a fund for the erection of a memorial to T.J. Byrnes. This committee was formed at a public meeting on 20 October. Over the next three years, 363 subscribers raised £250 for the purpose. This was matched £ for £ by the Queensland Government.

The Warwick statue was carved in Carrara marble, obtained from Andrews Bros. of Sydney. It rested on a veined Sicilian marble pedestal. This, in turn, rested on a concrete block and plinth of Melbourne bluestone. The structure stood 19.5 feet high.

On 13 December 1902, the Warwick monument was officially unveiled by the Queensland Governor, Sir Herbert Chermiside, at the intersection of Palmerin and Grafton Sts., Warwick, opposite the Post Office. The statue looked east along Grafton Street. It is one of Queensland's earlier public monuments and remains

an excellent example of its type – a life-like, finely carved statue set high on a decorative pedestal and located at the intersection of two of the principal streets in Warwick – specifically designed and located to impress.²⁵

Another Byrnes Memorial Fund was established in Brisbane. This raised £2,000 to erect a bronze statue in Centenary Place. It also endowed the Byrnes Medal for academic excellence.



THOMAS JOSEPH RYAN (1.7.1876 - 1.8.1921)

The second of our '2TJs' is Thomas Joseph Ryan. He was born on 1 July 1876 at Boothapool, ten miles from Port Fairy, Victoria. He was the fifth of the six children of Jane (Cullen) and Timothy Joseph Ryan. Tom's parents had migrated from Ireland to become small farmers. His father was illiterate; while his mother died when young Tom was only seven years old.²⁶

He began his education at Pretty Hill State School, before winning a scholarship to Xavier College, Kew, in 1889. His stay there was not a long one; for in 1891 financial difficulties necessitated his transfer to South Melbourne College. There, he paid his way as a pupil teacher and gained his Matriculation in 1895.²⁷

A course in Arts-Law at the University of Melbourne beckoned.—he graduated in Arts in 1897 and Law in 1899—but as an external student on account of his lack of financial support. This enabled him to undertake a teaching career during his period of study. He began as assistant classics master at the University High School, Melbourne. From there, he moved to the Church of England Grammar School, Launceston. Finally, at the time of his graduation, he was classics teacher at the Maryborough Grammar School, Queensland.²⁸

Between 1900 and 1903, he worked as second master at Rockhampton Grammar School. He did this because of a demarcation dispute concerning his qualifications. As a Victorian graduate in Arts-Law, his achievement was not recognised by the Queensland Bar. It was decreed that in order to meet the requirements of that august organisation he would have to complete a further year's study. He did this in July 1901, having obtained second-class honours in the exam. Finally, he was admitted to the Queensland Bar in December 1902. He resigned his post at Rockhampton Grammar in January 1903, but remained on the school staff until the end of the year.²⁹

In his Rockhampton solicitor's practice—and subsequently when he moved to Brisbane as a barrister—Ryan specialized in worker's compensation cases. This, in turn, brought him into contact with trade unionists, and awakened his sense of labor politics. An outlook such as this was unusual, at the time, for barristers from an Irish-Catholic background like Ryan's. Their usual place was on the Liberal side of politics, rather than on the Labor side.³⁰ Because of this, it became a common charge, among Ryan's legal colleagues, that 'he was not really a Labor man' and that 'he had simply accepted the Labor brief and argued it through as he would any other'.³¹

Such an opinion failed to understand the strength of Ryan's political convictions, gained in the light of lived experience. Sir William Webb, later to become Chief Justice of Queensland and a High Court Judge, rated Ryan very highly as a barrister.³²

Ryan's legal work illuminated his politics by giving him a sure grasp of Constitutional Law and correct Parliamentary procedure. It also provided him with the experience of weighing alternatives judicially.³³ This style was to become characteristic of Ryan's approach as his career progressed.

