

'I find it natural to speak for Britons'

OLIVIER CADIC, senator for the French abroad, tells Oliver Rowland why he has also been helping the British in France – and how he is surprised that Britons abroad have no such dedicated representation

FRANCE has 12 senators for the French abroad and 11 dedicated MPs.

One of its senators Olivier Cadic, who lives in Kent, recently spoke at both the French Senate and at the British Houses of Parliament to support maintaining the rights of Britons in the EU.

Mr Cadic was formerly a councillor on the Assembly of the French Abroad, a consultative body which has one or more elected representatives for each French consulate (including nine in London), elected by French people registered with that consulate. It meets twice a year in Paris and he sat on it from 2006-2014.

"It is these representatives who together elect the senators for the French abroad," he said. "Now I sit in the Senate and I represent the French across the whole world.

Unlike the MPs for the French abroad you don't represent a part of the world?

No, I've just come back from Madagascar, where I was working on cases of French people being kidnapped and murdered there – this year alone eight kidnappings and four murders. I met the prime minister and we set the objective that they will name a judge to be in charge of these cases, so we have a contact point for our judge who is following these dossiers.

It's one example. I think of the British academic doing political research who recently was condemned to life imprisonment in the UAE on accusations of spying. It's the kind of case a British counterpart might have helped with – if they existed.

Another example happened in the Dominican Republic, where French pilots had been arrested, supposedly with drugs in the plane. I went to the trial and helped the families. Diplomats are there to avoid disputes with the local authorities and have limits, whereas a politician, will generally be listened to and can do something extra.

So it is very hands-on?

Absolutely, and we see at the moment the difference with the British – they just have to cope on their own.

Apart from being a senator, you are an entrepreneur?



Photo: Sénat

Senator
Olivier Cadic

I used to have a business in electronics and the internet, but I sold up. Now I have a publishing business called Cinebook – for example, Lucky Luke comic books in English, that's me. I'm the world's biggest buyer of rights of cartoon books, which I translate to English and sell worldwide.

How do you divide up your time?

It's not complicated – 40% of my time, four nights out of ten, I'm in Paris at the Senate, three nights I'm in England, and three in the rest of the world; last week I was in Mauritius and Madagascar. Next I'll be in Lithuania and then Washington.

Why did you want the job?

I was asked to go for it. I'd given a lot of support to French businesspeople in the UK, and a senator told me I would make a good politician.

How does the role differ from the MPs?

Well for a start we sit in different houses, and the fact we have both makes sure the French abroad are represented at all stages of a law. There are as many French people abroad as in the DOM-TOMs and they have specific concerns. It helps them to stay in touch with French politics, to be involved and have their rights defended and to make sure their issues are taken into account, whether on tax, social security etc.

Can you give examples of issues?

Senators for the French abroad managed to remove the social charges on property incomes of the French abroad in the EU.

We also gained a lot for the organisation of French education abroad and we obtained a special social security *caisse* for expatriates. I work to create chambers of

commerce, for example a France-Mozambique one; I support creating French schools and Alliances Françaises abroad and worked to support the transfer of a French medical centre to Vietnam.

I helped find a solution for retirees in America whose French banks didn't want problems with the American authorities so stopped sending their pensions.

Do you see speaking out for the British in France as an extension of this?

Yes. I realised when Brexit happened and I started doing talks to EU citizens abroad in the UK that all the other nationalities didn't have such representatives and in a way I was representing everyone.

And I consider that defending the British of France is in a way an extension of defending the French of the UK. It's the other side of the coin. It doesn't seem right to me not to also think about them. Their fates are linked and I found it natural to speak for both.

Whatever decisions the British take with regard to the French in the UK, even if they were to be very tough on them, I will ask that there are better conditions for Britons in France. They weren't responsible for the situation and are victims of it like us and it's not fair to treat them poorly. It would honour us to maintain all their rights.

The idea of dedicated MPs for Britons abroad is supported by the Lib Dems, but the government thinks expatriates should maintain a link with their old constituencies. But those MPs do not necessarily understand their issues...

No they don't know what they are at all. What it means is that for the government you don't exist, as British expatriates. But they are conservatives with a small C, and I think the current Labour Party is as well.

To me it's a real source of pride to have this representative role because other countries see us as an example. In the Tunisian assembly now they have MPs representing Tunisians in France. But there's really no representation at all for British people abroad, which I find incredible.

The British have an insular view and if you're not on the island anymore it's over. There's not even any representation of expatriates at the embassy in France; I find it unbelievable. It's as if they just lose their rights – which they do in fact, since after 15 years they don't even have a right to vote. It's extraordinary.

