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PREM 19/3379

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL FILING.

~~National~~ Identity Cards

HOME AFFAIRS

August 1988

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PART 1 ends:-

SS/DoE to HS - 8.3.91.

PART 2. begins:-

MA to Ho - 15.6.93.



2 MARSHAM STREET
LONDON SW1P 3EB
01-276 3000

My ref:

Your ref:

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1

8 March 1991

Dear Home Secretary,

A COMMON NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

I have seen your letter of 6 February to David Waddington. I can see that there are arguments for a common national identification number although the Committee does not itself make a strong case for one.

The Committee's report also refers to the processing of information on the community charge. At the moment charging authorities have only limited scope for data exchange, prompting the Audit Commission and some individual authorities to press for a personal identification number to be introduced for the community charge. We should not underestimate the resentment which is building up about the cost of non collection of the community charge. The possibility that a common PIN, might help to reduce non-payment could, therefore be popular in some quarters. I agree however that the proposition would overall be very controversial. I certainly do not believe that the issue should be considered in relation to the community charge alone.

I am copy this letter to the copyees of yours.

Yours sincerely
Phil Wad

PH MICHAEL HESELTINE

Approved by the Secretary of State
and signed in his absence.

Home Affairs

National Identity
Cards Aug 80



SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

N BLM.

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

28 February 1991

Dear Kenneth,

COMMON NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 6 February to David Waddington about the recommendation in the Home Affairs Committee's Report on the Data Protection Registrar's Annual Report, that the Home Office should undertake a major study into the case for and against a national identification number.

I agree with your view that this is an extremely sensitive subject and that we should not embark on a costly exercise solely on the strength of the HAC recommendation. I am content, therefore, that we should respond to the Home Affairs Committee as you propose.

I am copying this to members of HS, the Prime Minister, other members of the Cabinet and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever,

Ian

IAN LANG

HOME AFFAIRS: National Identity Cards, August 88.



THE DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORT



FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE

2 MARSHAM STREET LONDON SW1P 3EB
TELEPHONE 071-276 3000

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Home Secretary
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

My Ref: R/PSO/1815/91

Your Ref:

Ch

26 FEB 1991

Dear Kenneth,

A COMMON NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 6 February about the Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee's proposals for a study of the case for and against a common national identification number.

My Department has a clear interest given its responsibility for the unique identification of all Britain's drivers. I agree with you that there is no pressure for change and there are good political and data protection reasons against a common identification number. I am therefore content with the response you are suggesting.

/ Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, other members of the Cabinet, members of HS and to Sir Robin Butler.

MALCOLM RIFKIND

Home Affairs:
Identity Cards
Aug 88



The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Home Secretary
Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS
Telephone 071 210 3000
*From the Secretary of
State for Health*

COA 26/7

26 February 1991

D. L.

A COMMON NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

will request, required

I have seen a copy of your letter of 6 February to David Waddington about the Government's response to the Home Affairs Committee report recommending the initiation of a comprehensive study of the case for and against a common national identification number. I fully support the line you are proposing although I would suggest the deletion of 'present' in respect of any intention to commission further work.

My concern is that confidential information should not be put at risk by the introduction of a common identification number. Medical records must remain confidential and protected from unauthorised access. Any perceived breach of that principle may undermine the willingness of patients to divulge personal information during consultations, thus undermining the value of the consultation and the record.

As you know, I also have responsibility for the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS). I am concerned that a hint that we might introduce a compulsory identification scheme might have serious consequences for OPCS statistics and for the social survey. OPCS relies on the voluntary co-operation of the public to acquire a lot of information which is indispensable. In the short term also, any suggestions that the Government was seriously considering a scheme on the HAC lines could adversely affect public co-operation in this April's census, which is already at some risk because of feared links to community charge registers.



I am glad to support your views on the subject. However, I feel that it is important for you to be broadly aware of the implications of such a scheme not only for the NHS, but also for the activities of OPCS. Presentation to the public would have to confirm that safeguards for confidentiality would be maintained and cross checking between the different agencies would not be permitted save in exceptional circumstances.

I am copying this letter to members of HS, the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet, and to Sir Robin Butler.

W
Waldegrave

WILLIAM WALDEGRAVE





MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB
Telephone 071-21 82111/3

SECRETARY OF STATE

MO 26/2/1/1D

CGP
22nd February 1991

David

*CGP
25/2*

A COMMON NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

will request if required
I have seen Kenneth Baker's letter of 6th February to you about a Common National Identification Number.

I wholly endorse the approach set out in Kenneth's letter. There is, however, one additional factor that we should consider including in the response to the Home Affairs Committee, and that is the question of cost. While I cannot provide any figures, it is reasonable to assume that considerable expenditure would be required to introduce such a system. This aspect will need to be included in any discussion on the introduction of a National Identification Number.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, members of HS, other members of the Cabinet and to Sir Robin Butler.

Tom King

The Rt Hon Lord Waddington QC
Lord Privy Seal



dti

the department for Enterprise

The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley MP
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

Department of
Trade and Industry

1-19 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Enquiries
071-215 5000

Telex 8811074/5 DTHQ G
Fax 071-222 2629

Direct line 071-215 4440

Our ref PE2252

Your ref

Date 21 February 1991

Dear Kenneth

COMMON NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

Your letter of 6 February to the Lord Privy Seal, copied to others, sought comments on the recommendation from the Home Affairs Committee report that have a bearing on the Data Protection Act, namely that there should be a common identification number. My comments are made in the context of my responsibility for consumer credit issues, since as you rightly say the subject is a sensitive one, raising issues of personal privacy.

The Government is actively promoting responsibility in lending and borrowing; the Government's latest initiative "Proposals for New Legislation on Credit Marketing" was launched by Edward Leigh in December. Responsible lending depends on the ability of the lender to undertake sound credit assessments which, in turn, requires access to comprehensive and sound information. This must, of course, be achieved fairly and with due regard for people's privacy. Accordingly, whilst I have no objection to the line that you propose, I welcome the comment that "we will continue to take note of views that may be expressed on the subject".

A copy of this letter goes to recipients of yours.

Yours ever

K Baker



Recycled Paper



NBAM

CCPJ

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

6 February 1991

Lord Waddington

A COMMON NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

The Home Affairs Committee recently published a report on the Annual Report of the Data Protection Registrar. Government Departments were not invited to give evidence but the Report directs a number of policy recommendations at us. My Department is pursuing these bilaterally with relevant Whitehall interests in the usual way, in order to put together a Government response. However one recommendation, though addressed to the Home Office, raises a very wide issue which, if seriously pursued, would not necessarily fall to the Home Office to co-ordinate. To save unnecessary work later on I am writing to colleagues now to propose the line we should take on it.

... Paragraphs 18-22 of the Report, attached, discuss the Registrar's doubts about multiple use of personal identification numbers created by users of computerised personal data such as DSS and local authorities. The Committee, while making it clear that it had not been able to address the issue properly, was inclined to the view that there should be an efficient single system of identification. It recommended that the Home Office should initiate a comprehensive study - which would necessarily involve a number of Government Departments - of the case for and against a national identification number.

