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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Monday 20 June 2016

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

DEATH OF A MEMBER

Mr Speaker: Colleagues, we meet today in heart-breaking sadness, but also in heartfelt solidarity. Any death in such awful circumstances is an outrage and a tragedy. Yet this death in this manner of this person, our democratically elected colleague, Jo Cox, is particularly shocking and repugnant.

All of us who came to know Jo during her all-too-short service in this House became swiftly aware of her outstanding qualities. She was caring, eloquent, principled and wise. Above all, she was filled with, and fuelled by, love for humanity. Devoted to her family and a relentless campaigner for equality, human rights and social justice, Jo was proud to be the Member of Parliament for Batley and Spenningsdale, where she had her roots and where she was determined to live life to the full. She succeeded superbly.

Jo was murdered in the course of her duty, serving constituents in need. She fought for them just as she fought for others—at home and abroad—who were victims of poverty, discrimination or injustice. An attack such as this strikes not only at an individual, but at our freedom. That is why we assemble here both to honour Jo and to redouble our dedication to democracy.

Tributes to Jo Cox

2.38 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the matter of tributes to Jo Cox.

Last Thursday, Jo Cox was doing what all of us here do: representing and serving the people who elected her. We have lost one of our own, and our society as a whole has lost one of our very best. She had spent her life serving and campaigning for other people, whether as a worker for Oxfam or for the anti-slavery charity, the Freedom Fund, as a political activist and as a feminist.

The horrific act that took Jo from us was an attack on democracy, and our whole country has been shocked and saddened by it, but in the days since the country has also learned something of the extraordinary humanity and compassion that drove her political activism and beliefs. Jo Cox did not just believe in loving her neighbour; she believed in loving her neighbour's neighbour. She saw a world of neighbours and she believed that every life counted equally.

In a very moving tribute, Kate Allen, the director of Amnesty International, said:

“Her campaigning on refugees, Syria and the rights of women and girls made her stand out as an MP who always put the lives of the most vulnerable at the heart of her work.”

Her former colleague at the Freedom Fund, Nick Grono, said:

“Jo was a powerful champion for the world's most vulnerable and marginalised.”

She spoke out in support of refugees, for the Palestinian people and against Islamophobia in this country. Her integrity and talent was known by everyone in this House, and by the community of Batley and Spenningsdale, which she proudly represented here for the past year. It was that community in Batley and Spenningsdale that brought her up, as well, of course, as her wonderful family, with whom we share their grief today.

Her community and the whole country has been united in grief and united in rejecting the well of hatred that killed her in what increasingly appears to have been an act of extreme political violence. We are filled with sorrow for her husband, Brendan, and young children. They will never see her again, but they can be so proud of everything she was, all she achieved and all she stood for, as we are, as are her parents, as is her sister and as are her whole wider family.

Jo would have been 42 this Wednesday. She had much more to give, and much more that she would have achieved.

I want to thank the heroes who tried to intervene. Bernard Kenny, a 77-year-old former miner, saw the need and ran to Jo's aid. He was stabbed and taken to hospital. I am sure that the whole House will join me in wishing Mr Kenny a speedy and full recovery—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”] Many shopkeepers and bystanders also tried to help, and administered first aid to Jo and Bernard, and there were also the police officers who made the arrest and the national health service paramedics who were on the scene so quickly.

In her maiden speech last year, Jo said:

“Our communities have been deeply enhanced by immigration ... While we celebrate our diversity, what surprises me time and time again as I travel around the constituency is that we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 674-75.]

We need a kinder and gentler politics. This is not a factional party political point. We all have a responsibility in this House and beyond not to whip up hatred or sow division.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you, Prime Minister, and Rose Hudson-Wilkin, our wonderful chaplain, for accompanying me to the vigil for Jo last Friday at the Priestley statue in the centre of the lovely town of Birstall. We—all of us—were moved by the unity and warmth of the crowd brought together in grief and solidarity.

I have been very moved by the public outpourings since her death—the hundreds of letters and emails we have all received in solidarity with Jo's family in their hour of grief—and by the outpouring of charitable donations to causes close to her heart, the White Helmets, HOPE not hate, and the Royal Voluntary Service. Last night, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) and I held a vigil outside our town hall, one of hundreds of vigils attended by tens of thousands of people right across our land who are so shocked by what has happened and want to express that shock and grief.

[Jeremy Corbyn]

I also want to thank the other parties in this House, which have offered their sympathy and support at this very difficult time. We are united in grief at her loss, and we must be aware that her killing is an attack on our democracy. It is an attack on our whole society. As my hon. Friend the Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern) wrote recently,

“Jo’s life was a demonstration against despair”.

In Jo’s tragic death, we can come together to change our politics, to tolerate a little more and condemn a little less. Jo’s grieving husband Brendan said:

“Jo believed in a better world and she fought for it every day of her life with an energy, and a zest for life that would exhaust most people.”

Today, we remember Jo’s compassion and her passion to create a better world. In her honour, we recommit ourselves to that task.