Election to Parliament was some time in coming, however. In 1903, he stood—unsuccessfully—for the Federal seat of Capricornia; an electorate centred on the city of Rockhampton, which included the centres of Mount Morgan and Yeppoon. This was followed in 1907 by another unsuccessful attempt: at the State seat of Rockhampton North. [A contributing factor to this last defeat was the fact that a High Court case in Brisbane prevented him from campaigning in the electorate until the last fortnight of the campaign.³⁴] But he was ultimately to be successful in a third attempt, and, on 2 October 1909, was returned as Labor MLA for the western Queensland State seat of Barcoo. He retained the seat for ten years, even though he lived in Brisbane for most of that time.

On 30 March 1910, Ryan married Miss Lily Virginia Cook, the daughter of Frederick Cook, a grazier from Dingo, at Rockhampton. Rockhampton's Bishop, James Duhig, a friend of Ryan's was the celebrant.³⁵ Together, they had a son and a daughter. Lily survived her husband and continued a career in Government: she was the State's representative in Melbourne in 1944.³⁶

In 1910, Ryan became a newspaper proprietor and editor when he purchased the Rockhampton *Daily Record*. This enabled him to extend his influence even further in Central Queensland. It also gave him the experience of producing a Labor newspaper; something that would stand him in good stead when he became Premier later. (A grazier friend, Tom Purcell, later bought the newspaper; but he allowed Ryan to continue to exercise editorial influence.)

Meanwhile, affairs in State Parliament had been progressing. An election had been held in 1912 and David Bowman, the Labor leader in State Parliament had resigned to make way for 'new blood'. With the support of key Labor 'king-makers', Edward Theodore and John Hunter, Ryan was able to secure the leadership of the State Parliamentary Labor Party. On 1 June 1915, the Ryan Government was returned as the first majority ALP Government in Queensland history.³⁷ With its election came the sense of a new beginning. Only three of the eight members of Ryan's Cabinet had connections with the old ALF of the 1880s and with the 1891 Shearers' Strike. Further, Ryan was able to concentrate political power in his own hands; holding simultaneously the offices of Premier, Chief Secretary and Attorney-General from June 1915 to October 1919.³⁸

Ryan was supported in office by leaders of the Public Service and certain newspaper editors of the Labor Press. Peter McDermott had been Under-Secretary of the Chief Secretary's Office since 1904. Like Ryan, he was Catholic, a classicist, a minor poet, a friend of Labor journalist Henry Boote, and President of the Queensland Irish Association.³⁹ Thomas W. McCawley was Crown Solicitor. A

young man of 28, he—like Ryan—had begun life in a poor Catholic family.⁴⁰ Ryan was to appoint him President of the Arbitration Court. In September 1915, John Stanislaus Hanlon was appointed editor of the Queensland *Worker*—the weekly newspaper of the AWU, to which Ryan belonged. Another young man, 33 years old, he belonged to a family which had participated in Ballarat’s Eureka Stockade. To him fell the task of media promotion of the achievements of Ryan’s Government.

Ryan’s own lifestyle was very middle class. As a successful barrister he was comfortably well-off. He had bought a large and expensive house in Clayfield and later employed a maid. Rising prices therefore did not affect him as they did the rank and file of his party, yet he appreciated that the real value of a workman’s wage was governed by the prices of the goods and services he bought.⁴¹ It may be said that Ryan’s main attraction as a political leader was his ability to synthesize the analyses of others and to present the final argument in a clear simple form which was both practicable and logical.⁴²

Combating monopolies became an integral part of Ryan’s political philosophy.⁴³ This was done by establishing State enterprises in various areas: the State Government Insurance Office (SGIO), the Public Curator, cattle stations, butcher shops, fish markets, produce agencies, sawmills, coal mines, railway refreshment rooms, and hotels. His attempts to establish a steel works and a shipping line proved unsuccessful. Many of the other enterprises, established to curb the power of capitalism, proved difficult to operate in the interwar years and were sold off or disbanded.

