

From his father an organizer for the Irish National Teachers' Organization Paul O 'Dwyer derived pro – trade - union & anti - clerical attitudes. His witnessed the Black - and - Tan activities during the War of Independence. His family's anti - treaty position in the civil war were also formative influences. (*White Lawrence William*) [\[viii\]](#)

## Education

Following Paul O 'Dwyer's early education two of his sisters supported his further education at U C D. They both were teachers in Mayo. [\[ix\]](#)

## Emigration

A letter from his brother Frank in N. Y. C. with an invitation to work by day & study by night persuaded Paul O 'Dwyer to leave Ireland during 1925 when he was aged eighteen years during 1925. [\[x\]](#)

He lodged with Frank & Jack at Mrs. Mc Guire's boarding house in New York City. [\[xi\]](#)

During April 1925 Paul O 'Dwyer emigrated to New York with \$25 in his pocket also '*a single suit of clothes on my back and a straight razor.*' He stated he '*barely noticed the Statue of Liberty and nobody told us much about it but the harbour looked magnificent.*' [\[xii\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer emigrated to Brooklyn New York during 1925:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_O%27Dwyer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_O%27Dwyer)

On arrival in America at age eighteen years Paul O 'Dwyer laboured up from dock work also garment packing to become one of New York's Leading Defenders of the Underclass. (*Clines*) [\[xiii\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer was employed at a labourer's job New York City. [\[xiv\]](#)

## American Citizen

Paul O 'Dwyer became an American citizen during 1930. (*Cronin Sean 25<sup>th</sup> June 1998*) [\[xv\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer became a United States citizen during 1930:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_O%27Dwyer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_O%27Dwyer)

## Further Studies

For six months that followed his arrival to New York he undertook several jobs that included one at the shipping department of Susquehanna Silk Mills. Paul O 'Dwyer enrolled as a pre - law night student at Fordham University. The following September he enrolled at St. John's University in Queen's. (*Cronin*) [\[xvi\]](#)

He graduated with his law degree from St John's University on Long Island. (*Clines Francis X. 25<sup>th</sup> June 1998*) [\[xvii\]](#)

He pursued studies at Fordham University. He studied for his law degree at St. John's University. [\[xviii\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer attended evening classes in St John's College Law School in Brooklyn 1926 to 1929. He sat the New York State Bar examination on special petition owing to his status as an alien. [\[xix\]](#)

## Employment

His brother William assisted him to obtain a position as checker on the Waterfront. While there he joined the All - Jewish King's County Democratic Club (*his Yiddish was fluent*) also the Longshoreman's Organization. (*Cronin*) [\[xx\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer was employed successively as stock clerk in an automobile garage, as an elevator operator also a shipping clerk in a textile factory. [\[xxi\]](#)

During his studies Paul O 'Dwyer worked as a checker on the Brooklyn docks also as a seaman on summer runs to Latin America. He held a Longshoreman's union card for the remainder of his life. He worked as a legal clerk from 1929 to 1931. [\[xxii\]](#)

## N. Y. Bar

As the Depression hit the United States Paul O 'Dwyer graduated from the Law School: he was admitted to the Bar during 1931. (*Cronin*) [\[xxiii\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer's testament to his fiercely Irish inner drive ensured his admittance to the New York State Bar: before he was eligible for American citizenship. [\[xxiv\]](#)

## Law Career

He joined his brother Bill at the firm Holmes & Bernstein. But soon decided that he could not shake off the '*big brother*' effect. He borrowed three hundred dollars from his brother: then opened his own office at 51 Fifth Avenue! When William became a magistrate Paul O 'Dwyer returned to his original office where Oscar Bennet became his mentor. [\[xxv\]](#)

## Personal Life

He married Kathleen Rohan of Connemara, Co. Galway: they had four children: William, Eileen, Brian also Rory. They lived on a farm sixty minutes from New York City: he stated that it was '*very like Mayo in the vegetation and topography and shared with Connamara ponies.*' His wife's demise occurred during 1981. O 'Dwyer's second marriage was to Patricia Hanrahan (*the Upstate Chief of Gov. Mario M. Cuomo's Women's division*) during 1984. [\[xxvi\]](#)