Although there are data protection aspects to this proposal it goes well beyond that particular subject and has implications for many Departments. However I do not consider that we should mount a major exercise on the strength of the Home Affairs Committee's flimsy discussion. The crucial question is whether Government should encourage or allow the creation of a single reference number under which personal records would be listed in a range of Government Departments, public authorities and no doubt private data users. Such arrangements operate in some other countries, and they presumably have some operational advantages. However, the subject is exceedingly sensitive politically, since

The Rt Hon Lord Waddington QC
Lord Privy Seal
Privy Council Office
Whitehall
London SW1

/2.

it will be seen as opening up the possibility of comprehensive tracking of a citizen's movements and activities. So far as I am aware, the pressure for such a change is not so great that we should even appear to be giving the idea serious thought - especially as we near the end of this Parliament.

I therefore propose that in responding to the Report we should say that the recommendation raises issues which go considerably wider than the Data Protection Registrar's responsibilities or the Data Protection Act generally; that we have no present intention of commissioning detailed work on such a proposal; but that we will continue to take note of views that may be expressed on the subject.

If any colleagues have substantially different views on the handling of this topic it would be helpful to know within a couple of weeks, to leave time for discussion before we finalise the Government's response to the report.

In view of the very wide implications of this recommendation I am copying this letter not only to other members of HS but also to the Prime Minister and other members of the Cabinet, and to Sir Robin Butler.

Tom Baker,
Kenneth

stating the issue of data matching and Ministers have agreed to consider carefully any recommendations that he may make.¹ Without wishing to pre-empt the Registrar's review, we would like to see clear procedures established governing the merging of files of data.

Personal Identification Numbers

18. With increasing amounts of information about individuals being held on computer files and being exchanged electronically, the need for this information to be accurate grows ever more acute. Mr Howe told us² that the credit industry, further to this aim, is keen to collect dates of birth on individuals in order to combine this with their names and addresses so as to produce a personal identification number (PIN) unique to each person.

19. The arguments for and against the development of such a personal identification number are set out in Appendix AAI in the Registrar's Sixth Annual Report. To summarise, it is clearly in the interests of both the computer user and the individual that information on any transaction refer to the correct person. Research³ suggests that accurate identification can be achieved using only name and address in 99 per cent of cases and a customer number (or PIN) can be formed by combining these two details. Difficulties occur when an individual changes his or her address. Consequently there have been demands for the introduction of a national identification scheme. The Registrar's concern is that the use of PINs on a national basis would facilitate data matching, thereby making it easier for information to be disclosed without an individual's consent and for errors to be replicated as inaccurate information is transferred across files. Mr Howe was worried⁴ that a national common identifier may creep into existence, by, for example, the wider use of the national insurance number, and stressed that any PIN should be restricted to the one industry and constrained from wider use.⁵

20. We recognise that these are legitimate data protection concerns, but they should not override other public policy interests. We believe that the case for one identification number for each individual may have some merit. The USA, France and Denmark are countries which have, in effect, a national personal identity number. The present system in the United Kingdom whereby individuals are identified by different organisations is extremely haphazard. Each individual submits different information separately in connection with the community charge, electoral register, birth and marriage registers, social security, the health service and vehicle licensing. The national insurance number, given to everyone at the age of sixteen, is used for some purposes other than social security, such as the new TESSA savings scheme, but Ministers rejected its use in connection with the student loan scheme.⁶ It requires considerable effort on the part of an individual to keep all the different public sector—let alone private sector—bodies which hold data about him or her, up to date with any changes in personal circumstances. It is almost inevitable that information becomes outdated eventually. It would be far more simple for an individual to inform one organisation of any change in personal information, such as address. These details could be updated on a central register and then passed on to specified relevant organisations. The advantages of such a system are set out in a paper⁷ by Mr Philip Redfern, a former Deputy Director of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, which the Committee was fortunate enough to see. He points out that a single identification number held on a local or central population register would provide benefits for both the individual and the state in terms of accuracy and administrative cost and would also make fraud in the form of false identities more difficult.

21. The implications for civil liberties arising from the development of a common national identifier would need to be given careful consideration. In a recent judgement Vice-Chancellor Sir Nicholas Browne-Wilkinson, the senior judge in the High Court Chancery Division, articulated this concern. He argued that "if the information obtained by the police, the Inland Revenue, the social security services, the health service and other agencies were to be gathered together in one file, the freedom of the individual would be gravely at risk".⁸ Although improper data matching

¹Official Report, 10 December 1990, col. 250.

²Q 21.

³This research was undertaken by Research Survey of Great Britain Ltd., contracted through the Central Office of Information, and involved face-to-face interviews with a random sample of 1,124 members of the population.

⁴Q 22.

⁵Q 21.

⁶Ev p. 3.

⁷A Population Register or Identity Cards for 1992? Philip Redfern, read to the Royal Institute of Public Administration, 19 February 1990.

⁸See *Financial Times*, 1 December 1990, p. 6.

would become easier with a common identifier, this is not to say that it need necessarily take place. We believe that the privacy of the individual could be successfully safeguarded by more rigorous data protection legislation.

22. The present irrational and higgledy-piggledy system cannot be justified simply because it makes life more difficult for those with ill-intent if it also complicates the life of ordinary people. Although the Committee has not had the opportunity to undertake a detailed examination of a system of personal identification numbers, it is nonetheless apparent that the present means of identification are ill defined, and prone to inaccuracy and abuse. We believe that this area requires a clear public policy designed to create an efficient system of identification whilst protecting the privacy of personal information. **We recommend that the Home Office should initiate a comprehensive study—which would necessarily involve a number of Government departments—of the case for and against a common national identification number.**

Police Records

a) Access to Police Records

23. The management of police records is a subject that we have addressed before and is one that has important data protection implications. In a previous report we recommended the establishment of an independent agency to maintain the National Collection of Criminal Records¹. This agency would be advised by the Registrar and would lay down guidelines governing to whom criminal records should be made available and in what circumstances. Although the Government indicated in its reply to the Committee² that it was not convinced of the need to establish such an agency, the then Home Secretary announced³ that an efficiency scrutiny is to be carried out which will consider, amongst other issues, the management of the National Collection and the control of access to it.

