

Legislating Opinions...by Daniel Peters

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Saturday, October 14, 2006

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This week, the French parliament adopted a bill to make it illegal to deny the Armenian genocide. The bill needs approval from the Senate and the President before it passes into law. Let us hope that the Senate or the President has more sense.

No good can come of legislation that removes the right to express an academic opinion. If academic debate can settle the matter, there is no need for legislation to prop up the winning side of the debate. This French bill amounts to a tacit admission that there is reasonable doubt. It is as if to say: The deniers of genocide cannot be beaten in fair debate, so instead we will beat them legally.

If I were convinced of the truth of the Armenian genocide story, and convinced that there was no room for reasonable doubt, and convinced that it was important for people to recognize it, then I would be appalled by the underlying message of this bill. Why are Armenians celebrating? They ought to be as offended as the Turks are.