

Catholic Register Nov 1, 1934

ENTHUSIASTIC TRIBUTE TO MR. FRANK O'CONNOR  
**Catholic Layman of Toronto, Who Has Munificently  
Aided Higher Education and Every Good Cause**

An enthusiastic public tribute to Mr. Frank O'Connor as a citizen, a benefactor of good causes, and especially as a Catholic layman, was paid at a banquet in the King Edward Hotel, Toronto, on Wednesday evening of last week. The ballroom, which is the largest room in the hotel available for banquets, was more than crowded and extra tables had to be laid in the gallery. The total number of guests were the leaders of the public, educational and Catholic life of Toronto. The banquet was organized by Newman Club under Father J.E. McGarity C.S.P.

Mr. W.G. O'Brien, President of Newman Club Alumni, acted as chairman. He read message of apology for absence, with tributes to Mr. O'Connor from Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop O'Brien, of Kingston; Monsignor Carroll, Administrator of Toronto Archdiocese, who was at Antigonish for the consecration of the new Bishop of Victoria; Rev. John E. Burke, C.S.P., a former Rector of Newman Club; Dr. Simpson, Ontario Minister of Education; Mayor Stewart of Toronto and others.

The chairman, Mr. W. G. O'Brien, spoke of Mr. O'Connor as a former schoolfellow. He mentioned that from school Frank O'Connor had gone straight to learning a trade, and he mentioned some of Mr. O'Connor's activities up to the time he came to Toronto, 20 years ago and started his extraordinarily successful business career.

Capt. The Rev. John McGarity, Rector of Newman Club, said that the munificence of Mr. O'Connor to Newman Club was the more notable inasmuch as Mr. O'Connor had never been a member, he was not an alumnus of the University of Toronto, or of any university except the great university of experience, but he had the imagination to be able to appreciate

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the value of Newman Club to Catholic students and the University, and therefore he gave to the Club unstintingly of his time, his ability and his means. Fr. McGarity remarked that he himself, now Rector of the Club, had formerly been associated with it as a student member before joining the army and going overseas on active service. He knew his own debt to Newman Club and knew the good it was doing to student-members. Mr. O'Connor's aid had been given not only to Newman Club but to all good causes without restriction of race or creed.

The Hon. Dr. H. A. Bruce, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, gave a humorous speech referring to the sporting, agricultural and business interests of the guest of honor. Mr. O'Connor, said Dr. Bruce, was among other things the smartest farmer in Ontario, getting the best ploughmen in Ontario to enter competition and plough all his land for him at Maryvale in the fall (laughter). *"He is a great citizen, a sportsman, a philanthropist, a jolly good fellow. In short he is a whiteheaded boy,"* said Dr. Bruce amid continued laughter. *"In business he is courageous, enterprising, keen, and withal he has a sweet way with him"* (more laughter).

Father M. Cline, who spoke in the absence of Msgr. Carroll, Administrator of the Archdiocese, spoke of Mr. O'Connor's work for education and *"one who has also been a regular Santa Claus to down-and-outs."*

Father E.J. McCorkell, C.S.B., President of St. Michael's College, said that for the new buildings at St. Michael's they were largely indebted to Mr. O'Connor's generosity and it was due to Mr. O'Connor that such a magnificent reception had been given to Cardinal Villeneuve in the recent visit of His Eminence to Toronto.

Brother Urban recalled an occasion when the late Archbishop McNeil had been told that another school was essential and His Grace had said: *"we must see Mr. O'Connor about that."* Bro. Urban said that whenever they had the need they called on Mr. O'Connor and he had never failed them.

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Reference was also made by Brother Urban to the Lake Simcoe camp for 100 boys made successful by Mr. O'Connor's assistance.

Rev. Dr. G.B. Phelan, of the Institute of Medieval Studies, spoke in introduction of Rev. Canon Cody, President of the University of Toronto. Dr. Phelan referred to the aims of the Institute, promoting studies which went down to the roots of our Christian culture and civilization. The University of Toronto had had no similar department and therefore the Institute was a contribution that St. Michael's college had made to the University of Toronto. What St. Michael's had done was largely owing to Mr. O'Connor. It was owing to him that such world-famed teachers as Maritain and Professor Gilson were in Toronto.

Dr. Cody, in acknowledging the indebtedness of the University to Mr. O'Connor, said that Mr. O'Connor had given a fine example to other men of large wealth. He had invested his wealth in such things as will promote social and spiritual benefits for all time. Ostentatious show of wealth was one of the causes of the present unrest and it was a stabilizing influence when a man distributed his goods for the benefit of others as Mr. O'Connor had done.

Dr. Cody then produced a small crucifix of which he told an interesting history. It had been blessed by Pope Leo XIII, and had been given by Cardinal Newman, in his old age, to one who the Cardinal had known in his Anglican days. The recipient has been a Toronto man. From his widow the cross had come into the possession of Dr. Cody, who said he would like to retain it as long as he was here, but on his death it would go to Newman Club.

Mr. A. Roebuck, K.C., Attorney General, spoke on behalf of the Ontario Government regarding Mr. O'Connor's public services. In his reply Mr. O'Connor showed himself greatly affected. *"I have never realized until this evening,"* he said, *"that so many nice things could be said*

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*of a common layman. I can say with truth that this has been the greatest evening of my life. It has been embarrassing to me to listen to so many kind words, but I have tried to brave it out. I am grateful to you all. I feel very glad. My daughter Mary and I will never forget this night."*

Sir William Mulock received a remarkable tribute. Owing to the lateness of the hour he begged to be excused from speaking, but the company would not be denied. They rose and cheered the Chief Justice who spoke in appreciation of Mr. O'Connor and of the contribution made by St. Michael's College to the University of Toronto.

Miss Madeleine Wright, on behalf of Newman Club, presented the following address to Mr. O'Connor:

*"The Members, Alumni and friends of Newman Club, take this occasion to express their appreciation for one who in this generation of modified giving, has bestowed his benefactions upon the Club and Chapel with a generosity and fitness of choice, that have enhanced their worth.*

*"Nor can we leave unmentioned, that more widespread support, which has given prestige and prominence to the cause of religion and education, throughout this Province.*

*"Hence this demonstration of affection and esteem for a personality that has ever been a welcome and cherished friend amongst us and the larger community beyond.*

*"Newman Club will retain your memory, no less than our Province itself will keep your fame unextinguished."*

The Mayor of Peterboro, Mr. R. M. Denne, and a party of 50 guests were present from that city. Amongst those seated at the head table in addition to those mentioned as speakers were: P. MacDonald, P. Lozier, Miss Gauthier, Dr. March, Miss Carroll, Father Dwyer, Miss Flanagan, Miss Mitchell, Brig.-Gen. D. C. Draper, Mrs. Denne, Mrs. Mother, Chev. Tiberi, Mrs. E. Sauer, Mrs. Leduc, Mrs. Heenan, Miss Mary O'Connor, Mrs. H. A. Bruce, Mrs. Arthur Roebuck, Hon. Peter Heenan, Mrs. H. J. Cody, Hon. P. Leduc, Signora Hibie, Emil Sauer, Mrs. D.C. Draper, Capt. Flanagan, Col. Ian Sinclair, Miss Cashman, D. O'Connor, J.L. Dillon and D. O'Leary.