24. The management of data on police force computers is still a matter for individual chief constables although they are guided by an ACPO code of practice.⁴ Mr Howe impressed upon us the need for a clearer policy on the question of access. He reminded us that there is growing evidence that employers are asking prospective employees to provide them with a copy of their criminal record, which they can obtain from the police.⁵ We agree with him that this represents "a misuse of the Data Protection Act".⁶ The Registrar stressed that issues such as these should be "considered as a matter of public policy"⁷ rather than left to individuals to interpret the Act as they choose. We concur with this view and will take a keen interest in any new arrangements that the Government proposes following the report of the efficiency scrutiny. **We emphasise again that decisions about disclosure of criminal records must be the same throughout the country. They should not be subject to the idiosyncrasies of the 52 police forces of the United Kingdom.**

25. Similar guidelines are also required for the length of time that different types of police records are held. At present the police are aiming to keep criminal records for twenty years but that period varies. Indeed, Mr Howe had the impression that some police forces would like to keep records for a longer period.⁸ It seems to us unnecessary for records of trivial offences to be kept for as long as twenty years but it may well be appropriate to maintain records on very serious offences for far longer. Mr Howe suggested a "more sophisticated approach"⁹ to the storage of criminal records which would account for the seriousness of the offence. This approach would be in line with the sixth data protection principle that "personal data held for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes."¹⁰ **We recommend that the efficiency scrutiny currently under way should establish guidelines both on the length of time different types of criminal records should be held and on the organisations that should have access to them.**

¹Third Report, Session 1989-90, HC 285, *Criminal Records*, para 41.

²Cm 1163, Government Reply to the Third Report from the Home Affairs Committee, Session 1989-90, p. 6.

³*Official Report*, 28 November 1990, col. 418.

⁴*Official Report*, 10 December 1990, col. 250.

⁵Q 54.

⁶Q 54.

⁷Q 54.

⁸Q 47.

⁹Q 46.

¹⁰Data Protection Act 1984, Schedule 1.





bc: PU

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

2 January 1991

Dear Paul,

IDENTITY CARDS:
HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

The Prime Minister has seen and noted without comment a copy of the Home Secretary's letter of 20 December to the Lord President.

Yours sincerely,
Caroline

CAROLINE SLOCOCK

P. Pugh, Esq.,
Home Office

87



WBPm
copy

SCOTTISH OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AU

The Rt Hon John MacGregor MP
Privy Council Office
LONDON
SW1

31 December 1990

Dear John,

IDENTITY CARDS: HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS

I have seen Kenneth Baker's letter of ^{rap} 5 December about the recommendations on identity cards in the Home Affairs Committee's Seventh Report on Practical Police Co-operation in the European Community.

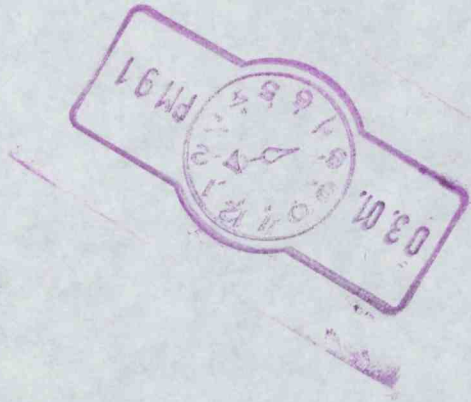
I agree with Kenneth that we should not pursue the introduction of a voluntary card scheme. It is not clear that the benefits to law and order would be substantial, whereas the costs plainly will be. I am content therefore that we should respond to the Home Affairs Committee as proposed.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, members of HS Committee and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever,
Ian.

IAN LANG

HONG AFFAIRS : ID Cards , Aug 88



RESTRICTED



NBAM

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

27 December 1990

Dear Colin,

plap

IDENTITY CARDS: HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

The Home Secretary wrote on 5 December seeking HS Committee's agreement to the terms of his proposed response to the Home Affairs Committee's recommendation that the Government should introduce voluntary identity cards.

Caroline Slocock wrote indicating the Prime Minister's support for the proposal that the Government should continue to resist the introduction of voluntary identity cards, but suggested that the Home Secretary should build a case against doing so in his reply. The Secretaries of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for Trade and Industry for Scotland and for Northern Ireland also wrote supporting the proposal.

The Lord Privy Seal would be grateful if the Home Secretary could circulate a revised draft response to colleagues in due course, reflecting the Prime Minister's views. The Lord Privy Seal understands that the Home Secretary is now aiming to respond to the Select Committee in January.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, members of HS Committee and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever,
Gillian

GILLIAN KIRTON
Private Secretary

Colin Walters Esq

HOME AFFAIRS. National Identity Cards Aug 88



Prime Minister?

SEP 14



CAS

21/12

QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

20 December 1990

John MacGregor



IDENTITY CARDS : HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

Further to my letter of 5 December, you may wish to see the terms in which I now mean to respond to this recommendation. The response has been amended to take account of the Prime Minister's views as expressed in his Private Secretary's letter of 10 December.

Whilst the technical feasibility of such a project is not in doubt, the Government is not persuaded that the case for a voluntary identity card has been made out, in terms of benefits either to the individual or to the State.

Although such a card would undoubtedly be capable of performing functions which could be useful to the public or a section of it, these benefits are not in fact exclusive to an official identity card. In practice a range of methods already exists for citizens to demonstrate their identity for everyday purposes, and it is no doubt for this reason that there is no evidence, in letters received in the Home Office, of widespread public demand for a voluntary identity card.

Since such a card would be unlikely to be held by the whole population its value to the police and other organisations would be negligible. The Association of Chief Police Officers believe that a voluntary card would be of little use to the police.

The Government does not consider that the public demand for a voluntary identity card, and the benefits it would confer on the community, would be commensurate with the high cost of developing, introducing and maintaining such a system. Nonetheless, the Government will follow closely what further interest may be stirred by the Committee's recommendations.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and the members of H, and to Sir Robin Butler.

John MacGregor
John MacGregor

The Rt Hon John MacGregor OBE, MP
Lord President of the Council
Privy Council Office
Whitehall
London SW1

HOME AFFAIRS,

ID Cards Aug 88.



NAPM AT 18/12



cepa

FCS/90/225

HOME SECRETARY

Home Affairs Committee: Identity Cards

1. I have seen a copy of your letter of 5 December ^{Proc} to John MacGregor, giving your proposed response to the HAC's recommendations in favour of introduction of a voluntary identity card system.

2. I accept your conclusion that we should go no further with the proposal for voluntary ID cards now. But I welcome your view that we should follow closely whether any further public interest is stimulated by the Committee's recommendations, or by future discussion of frontier controls.

2. I am copying this minute to the Prime Minister, members of H Committee and Sir Robin Butler.

Christopher Prentice

(seen by Foreign Secretary and sent in his absence)

(DOUGLAS HURD)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

14 December 1990

HONG AFFAIRS : National Identity Cards

Aug 88



NBPM CC PYH



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
Home Secretary
Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

13 December 1990

Dear Kenneth,

IDENTITY CARDS: HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

WITH CAS

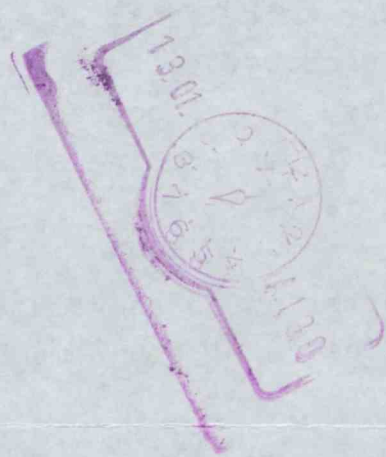
This is just to say that I entirely agree with the proposal in your letter of 5 December to John MacGregor. I would, however, be interested to see in due course the terms of any longer reply which might follow from Caroline Slocock's letter of 10 December 1990 to Peter Storr.

