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# CAPACITY FOR CONCERN\*

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HOUSTON, TEXAS

Your Excellencies, Archbishop Vehr and Bishop Maloney; Right Reverend Monsignor McGowan; Reverend Fathers; Drs. Murphy and Holoubek; Mr. Chairman; ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds, as Chairman of the Award Committee and on the occasion also as a junior pediatrician, I am privileged to honor as Catholic Physician-of-the-Year, 1961, an elder physician and a senior pediatrician, Dr. Norman M. MacNeill of Philadelphia.

Before I make the award I should like, first, to say that Dr. MacNeill was nominated by the St. Rene Goupil and St. Francis of Assisi Guilds of Philadelphia, and second, to relate to you something about this physician gentleman. He is a native of one of Canada's Maritime Provinces, Nova Scotia, a part of the continent noted for an unusually high ratio of advanced educational facilities to population and for an especially valuable export: brainpower. Dr. MacNeill was born in Antigonish, which on the province is eastward and north of the land of the Acadians of Longfellow's famous poem, *Evangeline*.

At Antigonish Dr. MacNeill attended St. Francis Xavier University. Afterwards he exported himself to the States, and graduated in medicine from the Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia. He served the Medical Corps of the Royal Canadian Army in World War I, became a charter member of the British Officers' Club (often not to the delight of the Irish in Philadelphia), and later one of the club's presidents.

Dr. MacNeill is a Fellow of the Academy of Pediatrics. In Philadelphia he engaged in the practice of pediatrics, and in successive clinical academic appointments attained his present faculty position, Clinical Professor of Pediatrics and Attending Pediatrician at the Jefferson Medical College and Hospital. Since 1921 in the Clinics for Children at Jefferson College and Hospital he has taught child health to countless students in medicine and nursing, and to countless parents as well. He is a member of the medical staffs of Germantown, Holy Redeemer and Nazareth Hospitals. At Jefferson Hospital a nurses' guild is named not in honor of a Quaker woman but in honor of a Catholic man from the province of New Scotland, thus the MacNeill Nurses' Guild at Jefferson.

As a pediatrician, his professional responsibility has been the care

\* Address honoring the Catholic Physician of the Year, December 1, 1961, Annual Winter Meeting, National Federation of Catholic Physicians' Guilds. The Brown Palace Hotel, Denver, Colorado.

of youth — not merely the youth in his own private practice and in the teaching clinics, but also the orphaned boys of the Steven Girard College Orphanage, the foster children of the Philadelphia Catholic Children's Bureau, as well as innumerable young persons associated with the Boy Scouts, athletic associations, and Boys' Clubs. He has also been the medical director of the St. Simon's Mission Settlement for Negroes, the Trinitarian Convent, and the Carmelite Sisters in Philadelphia.

To the Carmelite Sisters he refers problems of mind, body and spirit of friends and patients alike, often to the latter simply remarking: "Don't worry now, the Carmelites have all your problems!" And in hospitals which he has attended, he has seen to it that statues of the Infant Christ dressed by the Carmelites have been placed in the nurseries.

Along with an immensely busy private practice, Dr. MacNeill is a former national vice-president of the Phi Rho Sigma medical fraternity. He is a long-standing student of medical history, and of Catholic history and literature; and is a former president of the American Catholic Historical Association. As a member of the Pasteur Society at Jefferson Medical College and an active associate hitherto in Catholic discussion groups, he has involved medical students at Jefferson in these activities as well as those of Catholic lending library functions.

The forenoted activities, both professional and personal, are, of

course, performed by countless doctors in medicine across the country. But how often are they performed with Dr. MacNeill's viewpoint and attitude. For it's



Dr. Taylor, Award Chairman (left), presents Dr. MacNeill with scroll, honoring him on this occasion.

one's viewpoint and attitude toward life that serves to separate physicians from doctors; and is the kind of unflinching devotion to a spiritual purpose that the Acadians of Longfellow's tender narrative poem, *Evangeline*, carried out, however arduous, with constant gentleness and in simplicity and humility.

There are innumerable aspects of Dr. MacNeill's life which are inaccessible to me. But this much I know: his lifetime also makes a gentle narrative; it is an exemplary narrative not of what life had to give him but of what he could give

life, not a concern about the things of the world but a concern about the things of God, and not a devotion to what his practice and patients could do for him but a dedication to what he could do for the children and youth in his practice.

Dr. MacNeill is unmarried, but his capacity for concern for children is one of tender genius; and, however acquired or developed through God's grace, has permitted him to care deeply and properly about what happens to children and those in need. Even more significantly his concern is not solely for the physical and material well-being of children; it, above all else, is for their spiritual well-being. But to what extent even his material generosity has extended in charity is not known, nor is it necessary to know. For one of Dr. MacNeill's associates aptly said: "... he exemplifies the life of St. Francis . . . he lives a simple life . . . he does more true, quiet charity than any man I've ever known."

His patients' account books have been closed for 25 years, Dr. MacNeill in a daring way holding the belief that human beings are fun-

damentally honest and, with neither a physician's statement nor a professional bill, will pay the doctor if capable.

One of his friends also points out that Dr. MacNeill, as bachelors sometimes do, drives a 6-year-old Plymouth bachelor-style — untidy, filled with books, samples, and so forth; and when subject to any jesting about such a state of affairs his reply is apt to be, "Not only that, I've washed it twice in its lifetime!"

Nowadays, when all moral and social authority is either ignored or under suspicion, Dr. MacNeill has chosen to live honestly and simply. Deliberately dedicating himself to God, he is a daily communicant, quietly devoting his professional and intellectual capacities to love and charity, not only of children but of anyone in need.

Therefore, "when one envisions the ideal Catholic physician," wrote the Vice-Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and chaplain of the St. Francis of Assisi Guild, "the name, life, and character of Dr. MacNeill emerge immediately."

(Immediately following, Dr. MacNeill was presented with a scroll and medallion honoring him on this occasion.)