Another feature of Ryan’s political philosophy was his belief in the ability of the arbitration system—backed up with welfare proposals—to solve nearly all the problems that upset workers. He realized this vision in a raft of industrial legislation. The Industrial Arbitration Act established Arbitration and Conciliation Courts;⁴⁴ while Thomas W. McCawley, whom he appointed President of the Arbitration Court, was

‘an invaluable ally’ in its implementation. Ted Theodore engineered the passage of the Labor Exchanges Act. Working conditions were regulated by the Inspection of Machinery and Scaffolding Act and the Factories and Shops Amendment Act. Drawing the various pieces of industrial legislation together was the Workers’ Compensation Act, which was finally passed on 15 December 1915.⁴⁵ In this way, working conditions were protected and enhanced, to the benefit of employees.

Agricultural reform was also a feature of Ryan’s Government. The rural vote in dairying and sugar was consciously wooed. He set out plans to give primary producers a better deal, while at the same time suggesting that controls be set in place to prevent the charging of excessively high prices, in particular with meat. Prices Boards were set up to regulate fair returns to farmers.⁴⁶

Various other items of social reform were the product of the administration. These included the abolition of capital punishment; an amendment to the Elections Act which allowed women to stand for Parliament; and the passing of a Hospitals Bill—health was a recurrent feature of the Queensland Labor platform.⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that he spoke up in support of a White Australia policy.⁴⁸ But some excuses may be advanced by way of an explanation. In the first place, this was after all, ALP policy at the time. Secondly, the introduction of what was then described as ‘coolie labour’ came at the expense of Australian workers’ livelihoods. And finally, the conclusions may be drawn that ‘nobody’s perfect’ and that ‘it’s not possible to think beyond the square in everything’.

To meet the challenges presented by the Ryan Government, the conservative parties elected C.H. Macartney as Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly.⁴⁹ In the Legislative Council an obstructionist line was pursued to much of the legislation outlined above. Ryan argued that the only solution to the crisis was to seek the Council’s abolition.⁵⁰ In 1917, a referendum to decide the issue was lost, due to a confusion of other issues—such as a Federal Election,

Conscription, and Local-Option polls—which were also being debated at the time.⁵¹ The best he could achieve was to persuade the Queensland Governor, Sir Hamilton Goold-Adams, to appoint thirteen new Labor members to the Council. This meant that the house could have a quorum to enable it to function in the event of the conservatives using the tactic of non-attendance to stall proceedings. Beyond this, Ryan was obliged to handle relations with the Council with tact. The campaign for the abolition of the Council chamber would only succeed in 1922, after Ryan's death.

In 1916 Ryan strongly defended the Home Rule movement in Ireland. He supported Eamon de Valera as leader; and, in 1919, even went as far as chairing an Irish Race Convention in Melbourne, which had been called by that city's Archbishop Daniel Mannix. Yet—ever the skilful, pragmatic politician—he did not want the “Irish problem” to intrude into Australian politics.

During World War I, the Ryan Government was notable as the only Australian Government to oppose William Morris (“Billie”) Hughes' 1916 campaign for Conscription. Ryan made it clear that, while he supported the plea for reinforcements, he did so only if recruitment was done on a voluntary basis. He came under great pressure, especially when other Labor parties split over the issue; but Ryan stood firm, even when faced with legal suits from various quarters. ‘A nasty personality-power brawl’⁵² erupted between Hughes and Ryan over the issue. In this, his considerable legal expertise proved invaluable. The resulting 1917 conscription referendum resulted in an even larger ‘No’ vote than before, for Hughes' conscription proposal.

In 1917, the State was crippled by a serious railway strike, which took all his skills of balancing, bargaining and threat-making to diffuse. The issue was compounded by a seamen's strike in New South Wales which brought on a food shortage in the north and also affected sugar production. Ryan and his cabinet resisted strike-breaking tactics and settled the conflict by conciliation and arbitration — unlike the southern

leaders Sir George Fuller and Hughes who used coercive measures to break the strike.⁵³ Ryan's belief in the effectiveness of a State-endorsed system of Conciliation and Arbitration had been vindicated.