2.45 pm

The Prime Minister (Mr David Cameron): We are here today to remember an extraordinary colleague and friend. Jo Cox was a voice of compassion, whose irrepressible spirit and boundless energy lit up the lives of all who knew her and saved the lives of many she never ever met. Today, we grieve her loss and we hold in our hearts and prayers her husband Brendan, her parents and sister, and her two children, who are just three and five years old. We express our anger at the sickening and despicable attack that killed her as she did her job serving her constituents on the streets of Birstall. Let me join the Leader of the Opposition in his moving words praising Bernard Kenny and all those who tried to save her. Above all, in this House we pay tribute to a loving, determined, passionate and progressive politician, who epitomised the best of humanity and who proved so often the power of politics to make our world a better place.

I first met Jo in 2006 in Darfur. She was doing what she was so brilliant at: bravely working in one of the most dangerous parts of the world, fighting for the lives of refugees. Her decision to welcome me, then a Conservative Leader of the Opposition, had not been entirely welcomed by all her colleagues and friends, but it was typical of her determination to reach across party lines on issues that she felt were so much more important than party politics. Jo was a humanitarian to her core—a passionate and brilliant campaigner, whose grit and determination to fight for justice saw her, time and time again, driving issues up the agenda and making people listen and, above all, act; drawing attention to conflicts in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo; helping to expose the despicable practice of rape in war; her work with Sarah Brown on cutting mortality in childbirth; her support for refugees fleeing the war in Syria. Quite simply, there are people on our planet today who are only here and alive because of Jo.

Jo was a committed democrat and a passionate feminist. She spent years encouraging and supporting women around the world to stand for office, long before she did so herself. When she was elected as an MP, just over a year ago, she said to one of her colleagues that she did not just want to be known for flying around the world tackling international issues, but that she had a profound

duty to stand up for the people of Batley and Spen, and she was absolutely as good as her word. As she said in her maiden speech, Jo was proud to be made in Yorkshire and to serve the area in which she had grown up. She belonged there, and in a constituency of truly multi-ethnic, multi-faith communities, she made people feel that they belonged too.

Jo’s politics were inspired by love, and the outpouring and unity of the tributes we have seen in the past few days show the extraordinary reach and impact of her message, for in remembering Jo we show today that what she said in this House is true—and I know it will be quoted many times today:

“we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]

This Wednesday, as the Leader of the Opposition said, would have been Jo’s 42nd birthday, and there will be a global celebration of her life and values with simultaneous events in New York and Washington, London, Batley, Brussels, Geneva, Nairobi and Beirut. She should of course have been celebrating her birthday by hosting her traditional summer solstice party. It reminds us that behind the formidable professional was a loving and fun mother, daughter, sister, wife and friend, with a warm welcoming smile and so often laughter in her voice. Jo brought people together; she saw the best in people and she brought out the best in them.

A brave adventurer and a keen climber, Jo was never daunted. When most people hear of a place called the Inaccessible Pinnacle, they leave it well alone. Not Jo. She did not just climb it; she abseiled down it, and did so despite a bad case of morning sickness. It was her irrepressible spirit that helped to give her such determination and focus in her politics, too. A Conservative colleague of mine said this weekend:

“If you lost your way for a moment in the cut and thrust of political life, meeting Jo would remind you why you went into politics in the first place.”

There have been so many moving tributes in the past few days, but if I may I would like to quote someone already mentioned—the hon. Member for Wirral South (Alison McGovern):

“We mourn your loss, yet know that all you stood for is unbreakable. We promise to stand up, even though we are broken. We promise that we will never be cowed by hate.”

May we and the generations of Members who follow us in this House honour Jo’s memory by proving that the democracy and freedoms that Jo stood for are indeed unbreakable, by continuing to stand up for our constituents, and by uniting against the hatred that killed her, today and forever more.

2.50 pm

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): I stand here today to honour a friend and a colleague. Along with shock, anger and grief, I have very many fond memories of Jo. Jo and I knew each other for around 10 years. I have known her husband Brendan for longer than that: we first met at a Labour student conference about 18 years ago, and it was through Brendan that I first met Jo.

I remember Jo and Brendan coming round for dinner at my and my husband’s house in London and our visiting them on their boat—first in Ladbroke Grove

and later in Wapping. I remember worrying that I had drunk too much wine early in the evening, until I realised that it was the boat that was swaying and not me.

I remember talking with Jo about her future shortly after I became an MP. She was thinking about standing for Parliament and spent a day shadowing me in my constituency of Leeds West, talking to constituents about their problems, campaigning with local party members and attending meetings. By the end of the day, a lot of people were not sure who was the MP and who was doing the shadowing. Jo had a way with people—a way of relating to people from all walks of life. She had a real way of doing that.

Jo's main hesitation about a parliamentary career was her young family. She worried, as many of us do, about whether she could be a great MP and a great mum at the same time. But when the opportunity came up to represent her home seat of Batley and Spen, Jo felt a special responsibility to step up and do what she could for the place where she was born, grew up and went to school—the place that Jo called home.

Jo wanted to make the world fairer, more equal, more tolerant and more generous. We all have better instincts and deepest fears. Jo appealed to our better instincts—our sense that, as she said in her maiden speech, what we have in common is greater than what divides us.

On Friday morning, less than 24 hours after Jo was killed, I sat in a coffee shop in Batley just a few minutes away from where Jo had been murdered. A woman came over to me and said that she had not known Jo, but that Jo's death had made her want to be a bit more like her—a better person, a better mother, a better daughter, a better wife. It is ironic that, having travelled to some of the most damaged, war-ravaged places in the world, Jo died so near to her home. But she died doing the job she loved, in the place she loved, representing the people she loved. Her mum and dad said to me that Jo would not have changed a thing. She lived the life she wanted to live. And yet, in her mum's words:

“She had so much more that she could have done”.

