

21.05.11

**3 Deputy R.J. Ward of the President of the Executive Committee of the Jersey Section of the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie regarding the current situation and strong links with France (OQ.108/2021)**

Following the protest by French fishermen over fishing rights under the U.K. (United Kingdom) - E.U. (European Union) Trade and Co-operation Agreement, what communication has the president had with Ministers and what reassurances can he give or has he given that the current situation will not affect Jersey's otherwise strong links with France and those of its regions that neighbour us?

**Deputy M. Tadier of St. Brelade (President of the Executive Committee of the Jersey Section of the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie):**

I thank the Deputy for his question. It provides an opportunity to highlight that Jersey's relationship with our closest neighbours in France is not solely defined by the circumstances that we witnessed last week. As soon as I heard about the escalation of events last week, I wrote to the relevant Ministers to request a briefing. Events were such that I did not receive a dedicated briefing individually but in fact I think the next day we were all briefed collectively as States Members and I have since been updated by government officers on the efforts being made to address that situation.

**2.3.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Does the Deputy in his role feel that anything else could have been done and what concerns does he have for future relations that are beyond this dispute? What else would he have wanted to have happened?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

The first thing is that I think, like so many of us, whether in the Assembly or not, I think I was saddened by the events. Of course I do not think it is necessarily the time now to point fingers and to start to look at what could have been done better. I think there will be a time of reckoning. But I know that Ministers, as well as the rest of us, I am sure are keen to see a return to good relationships that we have previously maintained with Normandy, Brittany and the rest of France. I would emphasise that I think it is fair to say that this is a direct result of Brexit and it is something that neither we, as an Island, our fishermen and women and similarly those in Normandy and along the coast of France, it was not something that we asked for or that we voted for, yet we are having to deal with the consequences. But I am confident that this does not provide ... there are not sufficient grounds for why our strong relationships with France and the regions and our twinings in terms of the Parish should not continue once this issue about fishing has been resolved.

**2.3.2 Connétable M.K. Jackson of St. Brelade:**

(28 seconds of French spoken)

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

(1 minute 11 seconds of French spoken)

**2.3.3 The Connétable of St. Brelade:**

(17 seconds of French spoken)

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

(47 seconds of French spoken)

**The Bailiff:**

Yes, there is a point of order, Connétable of St. Helier.

**The Connétable of St. Helier:**

While I understand that it is within the rights of Members to speak in French or indeed in Jèrriais in the Assembly, is it not incumbent upon us to provide instant translation so that the hundreds of people listening who are concerned about our relationship with France can understand what we are saying?

**The Bailiff:**

Connétable, as you rightly observe, French is one of the official languages of the Assembly and it is open to any Member to ask a question or to deliver an answer in French. The risk of course that that Member runs is that they will simply not be understood by the large majority of people who may be listening. But my understanding is that a translation appears in Hansard when the answer is Hansarded, which of course happens relatively quickly. But this is not out of order for questions to be asked or answered in the French language.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Given the fact we are still in time, I think we have got more time, I am just happy to summarise the answers, if that is thought to be helpful, in English.

**The Bailiff:**

If you could just pause for a moment, I have to deal with a technical issue, if you will pause for a moment, please. A technical issue has arisen whereby for reasons that I cannot explain, members of the public are being allowed to join the meeting and that means that everything said in the chat is visible to them and that is not, in my view, the appropriate way in which this Assembly can function. Members should be free to raise points of order and all those kinds of things in the chat. Therefore, I am going to adjourn the sitting for about 10 or 15 minutes, which will enable the matter to be rebooted, Members to be invited once again so that we will have the normal process available to us. For 15 minutes I stand adjourned, the States stands adjourned and we will come back as soon as we have dealt with that.

[10:15]

**ADJOURNMENT**

[10:35]

**The Bailiff:**

I think the technical issues have been dealt with. I will allow 20 minutes of injury time for question times but not 20 minutes for this question. Next to ask a question I have Deputy Morel.

**2.3.4 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

I was wondering if I could ask Deputy Tadier in his position as Président de l'Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie in Jersey, how he sees the closure of the Maison De Normandie and its effect on relations between Jersey and Normandy.

