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Identity Cards

The Creation of a Police State



Big Brother has arrived.

If it becomes law, the Labour Government's Bill to introduce Identity Cards will be an unprecedented intrusion into the liberty of the individual in Britain in modern times. It will give the government powers over the individual more characteristic of a police state than a liberal democracy.

There are eight elements to the scheme:

- **The National Identification Register (NIR).** Everyone over the age of 16 living in the UK will be numbered, and have their personal details entered on the database. Your National Identity Registration Number (NIRN) will become the 'key' enabling government and private sector organisations to access information on the individual.
- **Collection of personal information.** Certain details, such as name and address, become "registrable facts" which you are compelled to disclose to the authorities. You must also notify them of any changes.
- **Collection and checking of 'biometrics'.** You will be photographed, fingerprinted and probably have your eyes scanned for iris recognition.
- **The card.** This will carry a photograph and details about you contained on a computer chip.
- **A national scanner network and new 'secure infrastructure'.** This will be required to read the chip on the card and check your details against the central database
- **Widespread use by organisations.** Use of the system by the private and public sectors will deliberately make life without a card increasingly difficult. Government will strongly encourage organisations to use your NIRN to identify your file in any records they keep, enabling the government to track individuals in any database.

- **Data-sharing between organisations on an unprecedented scale.** The register will contain all the official numbers used to identify individuals in different systems: taxation, national insurance, NHS. Participating agencies will be required to notify the NIR of changes to a person's details. The Home Office may disclose details about you from the register to other agencies without your consent.
- **Crimes & Penalties.** The Bill establishes a number of new crimes and offences to ensure that people will be forced to comply.

Crimes & Penalties.

Crimes: the Bill contains a number of new state powers, crimes, and penalties.

- Failure to notify authorities of a lost, stolen, damaged or defective card.
- Failure to renew a card.
- Failure to submit to fingerprinting or iris scanning.
- Failure to provide information demanded by the government.
- Failure to attend an interview at a specified place and time.
- Failure to notify the Secretary of State of any change in personal circumstance.
- Failure to obey an order to register, or providing false information.

Penalties: penalties range from a **£1,000 fine** to **two years imprisonment**. A penalty of up to **£2,500** can be levied for failure to attend an appointment for a fingerprint or iris scan. This fine can be repeated for every subsequent failure to attend.

What information will the card contain?

There are **50** categories of information required for the National Information Register. These include:

- Name, and any other names by which you have been known.
- Place of birth, address, and previous addresses, in the UK and outside.
- Photograph, fingerprints, 'other' biometric information.
- Signature, Registration Number, and the numbers of other registration documents (national insurance; passport; driving licence; any designated document which contains a number).

The Bill contains no provision for Parliament to decide what information can be stored in the NIR or the card. This will be left to the discretion of the Home Office. 'Other biometric' information leaves the way open for any personal information to be obtained, e.g. genetic information. The individual will no longer own the most personal information about themselves.

The stated purposes of ID cards.

The Bill states that the purposes of the ID cards are as follows.

- The interests of national security.
- For the prevention and detection of crime.
- For the enforcement of immigration controls.
- For the enforcement of prohibitions on unauthorised working or employment.
- For the purpose of securing the efficient provision of public service.

It can be demonstrated the ID cards will either not fulfil these purposes or that they are unnecessary.

■ **National security - Why ID cards will not protect us from terrorists.**

The hijackers who flew planes into the twin towers in New York, the Madrid bombers and the July 2005 suicide bombers in London had genuine identity documents - indeed some of them were identified from personal documents recovered from the wreckage. Genuine suicide bombers do not want to hide their identities. Charles Clarke admitted on 8th July 2005 that he did not believe that ID cards would have stopped the 7/7 bombings. The open borders of the European Union mean that a terrorist wishing to come to Britain

could obtain fake identity papers from any one of the member states and present them as the supporting evidence for a British ID application.

■ **The prevention and detection of crime - Why ID cards will not cut crime.**

Burglars, muggers, thieves, shoplifters, murderers, rapists and professional criminals are not going to be deterred by the requirement to have an ID card. ID cards do not deter crime in those countries that already have them, such as France, Germany, Italy and Spain. The Government claims that ID cards will cut identity fraud. International experience shows that assigning a unique number to centralise personal data records leads to increased identity fraud not less.

■ **The enforcement of immigration controls - Why ID cards will not stop illegal immigration and asylum seeking.**

Illegal immigration is often run by organised-crime gangs and people-smugglers. Organised criminals are likely to have ID cards at their disposal for their clients. There is already a thriving trade in stolen passport identities. Asylum seekers, whether genuine or bogus, receive a biometric Asylum Registration Card - and have done since 2002. Giving someone an ID card proves nothing about their real identity and will have no effect on the numbers entering the country.

■ **For the enforcement of prohibitions on unauthorised working or employment - Why ID cards will not stop illegal employment.**

Many illegal immigrants work in the black market on a cash-in-hand basis. Not having an ID card is unlikely to deter them. Only the requirement to carry one at all times and the possibility of it being demanded at a moment's notice might have some deterrent value - but the Bill states that (initially at least) it will not be compulsory to carry an ID card. Therefore, what value do they have? The way to deter illegal employment is by having effective border and immigration controls in the first place, not by imposing ID cards on the whole populace.

