

## ***A Purge at the French High Committee for Education (HCE)***

To be read at: <http://michel.delord.free.fr/llaff-eng.pdf>

French version at: <http://michel.delord.free.fr/llaff.pdf>

On Monday November 21, 2005, Mr. Laurent Lafforgue, French mathematician, permanent professor at the *Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques* (Institute of Higher Scientific Studies, IHES), member of the Academy of Science, winner of the Fields Medal in 2002, resigned after having been requested to do so from the High Committee for Education.

The missions of the High Committee for Education<sup>i</sup> are many: it will replace the National School Program Council (*Conseil National des Programmes*), as well as the High Council for School Evaluation (*Haut Conseil de l'Evaluation de l'Ecole*). It will be responsible for defining the contents of the knowledge and skills that all children will need to have acquired by the age of 16. And it will also be in charge of defining the specifications for the University Institutes for Teachers (IUFM, *Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres*). The High Committee for Education is therefore highly important for the future of education in France.

Only 15 days after its creation on November 8 and its first meeting a clash occurred: Laurent Lafforgue was requested to resign. The opinions of Laurent Lafforgue about education and teaching have been known to all for a long time: it is public knowledge that he is a blazing defender of public education and that he does not belong to any powerful lobbies of the pedagogical movement which have been effectively controlling the Ministry of National Education for over thirty years.

In a private letter<sup>ii</sup> sent to Mr. Bruno Racine, President of the High Committee for Education, and to all its members, Mr. Laurent Lafforgue expressed his doubts about the need to take advice from the so-called "*experts of the Ministry of National Education*", because he refutes their ability to change the policies which they have all promoted since the late sixties: Mr. Lafforgue is - rightly so - astonished that, once more, the mission to rebuild the French Public School System should be put in the hands of those who have never stopped undermining its foundations through inconsistent policies and foolish pedagogical measures.

He closed his letter with a forceful questioning of the nature itself of the task of the HCE: Does it wish to "*entrust the same experts whose policies have led to the present disaster of our schools with the task of elaborating the future policies*", or will it have the salutary will to "*radically break the ties with all the present educrats*" and "*work [...] on developing policy advice that the government may use to save our educational system from a complete and definite destruction?*"

Against all custom this private letter was divulged outside the High Committee for Education, and sent out to various departments of the Ministry of National Education. The aim of such a manoeuvre was clear: to destabilize Laurent Lafforgue and force his resignation, solely because his continued presence would have allowed him to oppose and denounce the continuation of policies which are leading our schools to ruin. If his resignation is confirmed, a shadow will weigh on the authority of the High Committee for Education, as well as on the autonomy of its work. Can the HCE afford to dispense with the advice and counsel of a personality as competent and eminent as Laurent Lafforgue, without jeopardizing its credibility?

This is why we urge Mr. Jacques Chirac, President of the Republic who nominated Laurent Lafforgue to the HCE, to refuse his resignation.

Text written by members of *GRIP, Sauver les Lettres, Reconstruire l'Ecole*

Signed by *GRIP - Reconstruire l'Ecole - SAGES -*

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**For your information:** a petition against the eviction of Laurent Lafforgue from the HCE can be found at:  
<http://www.re2.freesurf.fr/Actions/deml12.html>

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**And you will have an updated version at:** <http://michel.delord.free.fr/llaff-eng.html>

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.education.gouv.fr/syst/hce/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.ihes.fr/~lafforgue/dem/courriel.html>