Copies of this letter go to the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Lord President & other members of H, and to Sir Robin Butler.

Louise

Prin

PB



dti

the department for Enterprise

cc pg

NBPM

The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley MP
Secretary of State for Trade and Industry

The Rt Hon Kenneth Baker MP
The Home Secretary
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

Department of
Trade and Industry

1-19 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Enquiries
071-215 5000

Telex 8811074/5 DTHQ G
Fax 071-222 2629

Direct line 071 215 5623
Our ref JW12075
Your ref
Date 12 December 1990

Dear Kenneth

attached

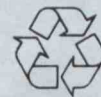
Thank you for copying to me your letter of 5 December to John MacGregor.

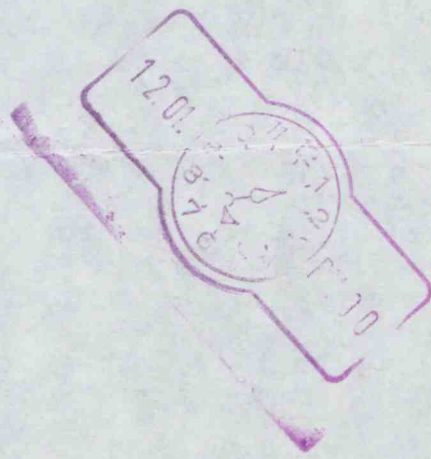
I agree that a voluntary ID card system would probably be expensive to run, and of little practical benefit. In particular, I believe that the Committee have exaggerated the EC benefits of a scheme like this. I therefore agree that you should reply to the Committee in the terms you suggest.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, members of H Committee, and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever

Peter





file: eam



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

10 December 1990

Dear Peter,

IDENTITY CARDS: HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

The Prime Minister has seen a copy of the Home Secretary's letter of 5 December to the Lord President. He has commented that he shares Mr. Baker's view that the Government should resist the introduction of voluntary identity card. He has said that there is some demand for a card on security grounds - and some logic to this - but the cost/bureaucracy rather jar against the idea. But the Home Secretary should build up a practical case against the introduction of a voluntary card in his response to put flesh on the assertions in the proposed reply to the Home Affairs Committee set out in his letter.

I am copying this letter to Richard Gozney (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), the Private Secretaries of the members of H Committee and Sonia Phippard (Cabinet Office).

Yours sincerely,

Caroline

CAROLINE SLOCOCK

Peter Storr, Esq.,
Home Office

MEM



570 Prime Minister?
OAS

7/12 QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

CCP

Andrew/ I agree with Mr. Baker.

5 December 1990

" There is some demand for a card on security grounds - and some logic to this - but the cost/burden is rather jar against the idea. But the HS should build up the practical case against it by response to put flesh on the assertions in the proposed reply to the HAC."

John MacGregor

IDENTITY CARDS: HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATION

HAC. 7/9.12

I am writing to let you know how I propose to respond to the recommendations in the Home Affairs Committee's Seventh Report which, in effect, call on the Government to introduce a voluntary identity card.

The recommendations are as follows:

'We recommend that the Government employ the services of those with sufficient technological imagination to produce a machine readable identity card', and

'We recommend that the project for a common card, which would be entirely voluntary in the United Kingdom, should be a goal of British Presidency of the EC in 1992: if it is pursued with enthusiasm with our European partners, and with the interest of individual freedom in mind, it will enhance our European sense of identity and make Europe an easier and safer place for its citizens'.

In considering how to respond to these recommendations, I have been mindful of the fact that last year H Committee, having previously rejected the idea of introducing a compulsory card, approved Douglas Hurd's proposal to set up an inter-departmental committee to look at the feasibility of a voluntary one. Before anything could be done, however, the Prime Minister asked that work should be suspended until the Autumn; although this inter-departmental study did not therefore take place, my officials have done further work on the idea of a voluntary card, and our formal position has been that the issue is under consideration.

Clearly the HAC's recommendation requires a substantive response, which would be either a rejection or an undertaking to do further work possibly by reviewing the proposal for an inter-departmental committee. My conclusion is that it would be preferable to take

The Rt Hon John MacGregor MP
Lord President of the Council
Privy Council Office
London SW1

/over

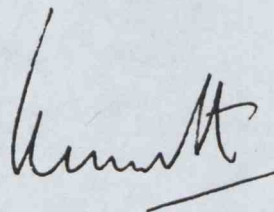
the issue no further. There is no apparent public demand for a voluntary identity card, and the State would gain very little from introducing one. Its value in law and order terms would be negligible as it would not be comprehensive, and although it might function as a travel document for use within the EC, it is in my view questionable whether this would be a sufficient inducement for the public to buy it, and whether the benefit to the State would be commensurate with the high cost of developing it which I would have to meet from my Department's resources.

I therefore propose to respond to the HAC as follows:

"Whilst the technical feasibility of such a project is not in doubt, the Government is not persuaded that the public demand for a voluntary identity card and the advantages it would confer on the community at large would be sufficient to justify the substantial cost. Nonetheless, the Government will follow closely what further interest may be stirred by the Committee's recommendations."

I am conscious that my proposed response is at variance with the line accepted by H last year, but it seems to me to be the right response to the Committee's recommendation, and I would be grateful for the agreement of H. The deadline for publication of the response to the HAC's report is very tight, and I should therefore welcome comments by Friday 14 December at the latest.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, members of H, and Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Am', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. Am', with a horizontal line underneath.



CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

24 April 1989

Dear Stephen

IDENTITY CARDS

The Prime Minister was grateful for the Lord President's minute of 20 April. The Prime Minister feels strongly that any further consideration of this issue should be deferred until the autumn.

A copy of this letter goes to the Private Secretaries to the other members of H Committee, and to Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Michael Saunders (Law Officers' Department), Alan Maxwell (Lord Advocate's Department) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

Dominic

DOMINIC MORRIS

Stephen Catling, Esq.,
Lord President's Office

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

21 April 1989 (1)

Prime Minister

IDENTITY CARDS

The Home Secretary's study would involve outsiders; and it is difficult to see how it could avoid muddying the waters with the football Spectator Bill.

Douglas Hurd put a paper to H Committee this week seeking agreement to establish a committee of officials and outside experts to examine the case for introducing a voluntary identity card. John Wakeham asks whether you are content for the Home Secretary to circulate proposals:

Content for me to minute out recommending that the study be deferred until the Autumn?

- (a) for the terms of reference for such a committee;
- (b) for the presentation and timing of an announcement.

There are strong arguments for putting all further work on this on ice until the football membership scheme has been sorted out.

DM
21/4

- The political pressure on identity cards has waned recently.
- Such pressure was for a compulsory scheme. Douglas Hurd's voluntary scheme would not be regarded as fitting the bill.
- Hardly anyone in H Committee sees any point in the idea of a voluntary card.
- Douglas Hurd suggested that his scheme was attractive in the context of 1992. But Geoffrey Howe does not want it connected in any way with Europe.
- An announcement by the Government that it was examining the possibility of introducing a voluntary identity card would add to the contention surrounding the football membership scheme.