He married first in 1935 Kathleen Rohan (*d. 1980*) an Irish - American of Galway ancestry: they had three sons & a daughter. He second marriage was during 1984 to Patricia Hanrahan Chief of New York State Women's Division (*she survived him*) they had no children. *The Connacht Tribune 8th March 1974*) [\[xxvii\]](#)

## Residences

The O 'Dwyer families lived at various addresses in Brooklyn before & following his first marriage. During 1939 he moved his family to 350 Central Park West, Manhattan. [\[xxviii\]](#)

## Lawyers Guild

Paul O 'Dwyer was very active in the National Lawyers Guild. during 1947. He became its president. He served on its national board from 1948 - 1951: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_O%27Dwyer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_O%27Dwyer)

Paul O 'Dwyer was elected chairman of the Guild's Civil Rights committee. He was president of its New York Chapter during 1947. He was on the National Board of Directors from 1948 to 1951. (*The Connacht Tribune*) [\[xxix\]](#)

O 'Dwyer was elected president of the National Lawyers Guild in 1947. He served on the national board from 1948 to 1951. He was personally close to a generation of Black Politicians: he managed the campaigns of several. [\[xxx\]](#)

### **Labour Union Movement**

During 1932 Paul O 'Dwyer found himself in the middle of a labour union movement (*that had been revitalized by Roosevelt's new Legislation*) During that time his brother Bill stated '*He had a gift of discharging the pickets without antagonizing the police.....we never worked better.*'!! His home also was a salon for actors, labour leaders, thinkers, activists also politicians. (*Cronin*) [\[xxxi\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer outlasted his brother '*Bill - O*' in public life. He fought for the labour movement also embattled Immigrants in the 1940's, against McCarthyism & racial segregation in the 1950's then against the Vietnam War during the 1960's. In the Anti-War Movement he was a patriarchal exception in the eyes of young pacifists that were intent on trusting no one over thirty years of age! [\[xxxii\]](#)

### **Practice Partner**

He was accepted as a full - time partner to the practice that came to be known as Holmes, Bernstein & O 'Dwyer. His readiness to represent politically different, diverse clients was shown in his work for the Iranian Government in their quest for the Shah's money. O 'Dwyer was very successful in several cases ie. in the defence of the following known as The Harrisburgh Seven, Rev. Frs, Berrigan who also were siblings, Srs. Joques Egan, Elizabeth Mc Alister & Egbal Ahmad a Pakistani scholar who were charged with a plot to kidnap the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. (*Cronin*) [\[xxxiii\]](#)

As a senior partner of the firm (*O'Dwyer & Bernstein*) he was one of America's leading civil liberties & civil - rights attorneys. His office was at Wall Street in Manhattan from 1939. (*The Connacht Tribune.*) [\[xxxiv\]](#)

### **Landmark Litigation**

He litigated a Landmark 1951 Fight against the powerful Metropolitan Life Insurance Company that opened the way for Blacks to live in Stuyvesant Town, a huge Manhattan housing complex. He succeeded in his defence of Kentucky Miners who were accused of blowing up a bridge during a labour dispute, he won the acquittal of a Black teenager accused of homicide during a New York City mid 1960's riot. He also defended an unpopular chief during a city garbage collection strike. O 'Dwyer sued City Hall to force extra budget for public transport. He was also successful against the Supreme Court for the right of mainland Puerto Ricans to take their voter literacy tests in their Spanish language. During 1958 he joined with Eleanor Roosevelt & Herbert H. Lehman (*the former Governor*) to establish the Committee for Democratic Voters, the State Party Reform Movement. (*Cronin*) [\[xxxv\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer successfully litigated a Landmark 1951 fight against the powerful Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. That suit opened the way for Blacks to live in Stuyvesant Town, a huge Manhattan housing complex that warned of an era of desegregation across the nation. Paul O 'Dwyer was among one of the first volunteers to litigate in Deep South integration struggles. '*It was like a present on Christmas morning*' he enthused about his participation. (*Francis X. Clines Francis X. 25<sup>th</sup> June 1998*) During 1972 Paul O 'Dwyer defended a pacifist group called The Harrisburg Eight led by the Rev. Philip F. Berrigan. He won them a mistrial on charges of an Anti - Government Plot against the Nixon Administration during the Vietnam War. (*Clines*) [\[xxxvi\]](#)