Note: There are around 2 million French people living outside of France. Around 5 million British people live out of the UK (2 million of whom live in EU countries).

When Citroën meant style and innovation



Photo: Mic / CC BY 2.0

by 'ROSS BEEF'

FRENCH car-makers traditionally reveal new models and concept-car technology in the autumn and the Citroën DS was no exception.

Launched at the Paris Motor Show in October 1955, it revolutionised motoring and remains an undisputable icon of French design.

Before *mondialisation* – the globalisation of car markets and manufacturers, during which time cars have become blandly similar – each country had a recognisable automobile style. Certainly France did, and none more so than Citroën.

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It combined technological prowess and audacious design innovation which defined it as a symbol of *Les Trente Glorieuses*

There are few things more thoroughly French than a 2CV – apart from the Eiffel Tower, baguettes, berets... well, you get the point.

Like the 2CV, the DS is the essence of Frenchness – even though its original designer was Italian. Its name is a play on words – DS with a French pronunciation gives *déesse*, the goddess – and it harks back to a period of forward-looking optimism, social change and industrial growth.

The car was ahead of its time – and an instant success, with nearly 1.5 million cars produced over a 20-year period until 1975. It combined technological prowess and audacious design innovation which defined it as a symbol of the *Trente Glorieuses* period, from post-war reconstruction to the 1970s oil crisis. The extended

bonnet with integrated headlights, the curved windscreen and streamlined roof, the long tail and sweeping rear wing, half enveloping the back wheels, gave the DS its avant-garde style.

The look was enhanced by the big chrome hubcaps, roof-mounted cylindrical indicators and extensive colour schemes, often with a different colour body and roof.

The DS was packed with innovative technology. It was the first European car to have independent brakes equipped with discs at the front. It had power-assisted steering, a 1900cc engine, and a semi-automatic gear change.

But it is the variable-height hydro-pneumatic suspension that most people associate with the double-chevron brand. Select the ride height, and with the pressurised system allowing trajectory correction, you could experience magic carpet comfort when out on the road.

Famously, the suspension also allowed the DS to drive on three wheels if required, in case of a puncture or damage.

Inside, the futuristic dashboard was like nothing before. In front of the single-branch steering wheel, you used the stick shifter to start the motor as well as change gear.

Aeronautical-style instruments and switches were visible and accessible behind.

The large seats, thick arm rests and padded carpeting made for a comfortable driving environment and set the DS apart from its competitors, in classic French style.

The DS was popular with the middle class and with the stars of the time, as well being the presidential vehicle par excellence. General de Gaulle survived an assassination attempt in 1962, thanks to the road-holding ability of the car.

Occasionally you pass one, often restored, cutting a dash through the town or country.

It is an indication of the significance of the car that, even today, it attracts attention. Its appeal goes beyond automotive passion, evoking a bygone era... proof that even in motoring, style never goes out of fashion.

Zone blanche solution to teenage phone addiction

by SAMANTHA DAVID

IT IS now illegal for pupils to use mobile phones, tablets, smart watches or other connected items in *écoles* and *collèges*.

Mobiles prevent children concentrating, are a tool for online bullying as well as a temptation to thieves, and prevent pupils making friends in real life, according to the authorities.

It is not against the law to take a mobile to school but on the premises they have to be switched off and put away. Special phone lockers might be an interesting way forward, suggests the government website. It is also illegal for pupils to use their tech devices on school trips.

The website says punishments can include confiscating the phone for the rest of the day, extra homework and detention.

But how is all this going to work? Are staff going to prowl the grounds seeking out the Candy Crush kids?

One hopes not. The law should be just a backup for what ought to be self-evident: you don't fiddle with your phone when someone is speaking to you or when you are supposed to be working.

And now a law backs it up, there can be no argument when teachers insist on phones being turned off.

I bet there will be, though. It's hard enough stopping children sneaking phones into their beds, let alone persuading them to stop using them during the day.

Excessive mobile use is a problem.

The endless body-perfect images, the competition to have the best Insta pix, the coolest Facebook page, the most likes, the most retweets... It all piles on the pressure.

It also eats time that could be spent making friends, learning instruments, playing sport and other old-fashioned stuff.

And from a parent's point of view, it's no fun living with a teenager who is physically present but mentally awol.

Perhaps people living in the so-called *zones blanches* – those patches of rural France where there is still no network, internet or wifi – are rather lucky.

Instead of complaining and asking the authorities to get them connected as soon as possible, maybe they could sell their properties to families with *ados*?

In fact, once more people realise the benefits of living in a *zone blanche* – your kids look up when you speak to them, no more battles to limit screen time – perhaps house prices in these areas will rise.