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Seattle Times editorial columnist

par in public places. Plenty of Muslim women here wear headscarves — you can see the face and eyes — but the French banned the public wearing of face-hiding burgas and niqabs. Certainly, in a perfect world, women of all religious faiths should be able to express their reli-

ago, I planned an
nature of France for its jitters
about the veils.
But a reporting fellowship to
various interviews

pot than people realize. France
these days is in a pitched battle for
its soul.

posedly is imposed Italy. The French do not allow big crosses or other overt expressions of religion in public either. Considering the

church and state, though it's some-
times hard to tell. The Constitution
could never allow a ban in the

the laws of France work for
cession.

of life.”

adapt to a new country's laws and culture so newcomers and their children succeed.

deputy secretary-general of Euro-
pean affairs, said the veil ban was
tricky at first but now there is con-

considerable national support. "It's something only women are obliged to do so it is contrary to fundamental principles of the R-

Some experts raise a troubling question: If a Muslim man is not willing to allow his wife to be so

in public without a veil, why would he let his wife out at all? How about when that Muslim

man lives & grows

seek asylum and inevitable gov-
ernment aid?
Many Muslim women wear th

burqa and niqab because they want to. So who is France to tell them what is good for them? Reasonable questions.

new countries need all the help they can get learning the language and adapting to their new country.

This is not about pricing Muslims. As many politicians and observers have said, the full-facel veil is too much a barrier. It stands

squarely in the way of communist and long-term success in France and Belgium, which both have banned the face-hiding veils.

The Netherlands and perhaps Switzerland may be next.

of the European Commission
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