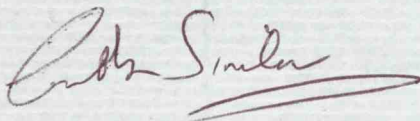
Peter
Consideration
until
Autumn.
The N.I.
card is a kind
of identity
card.
not

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Conclusion

The time is not right for further work on this idea. There should be no announcement, and no committee involving outside experts for the time being.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Carolyn Sinclair", with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

CAROLYN SINCLAIR

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PRIME MINISTER

IDENTITY CARDS

The Home and Social Affairs Committee (H) considered at their meeting yesterday morning a Memorandum by the Home Secretary on identity cards (H(89) 1).

No member of H favoured the introduction of a compulsory identity card, at least for the foreseeable future. The discussion accordingly focussed on the case for a voluntary identity card and, in particular, on the Home Secretary's proposal that the Government should establish an inter-departmental committee to examine the feasibility and acceptability of a voluntary card.

Interest in this topic has waned in recent weeks partly as a result of the failure of Ralph Howell's Bill, which sought to provide for a compulsory identity card system. However, the Home Secretary felt that the subject was bound to return to the political agenda before long and that the Government should therefore set in hand arrangements for examining the feasibility of a voluntary scheme.

The Home Secretary canvassed the possibility of replacing the British Visitor's Passport (BVP), which is widely criticised because of the ease with which it can be obtained, being replaced by a new travel document which could be used also as an identity card. This would be broadly in line with a recent proposal by the Home Affairs Committee. Such a document would be subject to a comparable standard of verification to that of the existing full passport. BVPs are issued by the Post Office, but the

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proposed new travel document would probably be issued by the Passport Office. As well as being used as a travel document within Europe, it could contain certain non-governmental information (eg. bank account number, blood group and next of kin) and might also be used as a means of identifying those who are old enough to drink in pubs, etc.

Both the Home Secretary and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary believed that the introduction of such a document might be of assistance in the negotiations on the abolition of frontier controls after 1992. However, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary was concerned that it should not be presented as in any way connected with developments in Europe.

Some members of the Committee were worried that any moves towards the introduction of voluntary identity cards would be wrongly portrayed as the first step towards a compulsory system. On the other hand, other members of the Committee thought that a voluntary card could be popular with the public, although it was recognised that it was open to question whether the Government should involve itself in facilitating the recording of personal data such as bank account numbers.

There was also some difference of view over whether the proposed inquiry should be presented as an investigation into the feasibility of a new travel document which might incidentally have the capacity to store personal data, or whether the travel aspect should be played down on the grounds that the proposed new document was likely to be both more expensive and less convenient to obtain than the BVP.

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On balance, the Committee believed that further work should be undertaken on the feasibility of a voluntary card, in the way proposed by the Home Secretary. However, it was recognised that careful consideration would need to be given to the timing of any announcement to ensure that it did not become linked in the public mind with either the football membership scheme or the community charge. The Committee also considered that any new card would have a better prospect of securing public acceptance if it was described as, say, a personal information card rather than as an identity card.

In view of the sensitive political nature of these issues, I undertook to report the Committee's views to you. If you are content in principle for an inter-departmental inquiry to be established, I think that the next step would be for the Home Secretary to circulate proposals for its terms of reference and for the presentation and timing of an announcement.

I am copying this minute to members of H Committee, to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Attorney General and the Lord Advocate and to Sir Robin Butler.



J W

20 April 1989

CONFIDENTIAL

Home Affairs - ~~the~~ card August

21/11
10/11
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CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

IDENTITY CARDS

The Home Secretary's paper to 'H' Committee seeks their agreement to setting up a committee, involving outsiders, to look at the possibility of introducing a voluntary identity card system. This voluntary card would serve primarily as a travel document to replace the British Visitors Passport, but also possibly to replace other forms of identity which citizens have to carry around for a variety of private sector and government purposes. Now that Mr King has ruled out an identity card system for Northern Ireland, no one is considering compulsory cards.

Content to await the outcome of 'H' Committee's discussion on 19 April of the Home Secretary's ideas?

Yes

Or

Are there any points you wish to register ahead of 'H'? (One obvious point the committee will need to look at if it is set up is the relationship between a voluntary card and the identity card aspects of the Football Membership Scheme.)

DM

DOMINIC MORRIS

14 April 1989

~~SECRET~~



we from 4
cfc
70

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

13 April 1989

IDENTITY CARDS

The Prime Minister has considered the Northern Ireland Secretary's recent minute on the question of identity cards for Northern Ireland. She notes the conclusion that practical difficulties rule out introducing a compulsory system and that a voluntary scheme would have serious disadvantages. She agrees that no further action should be taken for the time being.

I am copying this letter to Stephen Wall (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Philip Mawer (Home Office), Brian Hawtin (Ministry of Defence) and Trevor Woolley (Cabinet Office).

C. D. Powell

Stephen Leach, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

SECRET

3 (a-h)
cc/c.①^aThe Minister

PRIME MINISTER

✓

His conclusions over
 the practical difficulties
 rule out an identity card
 system for Northern Ireland.
 The GOC & Chief Constable
 are quoted in support.

CDB
12/4IDENTITY CARDS

Following the Security Review that we conducted last autumn, a range of new measures have now been legislated for and implemented, all designed to give additional support to the security forces in the fight against terrorism. Allowing inferences to be drawn from a suspect's decision to remain silent, changes in the remission arrangements for persons sentenced for serious terrorist crimes, new powers to investigate and confiscate terrorist funds, the reorganisation of intelligence arrangements, the establishment of more joint operations rooms and the prohibition on direct radio and TV interviews with, amongst others Sinn Fein, are all measures which, on top of their intrinsic merits, have helped to bring about a significant change in security force morale; and that in spite of the undoubted scale of the terrorist threat that we still face.

(or prep)

2. There is, however, still outstanding the further issue that you asked me to pursue in respect of identity cards for Northern Ireland. I have consulted the Chief Constable and the GOC before finalising my own views. This letter now offers an assessment of the security benefits that such a system might produce; the practical problems which would need to be addressed before those benefits could be obtained, the security and political implications in Northern Ireland of a decision to go ahead; and the impact this might have on the wider political scene. Both the Chief Constable and the GOC agree with my general conclusions.



Purpose

3. Although an effective (ie universal and compulsory) identity card system might well produce benefits outside the security field, I have been looking at the case for identity cards principally from the point of view of their potential to improve security in the Province. There can be no question that if we had a universal and fraudproof compulsory identity card system firmly in place in Northern Ireland, some of the tasks of the security forces could be carried out more easily. If cards were compulsorily carried by all Northern Ireland residents, they would facilitate rapid and accurate identification of persons being questioned by, or giving information to the security forces and, in particular, persons stopped at permanent and random vehicle check points. An additional benefit from this process would be an increase in the intelligence available to the security forces on the movement and associates of terrorist suspects. Identity cards might also produce other 'law and order' benefits, eg in relation to the control of under age drinking, cheque and credit card fraud and personation at elections.

