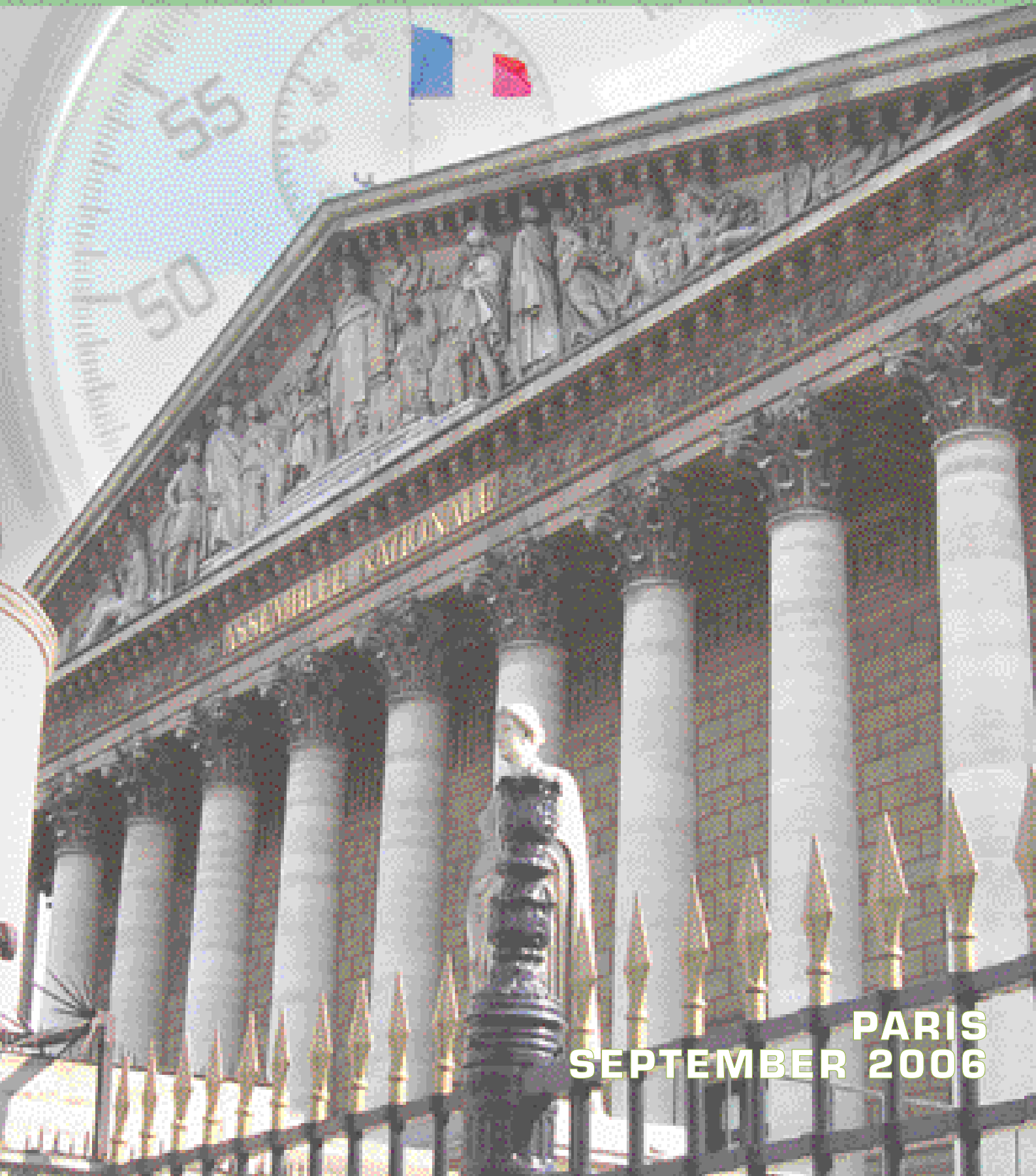


The irregularities
of a Parliamentary
Inquiry Commission



PARIS
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THE IRREGULARITIES OF A PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY COMMISSION

September 2006

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Introduction

France's situation with regard to religious freedom is not favorably viewed. So it was when the special Reporter of the UN Commission for Human Rights on Freedom of Religion or Conviction severely criticized France in her report presented in September 2006, for *"the different measures that were taken at the governmental and parliamentary level in the second part of the 1990s undermined the right to freedom of religion or belief and raised serious concerns about religious intolerance"*.