■ **For the purpose of securing the efficient provision of public services - Why ID cards will not stop health tourism and benefit fraud.**

The Home Office's press release of 11 November 2003 (Ref 307/2003) states that one of the purposes of ID cards is to *'ensure that public services are only used by*

those entitled to them - preventing health tourism'. Are we to believe that a sick or injured person presenting themselves to the health service will be turned away because they do not have an ID card? Abuse of the NHS by 'health tourists' exists on a massive scale. The way to deal with this is to require that no foreign national is allowed entry to Britain unless they first have adequate health insurance. It has also been proposed that ID cards would prevent benefit fraud, but over 90% of benefit fraud is committed by people using their genuine identities to make false claims. ID cards will not prevent this.

Will ID cards be technically reliable?

Two key elements of the scheme suggest that the systems supporting the National Information Register and ID cards will not be reliable.

■ The unreliability of biometric information.

The scale of the ID scheme (registration of about 48 million people over 16) means that it is technically very vulnerable. The use of biometric information itself is unreliable. The UK Passport Service's Biometric Enrollment Trial 2004 showed failure rates as follows.

- ❖ **Faces** - a failure rate of one in three.
- ❖ **Fingerprints** - a failure rate of one in five.
- ❖ **Iris Scans** - a failure rate of one in twenty.

Most importantly, the Government has admitted that it is impossible to reliably match biometrics 'one to many'. What this means is that biometric information, e.g. a fingerprint, cannot be compared to the NIR store of fingerprints to prevent multiple applications. This invalidates the core reason for storing biometrics on the database.

■ The proven inability of the government to implement reliable computer systems.

In a leaked memo in 2003, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw warned that the system could be a 'large-scale debacle'. The proposed registration scheme is one of extraordinary complexity and technical difficulty. Billions of pounds have already been wasted on government computer systems of far less complexity that initially failed to work properly, or still do not work properly. These included: The Child Support Agency, The Passport

Agency, HM Revenue & Customs, The Court Service, National Air Traffic Services, The Criminal Records Bureau, Local Authorities, The Ministry of Defence, The Home Office and The Prison Service. The list could go on. These systems did not work properly, so what faith should we put in the government's ability to successfully implement an even more complex system?

Your personal details will not be protected.

Clause 19 of the Bill allows the disclosure from the register, without the individual's consent, to other organisations, including: the police, security services, the Department of Work and Pensions, the Serious Organised Crime Agency, and HM Revenue & Customs. In time other organisations could be added to this list.

How much will it cost?

- **Cost to the Taxpayer:** The Government's current estimate is **£5.8 billion**. Independent experts put the cost at anywhere between **£12.5 to £19 billion**.
- **Cost to the Individual:** The Government currently estimates it will cost **£93** to be registered. However the Government intends to hide the real cost to individuals by subsidising it from taxation; in which case there may be a price of about **£30** to the user.

Compulsion and Refusal to Register.

- **You will obey.** The Home Office has always intended to create a compulsory system. While Clause 15 (3) of the Bill specifically rules out any provision requiring people to carry them at all times it will be compulsory to be entered onto the National Identity Register if you are required to do so. Clause 2 (4) allows the Secretary of State to enter a person onto the NIR without their consent. People will be obliged to register if they need to apply for or renew certain documents, e.g. passports, driving licences etc.
- **More powers for government.** The Home Office seeks wide discretion over the future shape of the scheme. There are more than thirty types of regulatory power for future Secretaries of State. These powers could be used to change the functions and content of the scheme and can be extended.

The Home Office's own press release of 11th November 2003 (Ref 307/2003) states the following.

"The Government expects that 80 per cent of the adult population will have an ID card by 2013 if passports and driving licences are issued on the proposed biometric basis. The Government, through Parliament, would make ID cards compulsory when the technology is seen to be working, take-up reaches an appropriate level and public acceptability of the card enables the implementation of a universal scheme. It will not be compulsory to carry a card."

What are the government's real motives in trying to introduce ID cards?

There is a hidden European Union agenda to the UK ID cards scheme. It is part of the 'harmonisation programme' that will eventually see the conformity of every aspect of life. The Home Office has stated that, *'The European standard to which the driving licence/identity card would need to conform does not allow for national symbols, only the European Circle of Stars'*. Home Office Minister Andy Burnham was reported in the Daily Express (12th September 2005) as saying, *'From 2008 onwards travellers within the EU will be able to use the card as a recognised travel document'*. The European Parliament has already voted in favour of biometric passports for the EU and the Government intends to bring in biometric British passports. Why then do we need a biometric ID card?

The card itself is a distraction. The real objective of the scheme is the National Identity Register. This will enable the personal details of every citizen to be known, to become the property of the government, and to be exchangeable between EU member states.

How ID cards will fundamentally change the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Under the British Constitution the citizen is free to go about their business unless breaking a specific law. Theoretically at least, the state is the servant of the citizen and not the other way around. ID cards will mean the citizen's existence has to be registered and ratified by the state. They will be obliged to supply and surrender control of the most personal information about themselves and their biometric make-up. The provisions of the Bill enable the scope of its requirements to be extended by future governments. Think what use a Stalin, Hitler or Mao could have made of such a system.

How you can oppose ID cards.

The UK Independence Party is totally opposed to ID cards. The main ways of opposing them are:

- Join UKIP.
- Write to the Home Secretary stating that you oppose ID cards. Write to your MP asking him/her to vote against the ID Card Bill in Parliament.
- Join the No 2 ID Campaign (see www.No2ID.net).

Acknowledgements

- No 2 ID (www.No2ID.net).
- Andrew Gilligan, Evening Standard, Monday 23rd May 2005.
- Professor John Wiles-Maconnamara, The Biometric Debate, EU Reporter, June/July 2005.
- LSE Identity Project Report June 2005.

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