

Jim Adams
Ground Floor Flat
163 Ditchling Rise
Brighton
BN1 4QR

Thursday 2nd June 2005

email: jim-adams@supanet.com

David Lepper MP
John Saunders House
179 Preston Road
Brighton
BN1 6AG

Dear David

Once again, congratulations on your General Election win in Brighton Pavilion.

In this letter to you I would like once again to express my opinion on a particular political issue – in this case on my opposition to ID cards.

Despite your support for all items of the Labour Party Manifesto, and also of my strong support for the Labour Party in that election, this is definitely an issue on which I did not and do not support Labour, and I would for that reason invite your comments.

Although the prognosis for the implementation of national ID cards is in doubt, and I am unsure of the process of consultation that has taken place in order to include it in the Manifesto – or whether in fact it has been railroaded through by application of centralised political pressure – there are many disquieting features which have not been adequately addressed, or if they have, are antithetical to ideas of liberty, privacy, national sovereignty and the conception of balance between the rights of the citizen and the power of the state.

On the question of cost, the original estimate of £98 per ID card, to be paid for directly by the bearer, seems to have escalated according to professional estimates to around £300 per card, and I myself would not be surprised, given my own experience of dumbly controlled computer projects, and of other examples in the health and defence sectors, if the final tally were £750. The general rule in such projects is they are cancelled after the money has been spent.

The cost, even if it were 50p per card, is an irrelevance to the principles at stake and the consequences of it.

In terms of national sovereignty, the contract is likely to be given to an American company, who will be compliant in allowing the U.S. government to obtain all information they wish residing on the British national ID card databases.

The fact that surveillance is technologically driven at an ever-increasing rate has allowed its physical and legal implementation to take place without the political development of corresponding checks and balances which normally and slowly arise in a democratic society when it is generally perceived that a process that is open to abuse is inevitably followed by abuse itself. We are in danger of implementing a Stasi state: a British Democratic Republic, or Blairistan.

What are we to make of an ID card scheme proposed by a former Home Secretary who will change the law to exclude a particular person from protesting against the war in Iraq, or will describe on TV a defendant at a trial in progress as if he were guilty? What guarantee have we that a Home Secretary (or other person with access) would not pursue a private agenda against an individual arising from surveillance via an ID card? Is it a fundamental principle, now abrogated, that the citizen should be protected, through law, even against politically malicious or self-serving arbitrary acts of the executive arm of government?

Already in the United States, we see a process in which peace activists and members of the Green Party are disbarred from flying in aircraft.

What information is to be excluded from ID cards? To whom is the information to be confined? There are questions here of system-wide and individual privacy and intrusions of privacy by individuals, public organisations and companies. Is it relevant to know in such databases a person's medical condition, sexuality, trade union membership, political party, religion, criminal convictions, lapsed or not, consumer preferences, education, job or profession and status, information from the intelligence services and gossip from neighbours?

What redress would a citizen have against false or inaccurate information, or unsubstantiated allegations, obtainable from an ID card?

The government is at risk of creating a Poll Tax type of situation with regard to ID cards. People who refuse to carry them, sometimes on grounds of civil liberties, will be imprisoned. ID cards will thus create the problem they are alleged to solve – by attempting to uphold the law they will invite civil disturbance and anger against injustice. Attempts will be made to sabotage the system, including directly disabling the card and by making its administration a nightmare.

As has been mentioned by others already, the existence of ID cards in the U.S. would not have stopped what happened on 9/11.

Yours fraternally

Jim Adams (jim-adams@supanet.com)