Scope

4. An effective scheme would have to be both universal and compulsory - at least as regards all those who are permanently resident in Northern Ireland. It would be necessary therefore to ensure that the entire adult (ie over 16) population of Northern Ireland applied for, and were issued with, such cards; that they should be carried at all times; that it should be an additional requirement that they be produced for the security forces when requested; and that there should be effective sanctions to enforce these requirements. It would also be necessary to ensure that visitors to Northern Ireland were required to carry some alternative



form of identification. I have, therefore, examined the practicalities and implications of designing a compulsory scheme which would minimise the scope for fraudulent applications (because the system would be useless if terrorists or their supporters could obtain cards by using false names and addresses) and which would include a suitable provision for visitors.

Issue and Design of Cards

5. Existing technology would enable a card to be designed which would be very difficult, if not impossible, to forge. Cards could be made machine-readable and, in that way, their validity could quickly be checked. But such a check would by itself only demonstrate that the card had been issued by the proper authorities; it could not prove that the card had not been fraudulently applied for or that the information on the card was accurate. The population at which an ID card scheme would be particularly targetted (ie terrorists and their supporters) represents considerably less than 1% of the whole population to whom it is intended that ID cards would be issued, and the fact that particular persons may fall into this category will not necessarily be known to the issuing authority. This point has particular validity in relation to those on the fringes of terrorism; a significant proportion of these (the very persons who are most likely to abuse the system) will not be recognised as such, and indeed their number and identities will change over time. The limitations of the check itself and the small size of the "Target" population together means that a very sophisticated screening system will be necessary to prevent fraudulent applications.

6. I am satisfied that postal applications would leave open the real possibility of abuse. As has been found by the Passport Office, which operates in this way, random checks on individual applications do not provide a complete answer to the problem. A system of personal application would probably be necessary, and the



considerations to which I have already referred all point towards giving the issuing function to the RUC. By requiring individuals to make application in person at a local police station, we might be able to ensure that the scope for fraudulent applications was reduced to an absolute minimum. But the Chief Constable is far from keen for his force to be involved in this way and I can understand his concern. He is reluctant to divert the manpower necessary to process applications away from other policing duties. Moreover, there are security implications in allowing too much public access to police buildings; and any RUC involvement in the issue of identity cards (especially since their introduction is certain to be seen as a controversial act) might have a negative impact on the improved community relations which the force is working so hard to achieve.

Visitors

7. It is essential that any scheme also deals effectively with the problem of visitors to Northern Ireland. Visitors from the mainland might be expected to have some means of identification and those from overseas would have passports, although neither of these are entirely reliable. But the vast number of visitors from the Republic of Ireland presents much more serious difficulties. Even with the full co-operation of the Irish authorities, we will be unable to issue temporary ID cards with any certainty that they would be accurate. A requirement for visitors from the Republic to carry either a driving licence or a passport would be ineffective against fraud because of the ease with which such documents can be forged. Terrorists wishing to avoid carrying a card would simply claim to be from the Republic and produce evidence to this effect which the security forces could not readily verify, except where the individual was sufficiently well known (in which case there is little need for an identity card system). All this means that the system would be weakest in the area which really matters.



Assessment

8. A compulsory identity card system that was already firmly in place, and which had something approaching universal acceptance from the people of Northern Ireland, would undoubtedly produce some security benefits but these are difficult to quantify. The Chief Constable tells me that his officers do not currently experience any major problems in establishing people's identities; and he makes the point that the majority of terrorists are already well known to the security forces, especially in their local areas. The Army have a bigger problem, especially in respect of those units deployed on short tours, but even these as you know from your own visits, such as that to Middletown, quickly get to know the main suspects in their areas. Against that background, it is not easy to assess the value in terms of an increase of the level and quality of available intelligence which might result from the ready availability of identity cards as an aid to the checking process.

9. There are clearly major difficulties in establishing an effective system and I have tried to assess the costs, and the risks to security in the Province, of the process of introducing a compulsory identity card scheme.

10. It would, of course, need primary legislation. This does not matter if we are satisfied that the results will be worth it; but I am not satisfied that this would be the case. Putting an ID card system into effect would involve a major commitment of resources in terms of money and manpower. Preliminary estimates suggest that it would take 100 additional staff at least 12 months to issue cards to everyone in Northern Ireland over the age of 16, and taking into account the costs of the cards themselves, we would be talking about start-up costs of the order of £8m. A realistic cost for maintaining the system (issuing and renewing or replacing perhaps some 200,000 cards a year) might be of the order of £1.7m.

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11. Much more important are the likely consequences on the ground of a move to introduce identity cards. As to this, I now think that there is a serious risk that any attempt to introduce a compulsory system in Northern Ireland, otherwise than on a UK-wide basis, would be strongly resented by a significant number of unionists, as well as nearly all nationalists. The former would see it as another example of Britain treating the Province differently (and worse) than the rest of the United Kingdom. There would be organised opposition from some nationalists. We would be in danger of creating another 'civil rights' issue, of being seriously misunderstood abroad (where mistaken comparisons would again be made with South Africa) and of further straining our relations with the Irish. Both the issue (if it involved the RUC) and the checking of identity cards could be another source of friction between the security forces and some sections of the community. We would seek to justify the upheaval on grounds of improved security which could not then be fulfilled. Even a wholly effective compulsory system would be far short of a panacea. Indeed there are fears that a widely accepted system might make it easier for paramilitaries on both sides to single out targets for sectarian killings.

A Voluntary Scheme?

12. In the light of the problems associated with the introduction of a compulsory scheme, I thought it would also be worth looking into the possibility of introducing in Northern Ireland a voluntary scheme. Different voluntary systems already operate in some European countries; but in Northern Ireland we were inclined to think that a better model might be a voluntary extension to non-drivers of the current computerised driving licence, which already contains a photograph. Some 800,000 of these documents were issued in the years 1985-87; and there are about 50,000 new applications a year.



13. Like a compulsory scheme, a voluntary scheme must be judged in terms of its advantages or disadvantages for security in the Province. If it is to provide security benefits, it must attract a high take up, particularly amongst the young and those most likely to be questioned by the security forces. Whether this would happen would depend in part on how useful the possession of such a card would be regarded, for example as a specified document at elections, in securing the acceptance of a personal cheque or in helping with benefit claims etc. But, much more crucially, it would depend upon the moral, political and intimidatory pressures that were put upon both the majority and minority communities to participate or not participate in the scheme. I have reluctantly had to conclude that the pressures that would be exerted on the minority population (and not just by the terrorists) would be against any such take up; and those who we would most want to cover from a security point of view would not be covered. Moreover, I would be worried that the introduction of a voluntary scheme, especially one with a good take up in the majority community, could have the effect of pointing the finger of suspicion at anyone who had exercised his right not to possess a card. Since, for a variety of reasons, nationalists would be far less likely than unionists to participate in a voluntary scheme, I fear that its introduction could be a seriously divisive act which would put moderate nationalists in particular in a difficult position.

