**Conor Cruise O’Brien Centenary Conference**

**November 2017**

**Facebook post**

Back from 2-day event at Trinity College Dublin commemorating and celebrating the life of Conor Cruise O’Brien. A veritable revisionist reunion/fest with positive memories, for the most part, of a man who reshaped Irish politics for the better.

The papers on Conor and the north from Eoghan Harris, Dennis Kennedy, and Stephen Collins were particularly effective and most enjoyable in their vigour and clarity. There was also a very perceptive and amusing presentation by Brendan Halligan, one-time Secretary of the Irish Labour Party. There were as well contributions from Ruairi Quinn, Mary Robinson and Margaret O’Callaghan. Susan McKay spoke cogently in an oppositional mode and to a lesser degree Deaglan de Breadun.

I met up with some old political friends from W.A. days including Dermot Meleady biographer of John Redmond, and John Cobain. Others present, some speaking, were Brian Garrett, Cecilia Linehan, Erskine Holmes, Paul Bew, Michael McDowell (Washington), Eunan O’Halpin, Roy Foster, Ruth Dudley Edwards, Tommy Murtagh, Tom Brace, Mort O’Sullivan, Tom Carew, and Seamus Moriarty, also Cameron Duodu from Ghana. There was the traditional BICO leaflet attacking O’Brien handed out and an intervention from Niall Meehan.

There was some sadness expressed about how ill-attended Conor’s funeral was but there is no doubt that his reputation is high and getting higher. I pointed out that although I never really believed Conor was a Unionist, let alone a UK Unionist or integrationist, he was in fact a 26-county patriot who so loved his country that he went to the outer edge to protect it, as very few others could.

The conference was followed by a very well-attended reception at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Iveagh House with some of his former DFA colleagues like Noel Dorr and current staffers Ruairi de Burca and the Secretary General Niall Burgess.

Family members present included their son Patrick, son-in-law Joe Kearney and a Simms grandson, but, best of all, Máire was there.

She, Máire Mhac an tSaoi, is ‘The Same Age As the State’, the title of her autobiography, and enjoyed the celebration mightily.

Jeff Dudgeon

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