The Reporter, Mme Asma Jahangir, who visited France in the fall of 2005, met members of the government as well as representatives of different religions. Her conclusions contain unequivocal declarations on how freedom of religion and belief has been called into question: *"the stigmatization of their members [of religious groups], has led to certain forms of discrimination, in particular vis-à-vis their children."*

In spite of this very unflattering finding, some French members of parliament have decided to create yet another commission of parliamentary enquiry on the subject of religious minorities - amalgamated under the pejorative appellation of "secte"; the third in eleven years. This time, the source of worry for the national representatives is the situation of minors in these movements.

But, does the problem really exist ? Why have the real problems that assail the youth of France - illiteracy, violence, suicide, child-pornography or drugs...not been the subject of any commission of enquiry ?

These pages bring together some beginnings of an answer.

It is to be feared that the conclusion of this new commission of enquiry has already been written before the start and that the few deputies who have initiated it need the commission to justify another law restricting fundamental liberties a little more, like the freedom of parents to give their children the religious education of their choice or the freedom of parents to educate their children themselves.

France already has a precedent with the "About-Picard" law, passed in 2001, which introduced an offence of "placing under psychological subjection". Heavily criticized by international Human Rights associations such as the International Federation of Helsinki, this law was welcomed by certain countries paying scant attention to religious freedom, such as China and Iran, who hastened to quote it as an example!

It is the duty of the international community for the defense of human rights to remain vigilant and to let our deputies know, if it should come to that, that they may not promulgate a freedom-killing law that would go against those international conventions that France has ratified.

Less than 24 hours!

Why create a Commission in such a hurry?

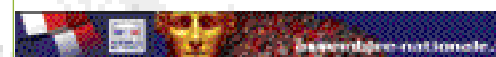
On June 21st 2006, the Law Commission assembled in order to discuss the proposed Inquiry Commission. According to the minutes, President Philippe Houillon *“noted that the examination of the proposal of resolution constituted an infringement of the jurisprudence governing the, according to which a proposal of resolution whose purpose is the creation of an Inquiry Commission may only be examined on condition that it is put on the agenda of the public session, and this is not the case at the present time”*.

As of June 27th, the conference of the Presidents of the Assembly met and placed the debate and the vote concerning the Inquiry Commission on the agenda of the June 28th session at 10 a.m., in other words a time limit of

LESS THAN 24 HOURS!

Report n° 51 of the Commission of Constitutional Laws, Legislation and General Administration of the Republic, Wednesday June 21st 2006

This haste was saluted on June 28th by the initiators of the Parliamentary Commission:



Mrs. Martine David. *“I salute the efforts made by several of our colleagues in forcing the creation of this Inquiry Commission.”*
(L'Assemblée nationale, session of June 28th 2006)



Mr. Philippe Vuilque. *“Mrs. President, my dear colleagues, the agenda of our Assembly has been jostled somewhat to enable us to examine the proposition this morning.”*
(L'Assemblée nationale, session of June 28th 2006)

By scheduling the discussion and the vote on the Inquiry Commission less than 24 hours after its was placed on the agenda of the Assembly, and this just two days before the end of the Parliamentary session which finished on June 30th, it was difficult, even impossible, for any M. P. to take part in a parliamentary debate.