14. In brief, therefore, I see a serious risk that a voluntary scheme would not only be ineffective in security terms, but that it would actually deepen the differences between the two communities and put relations between the security forces and the minority community under greater strain. I have therefore reluctantly concluded that a voluntary scheme cannot be considered as a realistic alternative to a compulsory system.

Summary

15. If we really could introduce a totally effective ID system in Northern Ireland it would undoubtedly be a useful tool for the

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security forces in their efforts to combat terrorism in the Province, although it would be a mistake to place too much weight on the security benefits it might bring. It could also bring other law and order benefits. But the practical difficulties - notably the 'visitors' loophole - that stand in the way of introducing an effective system are, in present circumstances simply too great. Moreover, the political, presentational and the (short to medium term) security disadvantages of an attempt to introduce either a compulsory or a so called voluntary scheme for Northern Ireland alone are, in my judgement, strong enough to tilt the balance against this course even if it were, in fact, a feasible one. My conclusion, which is shared by both the Chief Constable and the GOC, is that it would be a mistake to seek to introduce a compulsory identity card system at the present time. Although different views have been expressed about the value of a 'voluntary' scheme, I cannot see any truly voluntary scheme as capable of doing the job which we have in mind. I know that you will be as disappointed as I am by the negative conclusion; but I do not consider that the considerable amount of work that has now been done on this exercise will prove to be wasted. We have explored the issue in depth and have identified the key issues and mechanics of possible action against the possibility that circumstances could change and that the balance of advantage may tip the other way. Like every other possible security option in Northern Ireland, identity cards must be kept under review, but I would not propose further action at present.

16. I am sending copies of this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Secretary of state for Defence and Sir Robin Butler.

TK.

TK

JB/PROB/21578

Home affairs: Nat Identity cards. August 1988



SECRET 2



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
Whitehall
LONDON
SW1

Prime Minister

*I understand all
officials have recommended
that a compulsory & comprehensive
scheme for identity cards is not
workable, & that Ministers should
opt for a voluntary system introduced
over a period of years. It remains
to be seen whether the Northern Ireland
Government will overturn this.*

3/ October 1988

Dear Mr Powell,

IDENTITY CARDS

Thank you for your message about the Prime Minister's wish to produce a report on Identity Cards before her departure to Poland on 2 November.

The Secretary of State has been reading a draft report on possible Identity Card schemes while he has been visiting Japan and Korea. The report raises some fundamental issues about the possibilities for introducing a scheme which need to be resolved in further discussion with the Army and RUC. It has simply not be possible therefore to finalise the report before the Prime Minister goes to Poland on 2 November. The Secretary of State aims, however, to have a report finalised and submitted to the Prime Minister on her return from Poland.

*Yours sincerely
Jennie Murphy*

PP

M T H MAXWELL

cc PS/MofS (L&B) (3&4)
PS/PUS (L&B) (5&6)
Mr Stephens (7)
Mr A Wilson (8)
Mr Hewitt (9)
Mr Donnelly (10)

Secretary of State (L&B) (1&2)

IDENTITY CARDS

EDP
26/1X.

INTRODUCTION

I attach a provisional version of the note by officials which explores the main issues that would arise from a decision to introduce identity cards in Northern Ireland. It has yet to be cleared formally with the RUC and Army, but it reflects their views at working level and is unlikely to be changed in a way which affects its basic conclusions.

Purpose of the Scheme

2. The main security benefit of an ID Card system would be to provide rapid and accurate identification of persons stopped by the security forces at random and permanent vehicle checkpoints. This would lead to an improvement in the intelligence available to the security forces on the movement and associates of terrorist suspects. But the scheme would also produce other law and order benefits including for example the control of under-age drinking; better physical security at public buildings; and the reduction of personation. To be fully effective, it would be necessary to ensure that the entire adult population of Northern Ireland applied for and were issued with valid cards; that such cards were carried at all times and produced for the security forces as and when requested; and that visitors to Northern Ireland were required to carry some alternative form of identification. Officials have therefore considered the implications of designing a system which would minimise the scope for fraudulent applications and include suitable provisions for visitors.

Issue and Designing of Cards

3. Ideally, we would wish to involve the RUC in the issuing of identity cards. By requiring individuals to make application in person at a local police station, we could ensure that the scope for fraudulent applications was reduced to an absolute minimum. But the RUC have grave reservations about being involved in this way. They would not be prepared to divert the manpower necessary to process applications away from other policing duties and they also fear - justly in my view - that their involvement would have a negative impact on the improved community relations which they have worked so hard to achieve. I am satisfied that postal applications would leave open the possibility of greater abuse and the risk of issuing a higher proportion of invalid cards. Severe penalties for making false applications would therefore be necessary. I gather there would be no real difficulty in designing a card which would be incapable of forgery.

Visitors

4. On visitors, officials have been unable to devise an entirely satisfactory scheme. Whilst visitors from the mainland or from overseas would not present any major problem, the question of visitors from the Republic of Ireland poses a number of difficulties. In the absence of co-operation from the Irish authorities, we could not issue temporary ID cards with any certainty that they would be accurate. A requirement for visitors from the South to carry either a driving licence or a passport is similarly unattractive because of the ease with which such documents can be forged.

Assessment

5. A compulsory scheme promises much but carries a high risk in terms of civil disobedience, strained relations with the Irish and a deterioration in nationalist attitudes to our security policies.

There is a also a danger of raising expectations of improved security which finally are not fulfilled. It would require primary legislation and a major commitment of resources in terms of money and manpower. All of these issues are discussed in detail in the attached paper.

An alternative scheme

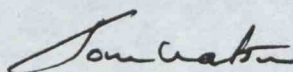
6. The alternative is to devise a scheme that, at least initially, is voluntary, and to introduce it gradually. This might be based on the widespread acceptance of the new computerised Northern Ireland driving licence card which also contains a photograph. By extending the availability of the card to non-drivers as is done, for example, in parts of the United States, we might, over a 3-4 year period aim to achieve perhaps 80% population coverage. This would then be a strong position from which to move to an obligatory scheme if circumstances justified it.

7. The key to a successful voluntary scheme lies in ensuring a high takeup, particularly among the young and those most likely to be questioned by the security forces. This in turn will depend on how useful the card may be to its owner as for example, a specified document at elections, enabling Social Security benefit to be gained quickly or reducing delays involved in security checks. Additionally such a card might also be regarded as an accepted identity for foreign travel, beside possible unofficial uses, such as for the backing of cheques. The RUC in particular are keen to stress the civic advantages of identity cards such as the reduction in under-age drinking and financial and social security fraud.

8. The fundamental question in my view is which scheme will best increase overall security in the Province. That is our key objective. An obligatory scheme promises more but carries a much higher risk. A voluntary scheme avoids these pitfalls. It offers improved identification procedures to the security forces, and a

solid base from which to go further in due course. Both the RUC and the Army, at working level, have said that they see this as a potentially more promising approach.