Jo was struck down much too soon. So it now falls on all our shoulders—the woman I met in a Batley coffee shop, Jo's friends, MPs, all of us—to carry on Jo's work: to combat and guard against hatred, intolerance and injustice and to serve others with dignity and love. That is the best way we can remember Jo and all she stood for.

But lastly, let me say this. Batley and Spen will go on to elect a new MP. But no one can replace a mother.

2.54 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): Today we mourn the terrible loss of our friend and colleague Jo, so tragically murdered as she went about her constituency duties last Thursday. The life has been taken of a truly exceptional woman, whose goodness and passionate dedication to humanitarian values has inspired us all. I knew her as a friend, but how unbearable must it be for those who mourn her as a daughter, sister, husband and, above all, as their beloved mum, whom they used to visit for tea each week in Portcullis House.

I first met Jo 10 years ago in London, when we marched against injustice in Darfur, and on two visits to al-Fashir in Darfur, where she helped develop a central humanitarian role for Oxfam. The Leader of the Opposition, as he then was, and I stayed there with her and other humanitarian workers and witnessed her crucial role for Oxfam in supporting women and children and securing water for thousands of refugees in the El Salam and Abu Shouk camps. She gave me the green wristband—I wear it still—to ensure that we remembered the desperate people caught up in what President Bush rightly described as a genocide. It is among her many friends and colleagues in the international humanitarian and development family all around the world, of which she was such a respected and experienced member, that she will be mourned and remembered as a staunch friend of the most desperate and deprived in our world and as a campaigner against injustice.

When she entered this House just 13 short months ago, she rapidly used her deep knowledge to champion the dispossessed. She was Labour to her fingertips, but restlessly dismissive of party political manoeuvring, which she saw as a barrier to progress. Making common cause with a crusty old Tory, she and I became co-chairs of the all-party Friends of Syria.

And she was brave: her energy and effectiveness were an inspiration. We invited ourselves to tea with the Russian ambassador in his London residence. With clever charm but steely determination, this five-foot bundle of old-fashioned Yorkshire common sense dressed him down for his country's cruelty and cynicism in Syria. I do not believe the Russian ambassador will easily forget that visit.

I think there are many things Jo would want us to remember this afternoon. May I mention just two? I do not believe she would want this vile and unspeakable act to change the open and accessible relationship we enjoy with our constituents. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”] All of us take the advice of our local police in protecting those who work with and support us. Thankfully, the record shows these attacks are as infrequent as they are disgraceful. Secondly, Jo would want us in this House to redouble our efforts to resolve the greatest catastrophe of our age: the crisis in Syria, where the lives of more than 11 million people have been ruined while the international community has shown itself disorganised, ineffective and supine.

I mourn Jo today as a friend and as a colleague, but most of all I mourn for her as a mother, whose two gorgeous children will now have to chart the shoals and eddies of life without the love and support of their wonderful, lovely mum.

2.58 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): I want to add to the very moving tributes to Jo. I got to know Jo after the 2010 general election, when she was elected to chair Labour Women's Network, which she did for four years. She would regularly burst into my office with that extraordinary energy she had and tell me all that they were doing to help Labour women get elected to Parliament to give women a bigger voice in the party. So many of the Labour women here in this Chamber today who were elected in 2015 and who are

[Ms Harriet Harman]

so deeply mourning Jo's loss were women whom, under Jo's leadership, Labour Women's Network helped and supported.

Not long after she had her son, she came to give me one of those regular briefings, and, of course, the baby came too—I remember it because she literally did not stop kissing him all the way through the meeting. When she had her daughter, she was still there for the women who were trying to become candidates—texting them support, phoning to commiserate if they did not make it, urging them to try again. Her feminism—her solidarity with other women—was a thread that ran through her and all her work in her community and for humanitarian causes. She always said to me emphatically that her children were her priority above everything. But there was no dividing line between Jo's maternal heart and her great political heart. Her children will grow up to know what an amazing woman their mother was. She is such a great loss to our politics; and an irreplaceable loss to her family, to whom we send our heartfelt sympathy.

3 pm

Stuart Andrew (Pudsey) (Con): “What an amazing woman.” “Jo was one of us.” “She was clearly a remarkable person.” These are not my comments, although I clearly concur with them; they are just some of the many comments I heard from constituents and from those I met over the weekend in Batley and Spen.

Conscious of time and wanting to ensure that her friends have the opportunity to speak, I make this short but heartfelt contribution on behalf of my fellow Yorkshire Conservative MPs. I first met Jo just over a year ago. It was not long after the general election and we were both appearing on the region's “Sunday Politics” show. On arriving at the studio, I was taken to the make-up room, where Jo was already sitting in the chair. Needless to say, I had to spend a lot longer in that chair than she did. As I walked in, Jo looked at me in the reflection in the mirror and greeted me with that wonderful smile that lit her whole face. In that instant—that split second—I knew this was someone I was going to like enormously, and I was not wrong. As we recorded the programme, it was clear that actually we agreed with each other on a number of issues. I am sure that the lack of political argument came as a huge disappointment to the producers. It is a testament to who Jo was that she got her point across effectively and calmly, without the need for talking over people—because when Jo spoke, people listened.