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

Yes, thank you for that question. I think we were all perhaps slightly surprised and shocked because while we know that it is normal for there to be discussions, even heated, passionate discussions about fishing rights post-Brexit and the relationship between Jersey and Normandy, I do not think anyone envisaged that. From a personal point of view, it is not that I just work closely or have worked closely with both Maison De Normandie and the Alliance Française, which technically stays open, it is the fact that I also count them among friends, if you like, in a sense that they do so much for Jersey and particularly the Maison De Normandie. I hope I am not speaking out of turn but I suspect that this would have simply been a directive from their regional government to close the Maison De Normandie. What I am hoping is that it does not affect the longer-term mutual respect and affinities that we have between Jersey and I am talking about culturally, not just in terms of the hard economics of it. Because I think we enrich each other's culture both ways when we engage constructively in all manner of ways with our neighbours across the water. I do not think that we can necessarily speak publicly at the moment because it is quite right that we do not prejudice any ongoing talks. But I am pretty sure that that sentiment is mutual and that ordinary citizens on both sides of the water that they are aware that these things arise from time to time but that our bonds are much stronger than any disputes that might come periodically.

### **2.3.5 Deputy K.F. Morel:**

Does the president believe that Jersey's political relations and cultural relations with Normandy and Brittany have perhaps, under the new ministerial system, the Government has devolved, essentially, to Government on its own? Does he see a wider role for an organisation like the A.P.F. (Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie) but also States Members taking it upon themselves to build their own relations with France so that we have non-governmental, as well as governmental relations?

### **Deputy M. Tadier:**

I think in general terms I agree with that sentiment, that nobody has the monopoly on making sure that we have good relationships with our neighbours in France and strengthening those relationships. I do not think it is an inevitable fact that the current form of Government has led to, for example, if we are going to call it a different way of operating that is perhaps not as effective. I would look under any system to try and play to one's strength, so I was heartened to see a press release yesterday that said some functions are being moved to the Environment Department where we know, of course, we have our own native French speaker who is both a member of the A.P.F. of our committee but also an Assistant Minister for the Environment. I think that it is important that we all pull together, so we should not be going off in different directions and firing off emails that have perhaps said: "We love you, people in Granville, and we cannot wait to get back to you." I think there is an appropriate time to do that, while there are perhaps very tough conversations going on with External Relations and with the Environment Department about the hard facts around fishing. But I think, generally, we do agree with the Deputy's comments that we have all got a role to play to make sure that whether it is soft diplomacy, cultural, environmental or economic, that we do strengthen our ties. I hope that after this episode our relationships with Normandy, Brittany and France as a wider country will be strengthened as a result.

### **2.3.6 Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

This builds on Deputy Morel's question and I note from my previous work on the St. Helier Avranches Twinning Committee that our relationship with the Maison De Normandie was really valuable, so it would be tragic if that loss was permanent. Would the president of the A.P.F. agree that when the timing is right, so after we have got through the worst of this tension and hopefully can look forward to returning to normality with our friendship with our neighbours, that some

thinking should perhaps be done with the A.P.F.? And, potentially, the Parishes as well, who are all twins with towns in France - most of them in Normandy itself - to look towards perhaps how we can step up that sort of diplomacy with our friends in these neighbouring jurisdictions and particularly when COVID is over, so we can, hopefully, have those engagements in person, just so that we have opened these communication streams, as they might be useful in future when we want to resolve these issues without the sorts of tensions arising like they have recently?

**Deputy M. Tadier:**

I thank the Senator for that question. If I can answer perhaps in this way, is that I think that historically Jersey has always done best and most successfully as an Island when it has recognised the fact that it is both British and has a strong French culture, as well as being, hopefully, more generally internationalist and welcoming. My concern is that we have lost some of that. While it is absolutely correct that we have strong relationships to the north, I think it is unfortunate being increasingly to the detriment of those relationships to the south and to the east, which we know is France. I think we all need to get to a point where we recognise, yes, the Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie has got an important and vital role to play in relationships, not just with France but the French-speaking world, in the same way that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has. I think we all need to get together - and this is perhaps something I would be happy to facilitate - to have a brainstorming and come up with real policies right through all of our departments, from the education system so that we can ensure that people leaving school are no longer just monolingual but that English-speaking students are also speaking French and other languages properly when they leave school and right through the culture and the economy and we have that debate about what kind of Island we are. Because, as I said, it is a personal point of view, I think we have lost too much of our French and European culture and our uniqueness as an Island and that we need to recalibrate, if you like. If the A.P.F. and our twinning organisations can do anything to strengthen that, then I think we would be more than happy to do that.

**The Bailiff:**

Supplemental, Senator Mézec?

**Senator S.Y. Mézec:**

No, *merci*.

**Deputy R.J. Ward:**

Thank you for the considered debate and to say *merci bien de fait*.