

The loss of Michael McInerney



Since the publication of the first edition of *The Old Limerick Journal* Michael McInerney has died. His sudden death came as a great blow to all who knew him.

Michael McInerney was born in Colooney (now Wolfe Tone) Street in the first decade of this century and was one of eleven children. He grew up during difficult days when families were large, working hours long and wages small.

He attended the nearby Leamy's School and went on to become one of its most distinguished past pupils. He retained fond memories of his years there and of his favourite teacher, Johnny Scallan.

At an early age he went to work at the docks helping his shipwright father. From his boyhood days he showed a natural talent for writing and wished to earn his living as a journalist in his native city, but the nearest he came to realising that ambition was to become a copy-boy at the "Munster News" office.

But the drive to write persisted and led him far beyond the bounds of Limerick. He worked in three cities, London, Belfast and Dublin, and made a major contribution as a journalist and political activist in all three.

It could be said of him that he took a political road to journalism and to life itself. On the journey along that road he never changed direction, never contemplated turning back or even resting on the way. In the course of their work many politicians and journalists became the victims of cynicism, but Michael McInerney kept his youthful enthusiasm and idealism to the last. But his politics and journalism were only means to an end. He believed that through political activity and journalism he could best contribute to changing the world around him. His life's work was an effort to prove that thesis.

Michael McInerney was a dedicated man who

worked for human progress and social justice. When the time comes to assess his contribution to Irish political development his twenty-eight years' writing on the "Irish Times" must rank as his outstanding achievement. During this period he took on the role of trying to lead the labour movement into taking a leading and principled position in Irish politics. That he did not succeed in this objective is no reflection on his efforts.

In the last decade of his life he became totally convinced of the futility of trying to achieve a solution to the Northern Ireland conflict by the use of force. This belief became a dominant theme in his writings. His war-time experience of living and working in Belfast influenced him considerably in reaching this conclusion.

Michael McInerney devoted much of his time to the trade union movement. His pioneering work as an organiser and negotiator for the National Union of Journalists and as a lecturer for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has won him an honoured place in Irish trade union history.

Though he left Limerick while still a young man, he always maintained an abiding interest in the city's people and history. He was one of the principal movers in the revival of *The Old Limerick Society*, and acted on the editorial committee of this *Journal*. His last visit to Limerick was to launch the first edition of the *Journal* in December. He had just finished his study of his fellow-Limerickman, Frank Ryan, and was engaged in writing his autobiography at the time of his death.

Michael McInerney was a noble human being. He was gentle, generous and hard working. His death is a great loss to his family, his native place and the Irish labour movement. As an appreciation of his life's work, this *Journal* is dedicated to his memory.