Jo was always passionate about the issues she cared about—never afraid to stand up for those she felt had no voice—but she was also a proud Yorkshirewoman, and our county is rightly proud of her. As I spent time in Birstall and Batley over this weekend, it was clear that her constituents loved her. Almost everyone I spoke to had met her: quite an achievement in just a year. As the floral tributes increased, you could sense the outpouring of love for Jo. On Friday, as some 2,000 people, from all faiths and none, packed into the Al-Hikmah centre in Batley, tribute after tribute spoke of the qualities of one of the most outstanding Members this House had. Many described her as a rising star; personally, I think she was a star, full stop.

The statements from Jo's husband, her sister and her family—powerful, inclusive, passionate—demonstrate the background that many of her values came from. In her maiden speech, as we have heard, she talked about how

“we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]

In everything she did, she promoted those values. She united communities and campaigned for things that highlighted the unifying qualities she cared so passionately about. In these last few days, I have been amazed at the kindness and love expressed on social media and in emails, letters, cards and conversations. The #thankyourmp hashtag has encouraged so many messages of gratitude and appreciation, even from people who have opposing views. In her tragic death, Jo is managing to achieve what she successfully did so much in her life.

I know I am not alone in saying that I will miss Jo. I will miss her compassion, her determination, her conviction—but above all I will miss her smile, whether it be as we passed each other in the corridor or from across the Chamber. Jo was a proud Yorkshire lass; a brilliant Yorkshire rose. My only regret about Jo is that I only knew her for a year.

3.4 pm

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): Jo and I have been friends for over 20 years, and we have had a wonderful 12 months sharing an office since our election last May. Jo used to use my cupboard as a wardrobe, and I will never forget her dashing around in her cycling gear, grabbing her clothes and shouting something over her shoulder about her latest project or campaign. She often brought her lovely children into the office with her, and if I was lucky I would get a dinosaur drawing or a chance to read them a story. They are wonderful kids, who are truly bathed in love.

The murder of Jo Cox was a national tragedy, but we must also remember the unspeakable personal suffering that it has caused. Jo's family have lost a loving mother, wife, daughter and sister. The fearless Jo Cox never stopped fighting for what is right. She gave voice to the voiceless. She spoke truth to power. She exemplified the best values of our party and of our country: compassion, community, solidarity and internationalism. She put her convictions to work for everyone she touched—for the people of Batley and Spen, for the wretched of Syria and for victims of violence and injustice everywhere.

On Thursday, Jo was assassinated because of what she was and because of what she stood for. But out of the deep darkness of Jo's death must now come the shining light of her legacy. So let us build a politics of hope, not fear; respect, not hate; unity, not division. I can only imagine Jo's reaction had she seen the poster that was unveiled hours before her death—a poster on the streets of Britain that demonised hundreds of desperate refugees, including hungry, terrified children, fleeing from the terror of ISIS and from Russian bombs. She would have responded with outrage, and with a robust rejection of the calculated narrative of cynicism, division and despair that it represents, because Jo understood that rhetoric has consequences. When insecurity, fear and anger are used to light a fuse, an explosion is inevitable.

In the deeply moving tribute that Brendan Cox made last Thursday, he urged the British people to unite and fight against the hatred that killed Jo. It is the politics of division and fear, the harking back to incendiary slogans and the rhetoric of “Britain First” that twists patriotism from love of country into an ugly loathing of others. We must now stand up for something better, because of someone better. In the name of Jo Cox and all that is decent, we must not let this atrocity intimidate our democracy. We must now work to build a more respectful and united country. This is our time to honour the legacy of the proud Yorkshire lass who dedicated her life to the common good and who was so cruelly taken away from us in the prime of her life. Jo Cox, we love you, we salute you and we shall never forget you.

3.7 pm

Mrs Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): Jo Cox was a politician who spanned continents and political parties. Among other causes, she campaigned alongside many of us on behalf of people with autism. With her death, we have lost a powerful advocate.

When I came into this House in 1992, I sat alongside the first woman MP for Batley and Spen, Elizabeth Peacock. She held her surgeries for 14 years in the Birstall library, and she exchanged letters with Jo when Jo was still at school. Like all of us, she has been shocked to the core by this tragedy. She asked me to say that the attack on Jo was an attack on our democracy and on the very basis of our Government and political system. She will mourn the loss of an outstanding friend in politics.

Jo’s family will mourn her as irreplaceable. We will mourn a woman of talent and humanity, a rising star and a bright light, whose voice may now be extinguished but whose spirit, which epitomises our democracy, will not be forgotten. It will inspire not only her children but many generations of politicians still to come.

3.9 pm

Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab): This is the hardest speech I will ever give. However, it was not difficult to write because there was so much that I wanted to say. Jo Cox, the hon. Member for Batley and Spen, was the very best of us. She may have been small, but in politics as in life, she packed a punch that was simply beyond measure. She came into this place with such passion and energy. From the start, she had a clarity about what she was here to achieve and what needed to change, and she was not going to waste any time in getting on with it. She knew that the people counting on her could not afford to wait.

Jo’s experiences of working in some of the most dangerous places in the world, caring for some of the most desperately vulnerable, upholding the principles of justice and basic human rights, were reflected in her politics and her character. It meant that when she spoke, people listened. There was a weight to what she had to say and she was not afraid to say it. She had a vision of a world better than the one that has taken her from us.

