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United Kingdom

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"Great Britain and Abusive Cults - Thirty Years of Governmental Irresponsibility"

The Council of Europe-accredited 30 nation umbrella body of anti-cult and family support groups

Problems with cults in the United Kingdom have been apparent since the 1970's. In those days both judges and government Ministers fiercely criticising the activities of Scientology and other cults. Since then there had been a near-silence from official and legal sources, and cults have been allowed to develop with very few restrictions.

I attribute this mainly to the irresponsible attitude of UK civil servants, especially in the Home Office (equivalent of the Ministry of Interior in other countries). While being aware of the problems, they have appeared to feel (and advise Ministers to that effect) that the whole subject was too complex and daunting: they preferred to pretend that the whole question involved matters of "faith" and was therefore inappropriate for government intervention.

To cover themselves publicly, the same people appointed as their adviser a London based academic body Inform, under the leadership of Dr Eileen Barker, an expert in comparative religion. Many anti-cult campaigners in the UK and elsewhere believe that this body was sufficiently unwilling to criticise cult activities, and in fact became an important source of support and legal defence for them, preventing any effective action in either helping families or issuing official warning to young people about the dangers of contact with cults. I believe Dr Barker has done further damage by influencing other academics around the world to act as "cult apologists".

This lack of central policy, and official warning or sanction, has meant that cults have met no obstruction in infiltrating local government and other public bodies: harmful, sometimes quasi-criminal organisations have thus managed to achieve tax rebates and other privileges usually reserved for religions, charities and other groups whose activities are deemed to be in the public interest.

Happily, there may now be rays of hope: in the new UK government there are a number of senior politicians who have demonstrated an understanding of the true nature of cults: it is important to take advantage of this by lobbying for a change of policy.

There are important lessons here for Croatia and other countries affected by harmful cults activity, you should take urgent steps to ensure that what has happened to us, does not happen to you.