In 1919, tensions again rose in a fresh round of railway and meatworkers' strikes, along with the 'red-flag riot' in Brisbane. Ryan—ever the conciliator—retained the support of the more radical elements by defending one of the rioters in court—unsuccessfully as it turned out.⁵⁴

The year coincided with a time of decision for Ryan. While on a trip to Britain, during which he first contracted and then successfully recovered from influenza, he contemplated retirement. There was a possibility he might go onto the bench of the Queensland Supreme Court—as Sir Samuel Walter Griffith had done. Alternatively, a career in Federal politics beckoned. His campaign against Hughes and Conscription had given him considerable exposure beyond Queensland.⁵⁵

Finally, in October 1919, Ryan was invited by a special federal conference of the ALP to transfer from State to Federal politics. It is 'the only occasion that such a motion has been passed.'⁵⁶ He resigned as Premier, and was returned as MHR for West Sydney. The seat had previously been held by 'Billy' Hughes (1901-1917).⁵⁷ When Federal Parliament met on 9 September 1920, Ryan took his place, as deputy leader of the Labor Party.⁵⁸

In July 1921, against doctor's advice, he went to Queensland to assist the Labor candidate, William Dunstan, in the Maranoa by-election. There, he contracted pneumonia, and died in Glenco Hospital, Barcaldine, on 1 August 1921. He was just 45 years of age. His body was taken by train to Brisbane, past crowds gathered at each station. Archbishops Duhig and Mannix presided over his funeral in St Stephen's Cathedral and his burial in Toowong Cemetery.⁵⁹ 'Ryan left no diary nor any personal papers...'⁶⁰

The Queensland historian, Charles Arrowsmith Bernays left the following appreciation of Ryan:

No politician within the writer's memory, and it is a long memory too, has been the equal to Thomas Joseph Ryan in tact, and the almost universal manner in which his supporters speak of 'Tom Ryan' indicates not only the respect for his leadership but personal devotion to the man. In politics a born fighter who does not care who treads on the tail of his coat, yet never carries bitterness beyond the four walls of the Chamber. Emotional by nature, kindly and tender-hearted by instinct, he stands out with prominence as one of the few great successes among our party leaders of past and present. Some men have not the assistance in carrying out their public careers, and do everything off their own bats. T.J. Ryan is not such a man. His first lieutenant to whom he owes so much is his popular and tactful wife—and he knows it.⁶¹

In memory of this great Queenslander, a grateful people took a number of actions to ensure he was not forgotten. In 1925, a 10ft/3m bronze statue, by Sir Edward MacKenna, on a sandstone pedestal, was erected in Brisbane's Queen's Park. The T.J. Ryan Medal was struck for candidates obtaining the highest pass in the annual Scholarship Examination at the end of primary school. This award ceased in 1970; but was reintroduced in 1993 as an annual award to Year 12 students. Besides the medal, the winner receives a scholarship of \$1,000 per successful semester in Tertiary Education, with a maximum of \$10,000 paid over 5 years. In an approach so fitting for a politician, the Federal electorate of Ryan is named after him.

His real legacy, however, is the State of Queensland, whose civic institutions and lifestyle are in so many ways the result of his labours.

Conclusions

In concluding, many things might be said by way of a comparison of the “2TJs”. For the moment, however, such comparisons will be restricted in their scope.

In the first place, both men came from a poor Irish-Catholic background and may be described as self-made men. Both were associated with the Jesuits’ Xavier College, Kew; though it is difficult to know if this is significant or mere coincidence.

Both studied Arts-Law at the University of Melbourne and subsequently enjoyed brilliant legal careers. This led, in turn, to careers in politics, although on opposite sides.

Both were members of the Australian Natives’ Association. (Ryan became president of its Rockhampton branch.). This is a significant indicator of their national pride. The ANA was committed to the federation of the Australian colonies. But it was also influential in providing sickness, medical and funeral cover for native-born Australians, in an age before the rise of State-sponsored social welfare.