1.47%

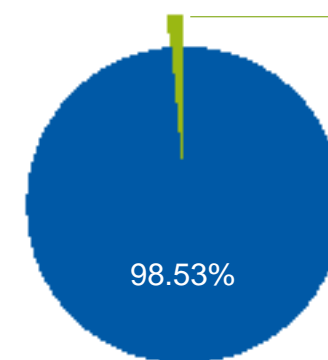
Number of M.P.s present during the debates and the vote

On June 28th 2006 at 10 a.m., a handful of M.P.s were present on the benches of the National Assembly to discuss the commission. Out of 577, there were:

10

Representativeness of M.P.s:

Absent
Present



1.47%

A self-proclaimed Commission:

On the whole, those who voted also became members of the new Commission.

M.P.s present voting	Member of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Georges Fenech	President of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Philippe Vuilque	Reporter of the Inquiry Commission
Mrs Martine David	Vice-President of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Jean-Pierre Brard	Secretary of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Serge Blisko	Member of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Guy Geoffroy	Member of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Jacques Remiller	Member of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Christian Decocq	Member of the Inquiry Commission
Mr. Philippe Houillon	
Mr. Olivier Jardé	

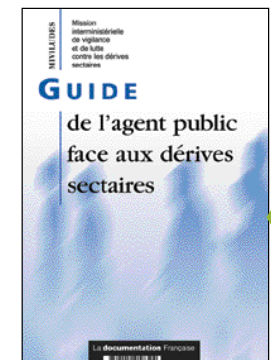
0.35%

Official information regarding children within new religious movements

In the *Guide de l'agent public face aux dérives sectaires*, (Handbook for Civil Servants in the face of Sectarian Deviations), published by the MIVILUDES in 2005, we read: *"However, the number of cases of minors in danger is relatively small on a national level (an investigation in 2003 showed that, out of 54, 000 cases of educational assistance, only 192 had any link to a problem of a sectarian nature)"*

This gives a percentage of 0.35 % (described as *relatively small* by the MIVILUDES) of cases of minors in danger who have a possible connection with a therapeutic, spiritual or religious group. The Commission therefore took the

conscious decision to concentrate on the study of these 0.35 % (192 cases on a national level), when elsewhere one third of teenagers are victims of cannabis use; the quantity of childpornographic images involving children posted on the Internet has increased exponentially; almost every day a teenager commits suicide; violence in schools has become an uncontrollable phenomenon of society (see chapter entitled *When will we deal with the real problems?* page 21).



On September 6th 2005, during an intervention at the National Assembly, the Prime Minister answered to a question by Philippe Vuilque, President of the Study Group on Cults : *"Cases of physical or psychological ill-treatment where one or both parents belong to a movement of a so-called sectarian character are exceptional."*



"Some prefects consider that their departments have very little "sectarian activity" and that it is probably neither necessary nor useful to set up this structure and maintain it." (Page 48)

On page 24 of the *Guide de l'agent public face aux dérives sectaires*, (Handbook for Civil Servants in the face of Sectarian Deviations), published by the MIVILUDES in 2005, we read:

"Nevertheless [penal] proceedings are limited in number. This can be explained in particular by the fact that complaints are scarce and there are no reports of incidents."

“Children are provided with schooling normally.”

Enquiry by the Ministry of Work and Solidarity

Even more demonstrative is a case file obtained by requesting access to administrative documents at the Ministry of Work and Solidarity. In this file one finds evidence of very biased methods of investigation.

On June 23rd 1998, at the request of the Inter-Ministerial Observatory on Cults, a collection of very alarmist documents concerning the supposed situation of children within groups

labeled “sectarian” and evoking serious potential risks, were sent to 32 selected County Councils. The quasi-totality of the responses from County Councils indicated that real-life situations are very far from those described by the Inter-Ministerial Observatory in these documents, and that such children did not encounter any difficulties, that they were in good health and lead lives like those of other children.