Characteristically, Jo would work across the Benches to build support for change in the most collegiate way. That has been reflected in the tributes paid to her.

When the new 2015 intake of Labour MPs arrived in Westminster in May last year, our then acting leader, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), told us:

“Every day you are an MP is a day that you can make a difference.”

Nobody embodied that sentiment more than Jo.

With friends and colleagues, Jo would speak candidly about the challenges of balancing a young family with the pressures of being a diligent and effective Member of Parliament. I was both Jo’s friend and Jo’s Whip, which should have been a difficult balance to strike, but it was not. That is not to say that she was the easiest person to whip as she knew that certain late night votes were not as important as being there to put her children to bed and to tuck them in.

Jo managed to reconcile being a hero of our movement with being incredibly down to earth. People only had to hear Jo speak to know that her roots were firmly in Batley and Spen. She was a daughter of Yorkshire and she fought tirelessly for those who had put their faith in her.

Like all of us, I will remember Jo in many different ways. She spoke of her predecessor, Dr Broughton, in her maiden speech, alluding to the fact that he had been credited with bringing down a Government, and she put Government Front Benchers on notice with a smile that we all came to know and love. Although they laughed it off at the time, I would not be at all surprised if they had become increasingly nervous once they began to realise just how formidable she was.

I will also remember Jo in the voting Lobbies in her cycling kit and trainers, leaving us all wondering where she found the energy. I remember hearing about the trials and tribulations of the kids recently having chicken pox. I remember regional news following her as a newly elected MP and capturing the moment when one of the kids lost their shoe to the Thames and Jo had to try to retrieve it, all before starting the day. I will remember her warmth, her spirit and her laugh.

Those of us from my intake who had the pleasure of Jo’s company as she hosted an event to mark our first year in office last Tuesday will be eternally grateful for those treasured memories and the chance to all be together one last time.

My hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Anna Turley) told me that she will remember Jo as a comet: burning brightly, lighting up the dark, awe-inspiring, giving off sparks of heat, light and positive energy wherever it goes. I cannot think of a better way of describing her.

Jo was the heart and soul of the Labour Benches and we are heartbroken. We loved her every day and we will miss her every day. She inspired us all and I swear that we will do everything in our power to make her and her family incredibly proud.

3.13 pm

Dr Eilidh Whiteford (Banff and Buchan) (SNP): Today, this House is united in grief. In Jo Cox we have lost a respected and treasured colleague and friend, and on behalf of SNP and Plaid Cymru MPs and the people we represent, I want to pay tribute to a remarkable

[Dr Eilidh Whiteford]

woman whose passion, determination and dedication characterised the short time she was with us, and rubbed off on those around her.

I was lucky enough to know Jo long before either of us was elected to Parliament, when we both worked for Oxfam. Jo was an inspired and inspiring colleague. When we first met, Jo, still only in her twenties, was already heading up Oxfam's advocacy office in Brussels, lobbying to make trade fair for developing countries, and she was a joy to work with.

Jo was incredibly talented. She was very smart, focused and driven, but it was the way she worked with others that really marked her out: she was supportive, inclusive and generous, and she radiated positive energy. Jo really was a bright star who helped others to shine. She could have done anything with her life, but she chose to spend it helping others and making the world a better place.

Inevitably, over the last few days I have been sharing memories of Jo with many of our former Oxfam colleagues, some of whom worked far more closely with her on a daily basis than I did. I want to share with the House just a few of the things they said, because they sum up well the sort of person Jo was before she entered Parliament and the values that she brought with her. One of her friends says:

"Jo brought energy, fun and an absolute focus on wanting to improve the lives of those living in poverty. She was determined to make Governments do more to end the conflict in Darfur and protect civilians. She embodied what it meant to be a true humanitarian."

Another says:

"The wonderful thing about Jo was how much she genuinely cared—for those around her and for those far away. She was not afraid to wear her heart on her sleeve."

Another friend describes her as:

"A massive bundle of brains and energy—a woman who radiated friendly warmth and intellect."

Almost everyone I have spoken to has mentioned how connected Jo was to her Yorkshire roots. As one friend observed:

"She was proud of where she was from, but rightly saw no contradiction between that and caring about the lives of people on the other side of the world."

We often witnessed that here in Parliament too, where Jo fought with equal resolve for refugee children fleeing Syria and the children in her own constituency growing up in poverty. I like to think that it was those deep, strong roots in her own Yorkshire community that enabled Jo to branch her arms around the world with so much love. She was proud of Yorkshire; Yorkshire should be immensely proud of her. I laid white roses for Jo at the vigil in Aberdeen on Saturday organised by Lewis Macdonald MSP and Dame Anne Begg, but I know that Jo's friends and former colleagues have been holding memorials for her in countries all over the world.

The last time I saw Jo was at the Macmillan Cancer Support parliamentary tug of war event just a couple of weeks ago. The conventional wisdom is that height and weight are distinct advantages in tug-o-war. [Laughter.] Jo had neither of those attributes: her stature was quite possibly the only thing about her that was diminutive. Nevertheless, there she was pulling for the women MPs'

team with every ounce of her strength and every fibre of her being, and with sheer, dogged determination. That is how I want us to remember her: this strong, brave, determined woman giving her all with absolute commitment. I want to remember Jo Cox for how she lived, not how she died. I want her to be a symbol of the politics of hope, not the politics of fear.

