

Summary of the Conference presentation

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The “About-Picard” Law

The cult phenomenon is a European phenomenon, differently treated by the public authorities. Many are those affected by the various “New Age” --esoteric or pseudo-religious -- movements. Over the last fifteen years, the French State has given itself the means to take a unique position in Europe in the interest of the individual and in the general interest. A commitment sustained by the entire political class.

After three parliamentary commissions, the so-called “About-Picard Law” established a definition of “cult” that is likely to be accepted by all. It also aimed at "strengthening the prevention and containment of cults which are prejudicial to the rights of man and to fundamental freedoms."

The gist of the penal text is as follows: "A penalty of three years imprisonment and a € 375,000 fine for fraudulent abuse of the state of ignorance or the situation of weakness, either of a minor, either of a person whose particular vulnerability, due to age, illness, infirmity, a physical or mental disability or state of pregnancy, is apparent and known to the perpetrator, either of a person in a state of psychological or physical subjection as a result of the exercise of severe or repeated pressures or techniques capable of altering their judgement, so as to lead this minor or person to an act or to an abstention to act that are seriously harmful to them".

One observes abuses in all sectors of the social life: care and health, continued training and school support, sport and cultural activities, esoteric or mystic groupings... These strike in all social categories. Therefore, one must remain aware of the need to demonstrate incessant vigilance because the damages caused to the victims and their families are dramatic and unacceptable. The State must be firm in its determination to see punished all deeds which entail mental domination. Legislating (in this area) is a reflection of this determination.

¹ UNADFI - Union Nationale des Associations de Défense de la Famille et de l'Individu victimes de sectes -- <http://www.unadfi.org/>

² ‘About-Picard’ Law -- <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT00000589924&dateTexte=>