## **WW11**

O 'Dwyer was a vehement opponent of American involvement in WW11. During the 1940's he fought for the Labour Movement also embattled immigrants against Mc McCarthyism & racial segregation in the 1950's while during 1960's his mission was to oppose the Vietnam War. [\[xxxvii\]](#)

## **Travels**

He travelled to Russia to denounce the treatment of Soviet Jews also to Spain to appeal the treatment of its people during Franco's regime. [\[xxxviii\]](#)

## **Politics**

O 'Dwyer spent over fifty years working on the struggle for Irish freedom from England. He supported Irish republican interests. He provided grants to Sean Mc Brides Irish Amnesty International, the Yeats Summer School, Co. Sligo, Trinity College Library, Dublin, Kilkenny Design Workshop, Ciste Colmcille, Merriman Summer School, Co. Clare also the restoration of Ballintubber Abbey in Co. Mayo. He was an enduring politician who impressed generations as an eloquent battler in the name of conscience: he also stood in the anti – war movement as '*a Patriarchal example in the eyes of young people intent on trusting no one over the age of thirty.*' (Cronin) [\[xxxix\]](#)

A leftist activist within the Democratic Party: he was prominent in the Party's Internal Reform Movement. With Eleanor Roosevelt & Paul O 'Dwyer as co - founder he headed a committee for Democratic voters in 1959. He was New York's co - chairman of John F. Kennedy's Presidential campaign during 1960. (*The Connacht Tribune*) [\[xl\]](#)

## **Democrat**

He was a life – long Democrat: during 1968 he delivered a powerful speech at a Democratic Convention. [\[xli\]](#)

## **Delegate**

Paul O 'Dwyer was a delegate to the 1964 Democratic National Convention as he led the fight to see the black Freedom Democratic Party of Mississippi represented. Personally close to a generation of Black politicians Paul O 'Dwyer managed the campaigns of several politicians. (Clines) [\[xlii\]](#)

As a delegate to the turbulent National Convention in Chicago Paul O 'Dwyer marched with anti - war demonstrators on the streets. He denounced Johnson Administration's Vietnam Policy on the Convention Floor. (*The Connacht Tribune*) [\[xliii\]](#)

## **Irish American Subculture**

A true American with an open spirit O 'Dwyer was the leader of the Irish American subculture that had developed in New York. He became chief liaison between the City Council with the individual diplomatic community. [\[xliv\]](#)

## **City Council**

Aged sixty - six years he was elected to the City Council. He served Manhattan from 1963 to 1966. [\[xlv\]](#)

As New York City Council president for three years he was successful in the alteration of the city's official founding date from 1664 (*when the British landed*) to 1625 when the Dutch Settlers arrived. [\[xlvi\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer was elected to the City Council to represent all of Manhattan for a term from 1963 - 65. He was elected to the position of New York City Council President (*then one of three citywide elected positions*) He served in that role from 1974 to 1977: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_O%27Dwyer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_O%27Dwyer)

Paul O 'Dwyer's tenure as president of New York City Council ran from 1974 to 1977. During a two - year term (*1964 / 5*) on the City Council as Manhattan councilman – at - large he was successful in the raising of the City's minimum wage. (*The Connacht Tribune*) [\[xlvii\]](#)

