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ON BEING ATTACKED IN PARLIAMENT!

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Yes indeed. It is surely a sign that you are making your mark on the world when you are subject to a verbal assault in the House of Commons from someone of the likes of the Conservative MP for Bosworth, Mr David Tredinnick (*note 1*).

It was reported in the *Intelligencer* three years ago that Mr Tredinnick, along with Prince Charles, was runner-up for Good Thinking's annual Golden Duck award in recognition for his support for those who 'practise pseudoscience in the most ludicrous, dangerous, irrational or irresponsible manner'. Later, in 2014, as a member of the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee and the Health Select Committee, Mr Tredinnick called for astrological forecasting to be used in medical practice. A year later he called for a homeopathic flu vaccine to be given to people at risk that winter. He also informed surgeons that they must not operate during a full moon (because blood won't clot then) and told GPs to use patients' horoscopes when they come for consultations. So, it must be an honour indeed to have Mr Tredinnick loudly declaiming you in the mother of parliaments for your efforts to stop the NHS wasting money on ineffective medicines, in this case homeopathy. 'There have been a lot of attacks in the past few years on homeopathy', he proclaims, 'which is an honourable and well-served practice of medicine with its own doctors, regulated in this country and used in 41 of 42 European countries. Some of those attacks have been from an organisation called the Good Thinking Society, which really consists of one man and a dog. It spends £100,000 a year, £20,000 of which comes from the taxpayer through its charitable status; I think that that is an absolute scandal. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister not to listen to the siren voices of that small, badly represented group. We need to use the discipline of homeopathy...' (*Can we stop here? – Ed.*)

Actually, I myself have been verbally attacked in the House of Commons. This was in 1994 and concerned a statement to the police that I had given following the unexplained death in her sleep of a young woman some hours after participating in a stage hypnosis show. The pathologist wanted to know if the process of hypnotising someone involves medical changes that could have been responsible for this person's death and I said no.

Mr Colin Pickthall, the family's MP, more or less said in Parliament that I didn't know what I was talking about and warned that because of the popularity of stage hypnosis at that time, the National Health Service (NHS) would struggle to cope with the flood of casualties that participating in this activity would precipitate. With reference to the case in question, he said that the pathologist felt that it was hard not to make a link between stage hypnosis and the woman's death. The pathologist felt obliged to appear on BBC Radio 4 news the next day reiterating his opinion that hypnosis was not involved. As a result of Mr Pickthall's intervention a committee of enquiry into the safety of stage hypnosis was set up and eventually brought out a report affirming its general safety and recommending a number of simple guidelines. Hardly anyone takes any notice of these or is even aware of them and the great stage hypnosis health scare eventually blew itself out.

Notes

1. <http://tinyurl.com/gtf7zku>