Both became Premiers of Queensland: Byrnes for five months, and Ryan for five years and four months. Both experienced difficulty in getting elected to Parliament the first time; but by the end of their careers they had become extremely popular. After their deaths this popularity was expressed in the commissioning of memorial statues in public places. Both also had Educational Medals and Awards named after them, to encourage children from similar backgrounds to theirs, in future generations.

Both died prematurely of pneumonia; Byrnes aged 37, Ryan aged 45. In Byrnes’ case this was the product of a case of measles, while in Ryan’s case, he overreached himself in campaigning for the political party which he loved. Both were buried in Brisbane’s Toowong Cemetery at the conclusion of Requiem Mass in St. Stephen’s Cathedral.

But there were differences as well. Byrnes was conservative in his politics. It was he who was able to use the Law to create the mechanism designed to put down the Shearers' Strike of 1891. His time as Premier was, in a sense, an anti-climax. Even though cut short by a premature death, one cannot avoid an impression that virtually nothing was achieved, or even decided upon, beyond the old tired strategies and policies of earlier days.

Ryan, on the other hand, was a quiet revolutionary. He espoused the socialist cause, applying his talents in support of the working-classes. This made him suspect among his colleagues in the legal profession, who mistook his stance as the acceptance of the Labor brief and arguing it through as he would any other. The truth was quite different, however. As a young lawyer, he defended some of the unionists, who had been charged under the laws that Byrnes had enacted. He joined the parliamentary ALP and, on becoming Premier, initiated programmes of reform throughout Queensland society. Some of these may still be identified as existing today.

In one respect, Ryan was unique. He was the only leader in Australian Government who opposed William Morris ("Billie") Hughes' campaigns for Conscription during World War I. In this, he combined with other community leaders, such as Melbourne's Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix, to bring about the defeat of Hughes' proposal in 1916 and 1917. Ryan made it clear that recruitment should be on a voluntary basis, not via conscription; and his case proved successful.

Thus, for the present, concludes the tale of the "2TJs". It may be noted that Queensland was particularly unfortunate in losing two such promising statesmen by untimely deaths. For all their qualities in their own times, both remain somewhat forgotten figures in the history of their own State and of the nation. If this brief sketch has served in some small way to preserve their memory, then it will have achieved its purpose.

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2. P.S. Cleary, *Australia's Debt to Irish Nation-Builders*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney 1933, p.169.
3. Cleary, 1933, p.169.
4. Cleary, p.169.
5. Gill, 'Thomas Joseph Byrnes', in Murphy and Joyce, eds., 1978, p.183.
6. C.A. Bernays, *Queensland Politics during Sixty Years (1859-1919)*, A.J. Cumming, Govt. Printer, Brisbane c.1919, p.144.
7. Cleary,1933, p.171.
8. Gill, 'Thomas Joseph Byrnes', in Murphy and Joyce, eds., p.181; Bernays, *Queensland Politics during Sixty Years (1859-1919)*, p.144. [Griffith, by the way, just "happened" to have been chairman of the Brisbane Grammar School trustees at the time that Byrnes was a student there. Had he been keeping his eye on young Byrnes since that time?]
9. Gill, 'Thomas Joseph Byrnes', in Murphy and Joyce, eds., 1978, p.181, citing Colonial Office Papers. [See also *T.J. Byrnes Monument website*, <http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/chims/placeDetail.html?siteId+16812> accessed 3/6/2010.]
10. Gill, 1978, p.183.
11. R.B. Joyce, *Samuel Walter Griffith*, University of Queensland Press, St. Lucia, Qld. 1984, p.182.