### **City's Commissioner**

O 'Dwyer accepted the role of the City's Commissioner to the United Nations during the Dinkins Administration: he soon boycotted the U.N. cafeteria for its anti – unionism stance. He later resigned due to his personal position on human rights. (*Cronin*) [\[xlviii\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer was named as City Commissioner to the United Nations in 1990. He boycotted the UN cafeteria for anti - union policies. He actually resigned so as not to impede his freedom to criticize human - rights abuses in member states. (*The Connacht Tribune*) [\[xlix\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer accepted the role of the City's Commissioner to the United Nations during the Dinkins Administration. Soon however he boycotted the U.N. Cafeteria for its Anti – Unionism stance. He finally resigned so as to enable himself to object against human rights abuses by several nations. (*Clines Francis X. 25<sup>th</sup> June 1998*) (*Cronin*) [\[l\]](#)

### **Historian**

During 1986 Manhattan Borough President Andrew Stein appointed Paul O 'Dwyer the Manhattan Borough historian: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_O%27Dwyer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_O%27Dwyer)

He was appointed Manhattan Borough historian during 1986. He assisted to engineer the election of David Dinkins as New York's First African - American Mayor in 1989 . (*The Connacht Tribune*) [\[li\]](#)

### **Honoured**

He was honoured by the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minnesota with an Honorary Doctorate for his humanitarian work. (*Cronin*) [\[lii\]](#)

Paul O 'Dwyer was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by St. Thomas's University in Minnesota. (*The Connacht Tribune*) [\[liii\]](#)

### **Ireland**

Paul O 'Dwyer's life - long commitment to his native Ireland was highlighted by two significant accomplishments : (A): his service as the national coordinator for the American League for an undivided Ireland, (B): his endowment of a home for the disabled on his family homesite in Mayo. [\[liv\]](#)

A national coordinator during the 1950s of the American League for an Undivided Ireland: he lobbied for a congressional resolution that urged a thirty – two - county plebiscite to determine the

constitutional status of Northern Ireland. He was active in funding. He served as first president in 1956 of the Irish Cultural Institute. He was a supporter of the Northern Ireland Civil - Rights Campaign of 1968 / 9. (*The Connacht Tribune*) [lv]

## Footnotes

[viii] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[ix] '*New York Mayo Men's Association Journal, Jubilee Edition*' 1954

[x] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.nytimes.com/>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xi] '*New York Mayo Men's Association Journal, Jubilee Edition*' 1954

[xii] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/paul-o-dwyer-1.172758>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xiii] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.nytimes.com/>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xiv] Paul O 'Dwyer Library (<https://www.irish-us.org/resources/paul-odwyer-library>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xv] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xvi] Ibid

[xvii] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.nytimes.com/>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xviii] Paul O 'Dwyer Library (<https://www.irish-us.org/resources/paul-odwyer-library>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xix] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xx] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxi] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xxii] Ibid

[xxiii] Ibid

[xxiv] Paul O 'Dwyer Library (<https://www.irish-us.org/resources/paul-odwyer-library>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxv] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxvi] Ibid

[xxvii] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xxviii] Ibid

[xxix] Ibid

[xxx] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.nytimes.com/>) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxxi] Ibid

[xxxii] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xxxiii] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxxiv] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xxxv] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxxvi] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.nytimes.com/>) [accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxxvii] Paul O ‘Dwyer Library (<https://irish-us.org/>) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxxviii] Our Campaigns Candidate (<https://www.ourcampaigns.com/>) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xxxix] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xl] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xli] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xlii] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.nytimes.com/>) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xliii] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xliv] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.irishtimes.com/>) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xlv] Paul O ‘Dwyer – The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/>) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xlvi] Paul O ‘Dwyer Library (<https://irish-us.org/>) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xlvii] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[xlviii] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[xliv] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[l] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[li] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[lii] An Advocate for Ireland ([www.irishtimes.com/](http://www.irishtimes.com/)) [Accessed 27<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[liii] Paul O ‘Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]

[liv] Paul O ‘Dwyer Library (<https://irish-us.org/>) [Accessed 28<sup>th</sup> June 2019]

[1v] Paul O 'Dwyer (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/odwyer-paul-a673>) [Assessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2019]