This Parliament is a lot poorer for Jo's passing, and we in the SNP and Plaid Cymru extend our sincere condolences to her colleagues and friends in the parliamentary Labour party. Jo's constituents in Batley and Spen have been robbed of an outstanding and dedicated MP—the person they chose, democratically, to be their voice in this place.

To Brendan, Cuillin and Lejla, and the Leadbeater family: we know your loss is immeasurable and that your lives have been changed irrevocably. We hold all of you in our hearts. I hope that in time, when they are older, Jo's children will come to understand more fully just how much their brilliant, beautiful mother was able to contribute to humanity in her short, purposeful and well-lived life. Jo, those of us who knew you will never forget you. I hope you rest in peace.

3.17 pm

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): In a tale of another Yorkshire tragedy that led to action and hope in the midst of sadness, we are told:

"The flowers of Yorkshire are like the women of Yorkshire. Every stage of their growth has its own beauty, but the last phase is always the most glorious."

And it was glorious, Jo.

I was in awe of Jo. To be honest, I was always a bit envious. She was energetic, brave, dynamic, fit, beautiful and passionate. I cannot ever recall seeing her sad, negative or without hope. She once told me, in a one-to-one meeting as my manager at Oxfam, that she did not do touchy-feely, that I was being too emotional, that we needed to "get on with it" and sort out the campaign we were working on.

Jo believed in building bridges. She was fiercely Labour to her core, but when we thought our party was on the way out of government, she knew there were bigger things at stake. We had to reach out to others: we had to convince them of the case for tackling global poverty and for standing up for civilians in conflict and crisis and for women and girls. She was never satisfied with platitudes. She wanted action. We have all been overwhelmed over the last few days with just how many lives she touched, from the refugee camps of Darfur to the mountains of Pakistan, but she was not some do-gooder jetting in to hand out alms. She wanted to know why, who was responsible and what we could do about it.

Jo had a remarkable mind and an incredible ability to multi-task. I once met her to go to lobby some very senior officials in the Foreign Office about various crises. She turned up, typically, in a rush with her climbing kit hanging out of her bag. We sat on the floor in King Charles Street, where she then jumped straight into reading a briefing. She knew exactly what the key points were within minutes and then delivered the crucial information to the decision makers with utter confidence

and assuredness. It was brilliant. That brilliance was universally felt by all those she worked with. Moira described her as a

“fearless, compassionate professional with such an impish streak.”

Vicky said that Jo had smarts and spirit. Conor, who worked closely with her, said that she taught him

“how to get stuff done ... with passion and professionalism”.

Our friend Ben, who spent a famous night on a mountain with her in Pakistani Kashmir, reminded our friends in recent days that everyone assumes that in NGOs people must all be really kind. He said:

“But the truth is we are not ... we can be vain, arrogant and mean... not Jo. Not just did everyone like Jo. More impressively Jo liked everyone. She was furious at injustice ... but saw no one as a permanent enemy, and everyone as a potential ally.”

Though Jo was kind, she was a steely edged campaigner. Our friend and colleague Phil Bloomer said that she was

“one of the most kind, caring and committed people I have had the privilege to know ... but she could also make herself a right royal pain in the back-side if she profoundly disagreed with you: a lesson many political leaders learnt too late, and to their cost.”

He reflected on Jo’s years influencing Peter Mandelson when she headed Oxfam’s Brussels office at a young age. He had to quickly adapt his approach. But most of all, Phil hit the mark. He said:

“Jo loved justice ... Jo loved Love”.

Adrian, our friend, told me of the time he saw Jo just a few months ago over a sandwich. He told me that he “saw again the bravery and determination as she figured out how to hold feet to the fire—in her own party as well as her opponents—over Syria and the good we failed to do.”

Our close mutual friend and campaigner Kirsty summed Jo up perfectly for me. She said that Jo

“never just asked ‘what do you think?’ always ‘what should we do’. This is what we should do. Act. Love. Unite.”

That was the Jo I knew. Kind, caring, passionate, principled, thoughtful—an intellect, but most of all focused on doing for others, not just being for ourselves.

3.21 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): We stand united as colleagues, indeed comrades, to mourn someone who was an enormous figure in the House and who would have gone on to be much greater still. For me and millions of others, the snatching away of a wife and mother, hugely loving and hugely loved, is what has moved Britain to stand in collective grief this last few days.

Others who knew Jo well have commented on her huge achievements in her career before Parliament and in the time she served during the past 13 months as an outstanding Member of Parliament. My path crossed hers as we took the same side in the campaign for this country to show compassion to desperate refugees, especially child refugees, fleeing Syria and elsewhere. Her winsome, authentic and informed contribution to the refugees debate seemed to me critical. Her legacy is one of building bridges and not walls; of getting this Lancastrian to wear this white Yorkshire rose; of combining passion in what she believed in with kindness in how she expressed it. Can we all agree now that that is how our politics shall be conducted? We are shocked and heartbroken at her loss. On behalf of my party, on behalf of everyone in Cumbria, I want to say that our enduring love and sympathy is with Jo’s family.

