

## **TOM COOPER: A FRIEND OF FREEDOM**

In February 2020, Tom Cooper stood down as Chair of the Irish National Congress. Tom Cooper is the longest serving Chair of the Irish National Congress, fulfilling that role for 15 years longer than all his predecessors: Bobby Ballagh, Paul McGuill, Mary Lou Mc Donald and Cathal Óg MacCarthy combined.

One can often judge the character of a man by his enemies. The one good thing about being an Irish republican is that you have the best of enemies, the type of people that even Mahatma Gandhi would brake for if he saw them crossing the road. People like Kevin Myers, Eoghan Harris, Robin Bury and Ruth Dudley Edwards.

Tom's enemies are those who are also the enemies of Irish unity and Irish freedom and these enemies fear Tom and with good cause.

Tom may never get his own statue, plaque, page in the history books or mention in illustrious biographies but, without any doubt whatsoever, I can say that Tom is a truly historic figure; he has made history and he has changed Irish history for the better.

Unlike his enemies in Britain's privileged elite, educated on the playing fields of Eton and the Bullingdon club in Oxford, Tom was educated by the Christian Brothers who taught him one thing - persistence, persistence, persistence.

It was this trait which led to his countless letters, published in *The Irish Times* and other media outlets, here time and again he corrected the inaccuracies of those who seek to rewrite Irish history and produce fake news today.

Tom's legacy will be truth and understanding while the legacy of those who serve the interests of Britain's privileged elite will be the economic chaos of Brexit and the failed states of Libya and Syria.

On a personal level (I don't say this about many people) I have never met a man like Tom. We have found ourselves in a fair number of scrapes over the years and in all that time Tom has always been an ideal gentleman from the tips of his hair to the soles of his feet. He has always been wise, calm, fair-minded, and reasonable, resolute and decisive when necessary. He is a credit to the parents who raised him and when my son grows up I will be proud to tell him that I knew Tom Cooper; he was my friend.

*Paul McGuill*