

Discours Marc-Antoine JAMET
Maire de Val de Reuil
Workington, le 9 mai 2012

Dear Mister Mayor,
[any other distinguished guests ?]
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Mesdames, Messieurs,

It is a great honour to be here, tonight, in Workington.

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to say a few words, after this very impressive “Mayor Making” ceremony.

1. First of all, congratulations to you, Mister Mayor.

At an age when young men prefer to go to pubs or chase out the girls, you have decided to enter into politics !

What a tough choice !

What a good choice !

They say that politics is out-dated.

They say that politics is old fashioned.

Your election shows that politics has no age.

They say that politics is meaningless.

Your election shows that it is meaningful.

Being a mayor, however, is not an easy job.

It is not even a “job”.

It is a mission. It is a duty.

To serve the people and put their interests first, before your own personal interest.

To build hospitals for your citizens ; to build schools for their children ; to help those in need of care ; to repair some of the damages done by the society to them ; to try to inspire people, to have a vision, to make tough decisions.

Being a mayor is about leadership as much as it is about accepting hardship.

Being a mayor is about long weeks, no weekends, no working hours, no public holydays, no holydays at all !

So, congratulations again, Mister Mayor, and all the best for the exciting and challenging times to come.

2. The second thing I would like to say tonight is “thank you”. Thank your for your continuous support for the twinning between our two cities.

Thank you to the city and citizens of Workington for their loyalty.

Thank you to the current Chairwoman, Conception BARBOSA, for her personal dedication to this strategic partnership.

The twinning between our two cities dates back to the early nineties, when the founding Chairmen, Mr Andrew DUNBABIN and Mr Rémi LEBRUN decided to join our forces together.

We have been together in this exciting and challenging partnership for exactly fifteen years.

Fifteen years ago, on 8th May 1997, the twinning agreement between Workington and Val-de-Reuil was signed by Barbara WEIR, Mayor of Workington and Bernard AMSALEN, Mayor of Val-de-Reuil.

We all remember Gilles RAGE, a previous Chairman, who did a lot to reinforce the links between our two cities, in particular the cultural and language exchanges.

He was a French man and an English teacher.

He did a lot for our two cities.

Tonight, on behalf of the citizens of Val-de-Reuil, I would like to pay him a great tribute for his personal dedication.

Other significant achievements have been made in recent years.

In 2005, we signed a strategic alliance between PMF and the SOUTHFIELD TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL of Workington.

In 2007, a group of students from Val-de-Reuil had the opportunity to visit Workington.

In 2009, a delegation of representatives from Workington city attended the twentieth birthday of the twinning between Val-de-Reuil and the German city RITTERHUDE.

3. After fifteen years of partnership, time has come to bring our twinning to the next level. We need to do more and, more importantly, we need to do better.

Fifteen years of marriage, this is an age when couples generally decide to divorce ...

Our twinning has been through ups and downs, as any couple does.

It has not always been easy.

But we have always managed to overcome our differences.

Now, we need work harder to make this love story a reality.

So, tonight, Mister Mayor, I would like to take the opportunity of this ceremony to make a few proposals in order to reinforce our alliance.

The first proposal I am making is to increase the number of exchange programmes between children and students of our two cities.

In order to work better, to do more together, we need, first of all, our citizens to know each other better.

The children are the citizens of the future.

They have to become Ambassadors of Val-de-Reuil in Workington, Ambassadors of Workington in Val-de-Reuil.

So we would be delighted to welcome a larger group of your people from Workington in Val-de-Reuil and to have them visit us more often.

We could even imagine to create some kind of a “*yearly cross-visiting programme*”.

The second proposal would be to further develop your “Sea Cadets initiative”, not only here in Workington, but also in Val-de-Reuil.

Although we do not have Sea Cadets in France, there is a similar programme dedicated to young people called the “Firemen Cadets”, les “Cadets Pompiers”.

Why don't we envisage to create an exchange programme between these two institutions, in our two cities ?

They share the same passion for social works.

They share the same ideal of serving others and the community at large.

These are two examples of the various links we can and we must create between Val-de-Reuil and Workington, to make our twinning a truly successful partnership.

4. Before I conclude this speech, I would like to say a few words about Europe.

Today, 9th of May, is the Day of Europe.

Yesterday was the sixty-seventh anniversary of the end of World War Two.

Val-de-Reuil is located in the northern part of France, in Normandy.

A region which knows that it owes its freedom to the British soldiers who landed there during the terrible summer of 1944.

Some of these soldiers were your fathers, your grandfathers.

These men put their own lives at risk, they left their families, their country, to save us from tyranny.

The twinning between Val-de-Reuil and Workington is also a tribute to their sacrifice.

More than half a century later, Europe is, again, at risk.

Here, in the UK, as well as in France, the number of so-called “euro-sceptics” is getting higher each passing day.

I personally believe that there is a lot of misunderstanding about what Europe truly is.

And that misunderstanding lays the ground for the so-called “euro-scepticism”.

So let me clarify a few points.

The true nature of Europe is not a bureaucracy that is producing rules and regulations.

The true nature of Europe is not an aristocracy of the happy few who speak in the name of the people they have never met.

Europe does not stop in Paris, in London, or in Brussels.

Europe is not the monopoly of its members States.

Europe is not even the monopoly of its capital cities.

Europe is the larger community of citizens who live in villages and in townships, in counties and in cities.

Cities such as Workington and Val-de-Reuil are part of Europe.

Together, through our twinning, we are building Europe.

A Europe of European cities.

Should we be reminded that “citizenship” is derived from “city” ?

In the old Greece, the city was the place where people would come together, share their concerns, discuss their future.

Democracy was created in cities, by the cities, for the cities, at a time when nations did not even exist.

This is how democracy started. This is how we have preserve it, to maintain it, to develop it.

This is precisely why you are elected, tonight, Mister Mayor !

And this is why, through your election today, as well as through our twinning, we are celebrating that tremendously important heritage, that is common to our two countries and to our two cities.

Thank you again for your hospitality.

Thank you for your loyalty.

And all the best for the tough and challenging and fulfilling times to come.