3.23 pm

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): Let me begin by saying again Jo’s own words:

“Who can blame desperate parents for wanting to escape the horror that their families are experiencing? Children are being killed on their way to school...one in three children have grown up knowing nothing but fear and war. Those children have been exposed to things no child should ever witness, and I know that I would risk life and limb to get my two precious babies out of that hellhole.”—[*Official Report*, 25 April 2016; Vol. 608, c. 1234.]

When Jo spoke, we all listened. Why? Because the principle that she drew on in that speech and in life is the simple idea that we have more in common than that which divides us. Her words demonstrate that if we choose, we do not always have to see ourselves as different from those far away. We can choose to see what unites us. We all listened because her words spoke to each and every one of us.

To know Jo, even a little bit, was to understand how proud she was of her family and to hear her relish her role as a mum. Many of her friends have spoken of that joy, that warmth and that natural charm. She had a way of talking not just about herself and her own ideas, but always about what we could do together.

Jo took on the toughest of problems and the most forgotten causes, and fought campaigns that we could all feel a part of and that would truly make change happen. Whether it was Darfur or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jo knew how easily our global responsibilities fade from view without conscious activism. As she herself wrote:

“This active internationalist approach is not inevitable. It has been, and is still contested across the political spectrum.”

Jo wrote about a fight not just for one country, one people or one cause, but for a world view that bestowed on each of us rights and on all of us the responsibility to protect. That is especially true in relation to her activism in pursuit of women’s rights. Faced with the great joy and great risk of motherhood, women are uniquely and equally vulnerable. When the world could not find the wherewithal to meet the millennium development goal to cut maternal mortality, Jo took on this huge challenge and made global leaders sit up and listen to women.

Jo did not just believe that women’s voices should be heard; she made it so. She was a feminist whose activism saved women’s lives and whose political skill got women elected to this House. Many in this place will never have seen the quiet, careful work of Jo and her colleagues at Labour Women’s Network to give women the knowledge and networks to take control and win power. She did it not by hectoring or lecturing, but by believing in the goodness of others. As Jo’s friend and mine, Kirsty McNeill, has written:

“Half holding you upright, half shoving you forward. That’s what it meant to have Jo’s arm around your shoulder.”

How we all long for those arms round our shoulder today—for one more hug, and definitely for one more smile—but it cannot be.

The words from Jo’s maiden speech must therefore truly ring out today:

“we are far more united and have far more in common than that which divides us.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2015; Vol. 596, c. 675.]

Cheap populism cannot take hold. Jo’s vision of our country, explained in that speech, is one that we know in our hearts to be true. It is not where you come from

[Alison McGovern]

that matters; it is the compassion and love in your heart. You might be ferociously proud of your home town, as Jo was, but you know that compassion does not end at its boundaries.

And here is another thing that does not end: Jo Cox's life had real meaning. She gave love to us all and that can never be lost. We may feel lost today, but inside us all, the love is still there.

3.27 pm

Mr Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): I speak today, by agreement, for all the Northern Ireland parties and Members represented in the House: the Democratic Unionist party; the Social Democratic and Labour party; the Ulster Unionists; and the hon. Member for North Down (Lady Hermon). We sit together and speak with one voice to echo the common, united response of all the people we represent at home in Northern Ireland.

Whatever is said cannot adequately express our deepest, most heartfelt feelings but, through the words that have been spoken already and that will be spoken, I pray that Jo's family may find some comfort and solace at this terrible time. We all want to extend our deepest sympathies to Brendan, her dear children and their wider family circle at the tragic loss of someone so loved and admired, and who will be so missed. We also want to extend our sympathies to the Labour party and the wider Labour movement, to the people of Batley and Spen, and to the many, many friends of Jo who have spoken about her in recent days in such moving ways.

It is right that we as parliamentarians meet together in this Parliament today not just to record our disgust or outrage at what has happened to an honoured colleague, but to express our determination to uphold the values of democracy and the open, accessible way in which we conduct our political life in this country. A life such as Jo Cox's should not be defined by its end. It was her life that counts, and that is what we remember today and should always remember.

We in Northern Ireland, on all sides and in all parties, who have direct and personal experience of murderous attacks and have indeed lost friends and dear colleagues to men of violence, have felt the pain and anguish that those close to Jo are going through now. Our hearts go out to them and our thoughts are with them. Our prayers are that God will comfort them and, in due course, in the words of Holy Scripture,

"give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness".

3.30 pm

Mary Creagh (Wakefield) (Lab): We are here today to remember our beloved Jo Cox—a woman who loved and was loved; a woman who fizzed with life, compassion and commitment to social justice; and a woman who cherished her family, who served her community and whose sole aim was to leave the world a better place than she found it. She did, didn't she? Following the cross-party group on Syria, the Government agreed to take 3,000 unaccompanied Syrian child refugees. In 13 short months, Jo achieved more than some MPs achieve in 13 years.

Jo had an open mind and an open heart, and the world really needed somebody like her—somebody who never gave up; and somebody who knew that, by the strength of our common endeavour, we achieve more than we can alone.

We send our deepest condolences to her dear family, and thank them for sharing her with us. It was a blessing to have known Jo. Rest in peace, sweet friend.

3.33 pm

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I first met Jo through my daughter Madeleine. Madeleine was working for Glenys Kinnock in Brussels and said, "I'm not worried about leaving Glenys because I've found this brilliant replacement called Jo Cox", so we go back a long way. There was a little bit of friendly rivalry because my daughter went on to work for David Miliband and Jo for Gordon and Sarah Brown, but it was all in good part.

