



## Jo Cox MP RIP

I wonder if yesterday's utterly awful news about Jo Cox will mark a turning point in the way we view politicians.

I hadn't heard of her before yesterday, but you hear about her life, and can't help but be impressed: the first member of her family to go to university, and she went to Cambridge; she worked for Oxfam, and on a campaign to lower maternal mortality in the Third World, and only then went into politics as an MP, where she impressed with her intelligence and commitment; she was married with two young children.

She was killed while doing her duty, at the end of a presumably humdrum constituency surgery

She may have been a particularly impressive woman, but she's also not unique. I respect and admire James Berry, our current MP in Kingston; I also respect and admire Ed Davey, our previous MP. I don't agree with everything they say, but these are two impressive men, who each seem to me to be out to serve their constituents and play their part in making Britain a better country.

Of course, not all politicians can be good eggs, but equally I cannot believe that Kingston has been uniquely blessed in having two genuinely committed, hard-working, essentially decent individuals to represent us.

Isn't it just possible that the majority of MPs are also committed, hard working, essentially decent individu-

als?

Politicians, though, have been the target of sneers for most of my life. "Don't believe a word they say" is the undercurrent of much political coverage. Worse than that, the expenses scandal 'proved' that they were on the take. Moreover, I think that politicians *are* open to criticism in the current Referendum campaign, in that views are exaggerated to prove a point, be that the economic apocalypse if we leave Europe, or the immigrant swarm, if we stay in. The facts and balanced estimates have been obscured.

However, rather than blame politicians for that, is it not worth thinking that that's more a consequence of the fact that we're a democracy? Being a democracy involves persuasive argument to bring the mass of the people to get behind your point of view. Democratic politicians are always at the whim of the people; the system compels them therefore to persuade and twist the truth to support their case.

That doesn't mean they're not sensible, rational people underneath, who routinely enter risky situations and put themselves in danger just doing their jobs from day to day. Ten years ago, Stephen Timms, another decent and honourable MP, was attacked at a parliamentary surgery; thankfully he survived. Yesterday, Jo Cox was less fortunate.

The grief among those close to her must be awful. I wonder if part of her legacy might be greater respect for all who choose this path of public office.

*June 2016. Thought for the Train is a short column written by the Reverend Robert Stanier, the vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train, or elsewhere. [www.surbitonchurch.org.uk](http://www.surbitonchurch.org.uk).*