- County Council of Alpes de Haute Provence, letter dated July 27th 1998
“[...] although very austere, it does not endanger their health, their security, their morality or their conditions of education.”
“In pursuance of this report, on January 23rd 1997 the Children’s Judge dismissed the case for lack of evidence of educational assistance where these minors were concerned”.
- County Council of Alpes-Maritimes, letter dated August 20th 1998
“[...] is the father of 3 children; of whom the youngest, who is 15 years old, does not appear to be encountering any difficulties”.
“For the time being, this situation is not the subject of any specific report and the community [...] is not known to departmental social services.”
- County Council of Bouches-du-Rhône, letter dated July 30th 1999
“Children are provided with schooling normally.”
- County Council of Corrèze, letter dated February 9th 1999
“I wish to inform you that there are no minors living in communities or places of a sectarian character in the department of Corrèze.”
- County Council of Drôme, letter dated December 18th 1998
“A check of the school carried out in 1997 found that all was satisfactory.”

“The schooling and socialization of the children is in line with current methods and the same can be said of their medical treatment.”

County Council of Gironde, letter dated October 1st 1999

“After a fairly long period of observation by the Medico-Social Center, no information leading us to suspect sectarian practices has been sent to me.”

County Council of Isère, letter dated August 1st 1999

Group 1

“Children were in good health; their weight was rather higher than average at birth. Everything was normal.”

Group 2

“No element of danger to children has been noted by the social workers of successive sectors who have worked within this community.”

County Council of Jura, letter dated December 21st 1998

“The attached social report shows no specific difficulties at the present time.”

County Council of Haute-Loire, letter dated November 13th 1998

“It has been found that, within the local community, the children attending school and those at the crèche do not lead a suspicious way of life, and on a medical level they are treated by a professional doctor.”

County Council of Moselle, letter dated September 24th 1998

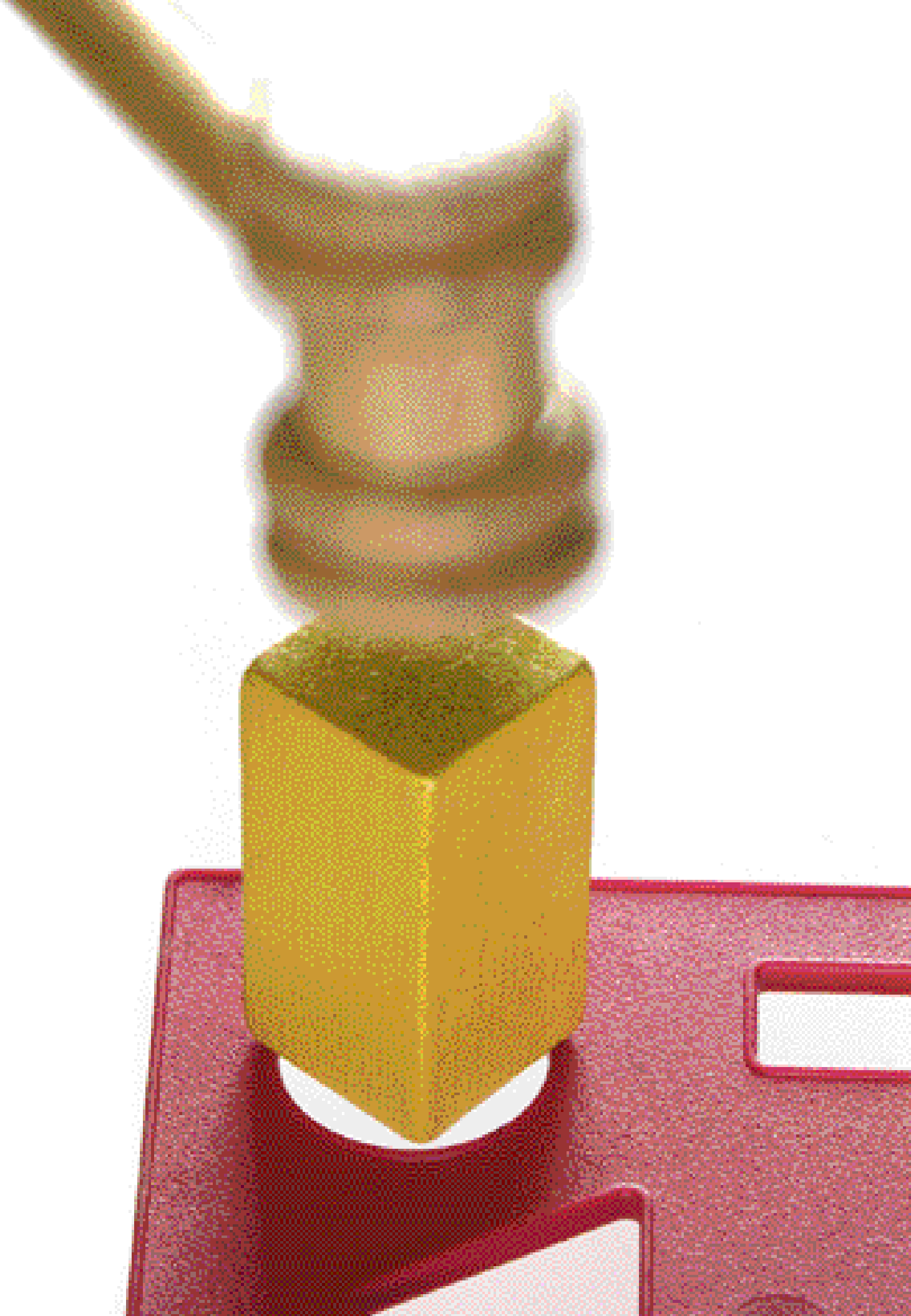
“The schooling and socialization of the children is in line with current methods and the same can be said of their medical treatment.”