Only a year ago, as a long-standing Member of Parliament for Huddersfield, suddenly I had two brilliant new young Members of Parliament just down the road from me, in Dewsbury and in Batley and Spen. Was I happy! What a change they made to this Chamber. Jo was wonderful, but, as someone said to me the other day, "Don't be mistaken about Jo. She's as tough as old boots when she's campaigning for anything. I upset her once or twice about things, but she always got her own way."

If you have a daughter like Jo, you must have a darned good family behind you. I am a grandparent—my 10th granddaughter was born only a few days ago. To have a girl like Jo, you need a wonderful, supportive family. We have a duty in this House to watch over that family in the days and months and years to come. We have a duty to support that family and those children.

3.33 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I did not know Jo well at all, but the more I have learned about her life and work makes me wish so much that I had done. I want to convey the Green party's very sincere condolences and our deep sadness. Indeed, on behalf of the many constituents who have been in touch with me, as constituents have been in touch with all hon. Members, I want to send those deepest condolences to Jo's husband, Brendan, her children, and her other family and friends.

Jo knew what really mattered and cut through to what was important. Her commitment to cross-party working, to speaking out for the voiceless and to fighting for justice are a shining light. As we pause and reflect on all Jo achieved in her short time as an MP, there is also the opportunity to recommit ourselves to the many causes for which she was such a powerful advocate, and to pledge to not let them be forgotten.

It seems that all who worked with or knew Jo considered her a friend. I want to mention in particular the staff in her constituency office, who will no doubt be hugely affected by the events of last week.

Jo was a formidable woman, juggling the demands of serving her constituents with those of being a mother. She will be very much missed and will always be remembered. We pledge in her memory to do all we can to continue to put hope before hatred.

3.34 pm

Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): This is a speech I could not even have imagined giving just a few days ago. How bitterly ironic it feels to be here, in one of the greatest debating chambers the world has ever known, and yet no words can do justice to our sense of loss or the grief we feel for Jo's family.

My wife Claire and I have known Jo and her husband Brendan for many years. They are a couple very much like each other—driven, passionate and impatient to change the world. I remember before the last election having dinner with them on their boat and encouraging Jo to stand for selection if her home town constituency of Batley and Spen came up. I thought she would be a brilliant candidate for Labour and a huge asset to Parliament. Her whole life had been spent serving others. I told her she could continue to do that here in Parliament, yet her willingness to enter public service has now cost her her life.

Over the weekend many people have rightly praised Jo's maiden speech or cited her campaigning on Syria and refugees as the way that they will remember her, but a different sort of story about Jo as a friend and a mother has been the memory most on my mind. It was at Labour party conference about five years ago, when my wife was breastfeeding our daughter at a fringe event and feeling quite self-conscious about it—some older comrades were still not at ease with that sort of thing—[*Laughter.*] Jo saw that and she sat down next to Claire and began to feed her own son, just to show solidarity with Claire and to make her feel better—[*Laughter.*] It is just one example of how Jo always thought of others in her everyday life. They went on to work together through Labour Women's Network, which Jo would chair while also changing the world through her day job and raising her young family with so much love.

Through Labour Women's Network, Jo would fight for other working-class women to have the same opportunities as her, to end everyday sexism and to make politics a safer space for women. What agony it is that her life is now for ever testament to just how important those causes are. Jo was right to believe in public service, she was right to believe in making the world a better place, and she was right to believe in this place.

In the overwhelming grief of this story there are shards of hope that exemplify just what this country is really about: the two unarmed police officers who wrestled her assailant to the ground; the 77-year-old retired miner, Bernard Kenny, who dashed from his car to try

to save her; and her assistant, Fazila Aswat, who was with her when it happened. These are the true faces of the Britain that we love.

Most of all, there is Jo herself. Once, when I had my own daughter with me in this place, she turned to me and asked, "Daddy, can little girls become the Prime Minister?" When our daughters ask us that question, let us tell them and inspire them with Jo's story—Jo the parliamentarian, Jo the campaigner, Jo the mother and Jo our friend.

Mr Speaker: Colleagues, thank you to everyone who has spoken in tribute to Jo and in support of her family. There is a tributes motion and I have to put the Question, but I hope that, when I do so, it will attract the loudest unified response in the history of this House.

The Question is that this House has considered the matter of tributes to Jo COX. As many as are of that opinion, say Aye. [HON. MEMBERS: "Aye!"] To the contrary, No.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the matter of tributes to Jo Cox.

Colleagues, we will adjourn formally in a moment or two. Before we do so, may I invite all right hon. and hon. Members to follow me in processing behind the Serjeant at Arms via Central Lobby and St Stephen's Entrance to St Margaret's Church across the road for a service of prayer and remembrance for the life of Jo Cox? Perhaps I can take this opportunity to re-emphasise that our chaplain, the Reverend Rose Hudson-Wilkin, will be at the service and will also be available in days to come to support Members, the staff of Members and the staff of this House.

Business without Debate

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 25),

That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn till Monday 27 June.—(*Margot James.*)

Question agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—(*Margot James.*)

3.40 pm

House adjourned.

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Volume 611
No. 14

Monday
20 June 2016

CONTENTS

Monday 20 June 2016

Tributes to Jo Cox [Col. 1883]
Motion—[Margot James]—agreed to

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
