



In Dunedin on 14 November 1899, Phillip George Connolly, a premature baby boy was born, so delicate his mother could never have believed he would grow up to become a Cabinet Minister. His mother was Evelyn Emily (nee Smith) and his father Hugh Babbington Connolly, a sheepfarmer from Hyde.

Phillip attended Otago Boys High School where he dreamed of taking up law. However his father died when he was 14 and Phillip left school to become an apprentice fitter at Dunedin's Hillside Railway Workshops. He then joined the Union Steamship Company as a marine engineer. In 1928 when the Otago Division of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was formed he was one of the original officers.

In 1929 he married Phyllis Mirfin, but she sadly died during childbirth in 1934.

His introduction to politics came in the 1930s when he joined a debating class. A group of 12 or 13 men would stay on till the early hours of the morning, talking about such topics as reduced working hours to absorb unemployment, import controls to build up New Zealand's industries, and a living wage for the unemployed.

In 1939 Phillip Connolly was elected as a Labour member of the Dunedin City Council, and in the following election topped the poll even although he was overseas on war service.

During World war Two, Lieutenant Commander Phillip Connolly commanded *HMNZS Moa* in the Pacific and the minesweeper *HMS Deodar* in the English Channel for 12 months and during the battle of Britain. In 1941 he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, and in 1944 the Volunteer Reserve Decoration.

In 1943 Phillip married Eileen Molly Noton, and that same year was elected to Parliament on the Labour ticket. He represented Dunedin seats for 20 years, serving as party whip, first chairman of the External Affairs Committee 1947-49, and on other committees of the House. In 1948 he was leader of the New Zealand delegation to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. From 1957 to 1960 he was Minister of Defence, Minister of Police, and Minister in charge of War Pensions in the Nash government.

He also served as a Dunedin City Councillor 1939-47, and 1968-70, as a member of the Otago Harbour Board 1944-47, 1950-56 and 1965-70, and as a member of the Otago Hospital Board 1944-47.

Phillip Connolly died suddenly on 13 February 1970, survived by his second wife and three daughters. He was described as “a crusader for ordinary people whom he felt were being unfairly treated.” His casket was draped with a battle-torn White Ensign from HMS Deodar and he was laid to rest in Dunedin;s Andersons Bay Cemetery beside parents who had never known of his achievements.