12. *T.J. Byrnes Monument website*.
13. It may be suspected that such an approach was politically-driven. In the campaign, he carefully avoided any use of the word Separation; and later, when the moment had passed, he was to declare himself against any Separation movement for North Queensland.
14. Gill, 'Thomas Joseph Byrnes', in Murphy and Joyce, eds. 1978, p.182, citing *Qld. Parliamentary Debates* 63 (15 July 1891), p.31.
15. After Byrnes' death, Morgan resumed the Warwick seat and held it until 1906.
16. *T.J. Byrnes Monument website*, <http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/chims/placeDetail.html?siteId+16812> accessed 3/6/2010.
[In 1897, he accompanied Premier Hugh Muir Nelson to Britain for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. During the visit he made a point of twinning Warwick Qld. with Warwick UK () a gesture which was to become popular in later times.]
17. Cleary, 1933, p.171.
18. Bernays, p.145.
19. Gill, *Thomas Joseph Byrnes*, Murphy and Joyce, eds. 1978, p.189.
20. Joyce, 1984, p.206.
21. Joyce, p.250.
22. *Warwick and District Historical Society: Memorials in Warwick*, Warwick, Feb 1968.
23. Cleary, 1933, pp.170-171. See also Bernays, p.144.
24. p.5.

25. *Warwick and District Historical Society: Memorials in Warwick*, Warwick, Feb 1968.
26. D.J. Murphy, *T.J. Ryan, A Political Biography*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1975, p.11. See also Cleary, p.171.
27. Murphy, 1975, p.12; Cleary, 1933, p.171.
28. Murphy, 1975, p.13-14.
29. Murphy, p.18.
30. The career of T.J. Byrnes, as seen above, is a case in point.
31. Murphy, 1975, p.55. One of Ryan's legal contemporaries, R.G. Menzies, sneered at Ryan's reputation in the courts (Menzies, *The Measure of the Years*, pp.264-265). See also Murphy, 1975, p.520.
32. Webb, Tribute in *Daily Standard*, 9 August 1921; Murphy, 1975, p.521.
33. Ryan, Thomas Joseph (Tom) (1876-1921), *Australian Dictionary of Biography—online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110509b.htm> accessed 3/6/2010.
34. D.J. Murphy, in R.B. Joyce, and C.A. Hughes, eds., *Prelude to Power. The Rise of the Labour Party in Queensland 1885-1915*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane 1970, p.210.
35. Murphy, 1975, p.41.
36. This pattern of the husband and wife team was one which was to be repeated in Queensland politics; most recently in the example of the careers of Sir Joseph and Lady Florence Bjelkie-Petersen—albeit on the other side of politics.

37. Murphy, 1975, p.102; Bernays, p.183. Previously, there had been two other Labor Governments in the State: the minority government of Anderson Dawson (7days in December 1899) and that of William Kidston (returned in 1906, but he had split the Labor party in February 1907 by insisting that members pledge their loyalty to him first, and to the Party second.) Murphy, 1975, p.28.
38. This Government was to provide the model for subsequent Labor Governments until 1957.
39. Murphy, 1975, p.109.
40. Murphy, p.109.
41. *Australian Dictionary of Biography—online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110509b.htm> accessed 3/6/2010. (referred to subsequently as *ADB*); Murphy, 1975, p.57.
42. Murphy, 1975, p.54.
43. *ADB*.
44. *ADB*; Murphy, 1975, p.122.
45. *ADB*; Murphy, p.147.
46. *ADB*; Murphy, p.127.
47. *ADB*; Bernays, p.184;
D.J. Murphy, and R.B. Joyce, eds, *Queensland Political Portraits 1859-1952*, University of Queensland Press, St.Lucia Qld. 1978, p.3.
48. *ADB*.
49. Murphy, 1975, p.106.

50. Murphy, p.129.
51. Murphy, p.129.
52. *ADB*.
53. *ADB*; Murphy, 1975, pp.264-271.
54. *ADB*.
55. Murphy, 1975, pp.414-416.
56. *ADB*.
57. After Ryan's death, a notable incumbent was Jack Beasley (1921-1946).
It was subsequently abolished in a redistribution of 21 November 1968.
58. Murphy, 1975, p.491.
59. *ADB*; Murphy, 1975, p.514.
60. Murphy, 1975, p.xv.
61. Murphy, p.180.