

~~Legality~~

Yes Floor Speech
in tribute to Mike Kirwan
3/28/60

I rise to pay tribute to a member of this House who is at this very moment receiving the highest award that a University can confer--an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities.

Receiving the award ^{was} the Honorable Michael J. Kirwan of Ohio--the man we all know affectionately as "Mike" Kirwan; but the presentation to the Gentleman from Ohio does us all honor. In a sense it is the House of Representatives and the American Way of Life which are honored by the award to Congressman Kirwan.

This award expresses Democracy as it is practiced in our Country. Congressman Kirwan was born in Pennsylvania of working folk and at the age of seven was employed in the coal mines of that State. At that tender age he was already a member of the Miner's Union.

He was a breaker boy picking slag in the mines. More important, he was an agile, fast runner and his task in the Mine Workers' Union was to act as messenger to let the members know where their meetings were to be held. This was necessary because the Coal operators of that day were alert for any opportunity to break up union organization meetings with club and gun.

Mike, the breaker boy, the union messenger of the turn of the Century is now a Congressman being honored with a degree of Doctor of Humanities. This is a measure of how far we have come in our search for understanding between those who work for and those

ad 1 kirwan

who manage industry--a furtherance aided immeasurably by men like Mike Kirwan. And Congressman Kirwan has never forgotten his union background, for today he still pays union dues and has paid them without a break since boyhood.

Congressman Kirwan went no further in school than third grade. Yet today Mike Kirwan is an educated man--educated by his own efforts--pulled up, if you will, by his own boot straps, and today the boy who never saw school from the age of nine ~~is~~ ^{has} received a Degree of Doctor of Humanities--as Dr. J. Stauffer Wilkes, President of Oklahoma City University, stated in announcing the award: "The highest honor this institution can confer." This, too, is a measure of the progress made in America.

Congressman Kirwan is a Roman Catholic and the University that does him honor is a Methodist University. I think this bare statement illustrates the tremendous strides made in our Nation in the field of religious tolerance.

These items would be regarded as paradoxical in any other civilization that the world has known. Yet in America--in our country--they are normal. Perhaps too often, we fail to realize how far we have come and only when our friend, the Gentleman from Ohio, has such an honor conferred upon him do we see a yardstick applied to progress.

Chairman,
Mr. ~~Spencer~~, why did the Oklahoma City University single out Congressman Kirwan for this signal honor?

In my office I have a newspaper which takes four columns of type to tell. The Congressional Record might be a better testimonial.

add 2 kirwan

Those of us who have had the privilege of collaborating with Congressman Kirwan over the 23 years he has been a member of this body could testify as to chapter and verse.

Let me cite only a few of the accomplishments of Congressman Kirwan over the years which have brought him this recognition. Oklahoma City University in conferring this degree mentioned, among many other things, Congressman Kirwan's contribution to the welfare of the American Indian.

Only recently the Christian Century pointed out that the American Indian is outnumbered 400 to 1 and attains a very low priority on the scale of our social activities. Of all of the minorities in this land of minorities the Indian has the poorest health, the least opportunity for education and occupies the bottom of the economic heap.

But Congressman Kirwan, with a true Irish love for the underdog, has championed the Indian's cause. When a move was made to cut the appropriation for education and welfare of the Indians in the 1959 budget because of military emergencies, Congressman Kirwan said, and this, too, is a measure of his devotion to mankind, "Every time we start to do something for the Indians some sort of an emergency comes along and their funds go out the window."

Chairman,
Mr. ~~Speaker~~, I remember on one occasion our colleague told this House that "No amount of money can wipe away the shame of the way this Nation has treated the Indians--but money would help."

Since Congressman Kirwan became chairman of the subcommittee which handles appropriations for Indian Affairs in 1948 more Indians

add 3 kirwan

are in school and college than ever before, more tribes run their own affairs, more timber is being scientifically harvested from Indian lands, thus aiding their economic development; and more roads have been built to and through the reservations than in the entire period of our history before our colleague's time. At the insistence of Congressman Kirwan, this year's funding of Interior Appropriations will complete a program which for the first time in 141 years will provide classrooms, buses, roads and other facilities to allow every Indian child to attend school.

Chairman,
Mr. ~~Speaker~~, this ^{is} one measure to apply to Congressman Kirwan's humanity.

There are many others. I have cited the Indian problem at length because it illustrates Congressman Kirwan's love of mankind. But think of the benefits achieved by all American citizens by his efforts.

Since Congressman Kirwan began his fight to protect the natural resources of the Nation, Congress has voted nearly three quarters of a billion dollars for the National Park Service. In 1936 only 11,900,000 Americans visited our Parks. This year 66 million will get maximum enjoyment and protection from our country's 183 parks.

Chairman,
Mr. ~~Speaker~~, the recipient of this award from Oklahoma City University has done inestimable service to mankind by his endeavors in pushing through for completion the greatest program of conservation and reclamation ever known to man. Whole states, entire regions, have benefitted by the foresight of Congressman Kirwan. The great Central Valley project in California and the

add 4 kirwan

Hungry Horse Dam in Montana are testimonial to his vision. There are other such testimonials just as magnificent.

Yet, in almost every case the projects he has had the vision to press have been national in concept--for Congressman Kirwan believes that what helps America helps all Americans.

I could cite other things, his record of insistence on mine safety, which has aided in reducing mine casualties--a subject dear to Kirwan's heart. His record on land management--the record on timber conservation, his record in helping build up the Fish and Wildlife Service.

All of these things have advanced the cause of mankind in our Nation, they have made life easier, safer, more pleasant, and economically more bountiful for millions upon millions of Americans. And in doing so he has reflected great credit on the House of Representatives, for what he has sought, we, in the House of Representatives and in the other House as well, have passed. We have helped our Country and ourselves in following the leadership of this dedicated man.

Chairman.
Mr. ~~Speaker~~, Congressman Kirwan is being honored in Oklahoma. I am proud to do him honor here in the House of Representatives which he loves so well; for he has a deep and abiding affection for this House and the Members of it. Yet, the measure of the man lies in the humility with which he accepts this honor. He told a reporter who interviewed him:

"I am an honorary chief of five Indian tribes in Oklahoma. I guess being a Doctor won't hurt that."

add 5 Kirwan

Congressman Kirwan has come far from being a breaker boy picking slag in the mines. I am proud to serve with him in this House and to call him friend, for in my judgment, this man merits the adjective "great" and he illustrates, better than most, the greatness of the democratic system which produced him.

##