County Council of Saône et Loire, letter dated February 10th 1999

“All the children are sent to schools nearby and these families do not pose any specific problems.”

County Council of Tarn-et-Garonne, letter dated February 10th 1999

“Regarding specifically the children coming to Tarn et Garonne with their families to reside in these groups, neither the neighborhood, nor the medico-social workers or the schools have informed us of particular problems with them.”



From 1995 to 2006, 26 Parliamentary Inquiry Commissions have been created

Amongst the subjects dealt with:

- Industrial safety / industrial accidents: > 1 commission
- Children's rights / living conditions of minors: > 1 commission
- Clandestine immigration / illegal residence of foreigners: > 1 commission
- Nuclear / fast neutron reactors: > 1 commission
- Dangerous and polluting products / sea transportation: > 2 commissions

And 3 commissions dealing with therapeutic, spiritual and religious minorities:

- in 1995
- in 1999
- in 2006

But 0 commissions on sensitive subjects concerning children:

- Drugs / their consequences to children >> 0
- Pornography and children >> 0
- Teenage suicide >> 0
- Youngsters in inner cities >> 0
- Paedophilia >> 0



**Have some M.P.s
lost touch with reality?**

Objet	Période	Président	Membres	Rapport
1995-1998				
Commission d'enquête sur l'impact de la mondialisation sur le monde rural	1995-1998	Philippe de Villiers	Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Louis Borloo, Jean-Louis Gaudon, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche	1998
1999-2002				
Commission d'enquête sur la situation des personnes handicapées	1999-2002	Philippe de Villiers	Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Louis Borloo, Jean-Louis Gaudon, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche	2002
Commission d'enquête sur la situation des personnes handicapées	1999-2002	Philippe de Villiers	Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Louis Borloo, Jean-Louis Gaudon, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche	2002
Commission d'enquête sur la situation des personnes handicapées	1999-2002	Philippe de Villiers	Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Louis Borloo, Jean-Louis Gaudon, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche	2002
2003-2006				
Commission d'enquête sur la situation des personnes handicapées	2003-2006	Philippe de Villiers	Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Louis Borloo, Jean-Louis Gaudon, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche	2006
Commission d'enquête sur la situation des personnes handicapées	2003-2006	Philippe de Villiers	Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Louis Borloo, Jean-Louis Gaudon, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche	2006
Commission d'enquête sur la situation des personnes handicapées	2003-2006	Philippe de Villiers	Philippe de Villiers, Jean-Louis Borloo, Jean-Louis Gaudon, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche, Jean-Louis Laroche	2006



Why a commission like this?

➤ **In the face of this waste of public money**

➤ **In the face of this waste of M.P.s' time**

➤ **One wonders who is organizing
this anti-religious uproar?**

By way of example, here are the declarations of some members of Parliament and heads of associations who work closely with certain M.P.s, initiators of the Parliamentary Commission.



They said:

“If we had any sense, we would put an end to all this nonsense, this sect nonsense, but also to the nonsense of major world religions.”

Roger Ikor, founder of the CCMM, an association against new religious movements, funded by the State

“We must smash , we must destroy these cults which swarm over our rottenness. When enough people will go and ransack the premises of these sects, they [public authorities] will probably do something.”

Roger Ikor, founder of the CCMM

“In agreement with all the M.P.s working on this subject at the European level, we have decided that we must not define. Because by defining the word sect, which is not defined from a legal point of view in France, we would enable sectarian movements to step outside the framework of the definition (sic).”

Catherine Picard, former M.P., initiator of the law dated June 12th 2001, and president of the UNADFI, an association against new religious movements.

“Unfortunately, we can't hope for a big 'sects night which would allow us to settle the question once and for all!”

M. Olivier Jardé, M.P., session report of June 28th 2006

“Only special legislation, introducing the offence of membership [...] would enable us to fight this phenomenon.”

Jean-Pierre Brard, M.P., *France-Soir*, dated 27/12/95

“They are criminal organizations which do not hesitate to solicit our fellow citizens.”

Jean-Pierre Brard, Debate on the influence of cults on minors, National Assembly, session June 28th 2006)

Jean-Pierre Brard, speaking of a religious community recognized in many countries, says they *“were screaming like slaughtered sows”*.

In reference to another community, he speaks of *“fiscal embezzlements”*, *“concealing trafficking”*, *“clandestinely sending money to Italy”*, having *“destroyed, broken many people”* all this without any proof whatsoever.

During public conferences Brard labels spiritual and religious groups, moreover officially recognized, as *“Nazis”* and *“pro-Nazis”*.



When will we tackle the real problems?

There are other very worrying issues touching young people which would fully justify the creation of a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission:

Drugs:

Cannabis: according the French Observatory on Drugs and Toxicomania (<http://www.ofdt.fr>), one third of teenagers between 17 and 18 years of age (26% of girls and 38% of boys) say they have used cannabis during the previous month.

Cocaine: in 2003, amongst young people aged 17, experimentation with cocaine rose to 1.1% for girls and 2.0% for boys. These figures are higher than those for 2000, date of the first ESCAPAD investigation (Inquiry into Health and Consumption during the Appeal to Prepare for Defense)

Ecstasy and amphetamin: data from ESCAPAD in 2003 shows that amongst young people aged 17, 3.5% of girls and 6.5% of boys say they have used ecstasy at least once in their lives.

Paedo-pornography:

Regarding young children, the National Division for the Repression of the Assault on Property and People noted an exponential increase in reports signaling the possession and spreading of childpornographic images on the Internet; they rose from 300 - 400 over the last few years to more than 3,000 reports in 2004.

Source: Forum of Rights on the Internet - 2005.

Suicide:

In France, 7% of students aged between 11 and 19 say they are depressed and French children are amongst the biggest consumers of sleeping pills worldwide. Statistics regarding suicide attempts are in line with this: 7% of students aged between 11 and 19 have attempted suicide and one third of them have done so a second time.

(According to the website Infosuicide.org, the rate of teenage suicides is close to 1 per day.)

Source: Document Assemblée nationale - Dépôt published in the Journal Officiel dated May 6th 1998

Violence in schools:

Statistics from the National Education system do not illustrate the situation in schools in the least. According to a report, racketing in schools is 210 times more frequent than the official statistics, incidents of actual racism 1,670 times more numerous, thefts 420 times more numerous (for instance 46.3% of students say they have been the victims of theft, while the National Education system reports 0.11%)!

Source: " *Violence in schools, between overstatement and ignorance*" (2006) a report by Eric Debardeux, Director of the International Observatory of Violence in Schools and of the European Observatory of School Violence.



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