8. You will no doubt wish to discuss. The 8 November SPM would offer a suitable occasion on which to seek considered views from the Chief Constable and the GOC. On the basis of the work already carried out, I think it should be possible to work up either scheme within a matter of weeks. We would then be in a position to report to the Prime Minister on the outcome of our considerations and offer firm proposals on the way forward.



IAN STEWART

*(approved by the Minister and
signed in his absence)*

21.10.88

SMN15173

INTRODUCTION OF IDENTITY CARDS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1. This note considers the issues raised by a decision to introduce identity cards into Northern Ireland.

2. The key objective of an identity card scheme would be to improve the security situation; and this must be the determining factor in deciding whether or not to introduce identity cards. A scheme with wider consequences leading to an overall reduction in security in the Province would clearly be of no value. The options available must therefore be considered in the context of the overriding aim of greater security.

I. Security Objectives

(i) RUC

3. The RUC are in favour of the progressive introduction of identity cards. They consider that quicker and more accurate identity checks would provide some extra low level intelligence data on suspects' movements, while helping to minimise inconvenience to other citizens. They also lay stress on the associated benefits of an identity card system in preventing cheque and credit card fraud, control of under-age drinking etc. The card would also have an important role in preventing electoral fraud.

4. The RUC's view is that a scheme need not be obligatory to be beneficial, since the majority of law-abiding citizens would wish to assist the police by carrying an identity card. They would however be opposed to any obligatory scheme in which the police had to take a leading role in issuing cards or which required people to attend at local police stations. The negative effort on overall relations between the RUC and the community, particularly the nationalist community, would outweigh any possible advantages. It would also be a diversion of police resources from more important tasks.

(ii) Army

5. The Army stress the advantages of an identity card system in speeding up the identification process at checkpoints. Troops on short tours of duty could not build up the same recognition of terrorists and their accomplices as the police and therefore an identity cards would be of substantial benefit. As the number of people carrying cards increased, terrorist suspects without them would inevitably have a higher profile; and any attempt to steal or forge cards would offer the security forces a further means of prosecuting terrorists. Like the RUC, the Army consider that even a system without 100% coverage would therefore aid their task, and speed up the average time taken for each check. On a busy day the Army might carry out some 1200 identity checks throughout the Province, with about half of these taking place in Belfast. For an individual with a common name and no proof of identity a computer-assisted check could take up to 20 minutes to complete. This inconveniences members of the public and by immobilising security forces can pose a potential threat.

5. The Army would intend to maintain the system whereby a soldier would radio the card number through to HQ and it would then be typed into a computer. This would avoid the need for soldiers to carry an additional piece of equipment, and also avoid the risk that such equipment could fall into the hands of paramilitaries and be exploited for their own purposes. However machine readable cards could be processed automatically at permanent checkpoints, such as airports, where no security risk was involved.

6. It should be noted that this position represents a development of the Army's traditional argument that no general system of identity cards could be effective in security terms unless applied simultaneously throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The Army and police still consider that an identity card system would be more effective if introduced throughout both countries. But they see even a voluntary system as producing immediate if modest benefits to the security forces on the ground.

II. The Main Options - Compulsory or Voluntary

There are two main approaches to setting up a identity scheme, depending on the levels of accuracy and coverage sought. These are considered below.

Option A Compulsory

7. This approach sets out to provide the adult population of Northern Ireland with a form of identity card which captures a single genuine identity, is difficult to forge, has to be carried at all times, and is easy to check. Its main features would be follows:

- Legal powers would be taken to compel all citizens to carry identity cards when in a public place. Failure to do so would be punishable by imprisonment. Forgery of a card would also be punishable by imprisonment.
- The card would be carried by all adults over the age of 16. [Some youths are already involved in terrorist-related activity at the age of 16. But to reduce the age further would be to invite criticism on civil liberties grounds and also be of less value in that the photograph would rapidly become outdated. It would also mean insisting that school children carried identity cards, which would be difficult in presentational terms and likely to lead to a lot of extra cards lost.]
- All visitors to Northern Ireland over the age of 16 would similarly be required to carry an approved identity document - either a passport or equivalent, or a temporary travel document to be issued at the frontier for short-term passes or, in the case of the Republic, through the Dublin Embassy.

- The only exemptions would be for diplomats, prisoners and the mentally ill.

- The card would contain a black and white photograph taken at an identity card centre - normally at a police station - and include card number, name, address, and date of birth. The number might be based on the NHS numbers given to each resident by the Central Services Agency. Any change of address would need to be notified within a specified period. [The consensus view is that a fingerprint would not add significantly to the security value of the card and it would be administratively difficult to process. Its inclusion is not recommended.]

- Other uses for the card should include its validity as a cheque guarantee card, a card to be used by off-licences etc, to govern the sale of alcohol and tobacco, and its recognition as a valid travel document at least within the European Community. It would become the only valid document for election identification purposes.

- A public relations campaign would be required to stress the identity cards' role as an anti-terrorist weapon, and to explain the need for a tightening of identity control.

Option B Voluntary

8. This approach builds on the current successful use of 800,000 driving licences, with photographs, as identity documents and would seek to ensure that the majority of the population carry an identity card without making its use a statutory obligation, at least initially. It would function on the following lines:-

- An identity card would be introduced over a period of 2-3 years.
- It would be administered by an organisation modelled on the current DENI Vehicle Licensing Office and possibly based in Coleraine also. The same type of format could be used, with the new card incorporating the current driving licence card. Non-drivers' cards would be endorsed to that effect. This would build on existing public acceptance of the driving licence with photograph.
- It would not be compulsory but application for a driving licence would automatically entail application for an identity card, providing a means of ensuring that the 50000 young adults requiring a driving licence each year would be issued with a card. Those already with driving licences would be encouraged to replace them with the new card, with its various advantages, before they expired. An element of compulsion could be introduced by requiring drivers to carry their driving licence at all times (though this would require primary legislation). Failure to do so could be penalised by suspension of licence.
- The card would normally be issued on postal application, following the driving licence and passport precedent.
- Would apply from the age of 16 initially as with provisional driving licences.
- It would not be issued to visitors at the first stage, but existing legislation requiring all visitors to co-operate in identity checks would be enforced more rigorously.
- As with obligatory card, could be used as a cheque guarantee card, proof of age, social security identification and foreign travel document (if FCO agree). Also for electoral purposes.

- Would contain photograph, number, name, address, and date of birth. Valid for at least four years
- Public relations campaign would emphasise voluntary nature, and associated benefits.

The initial priority would be to persuade the approximately 400,000 adults without driving licences to apply for identity cards, and encourage drivers to carry their licences at all times. In this way a low-key diffusion of the identity card amongst the population could be achieved, with the advantage that the new format card would be circulated most rapidly to the key target group of young adults.

9. These two options represent the extreme of the acceptability/efficiency trade off presented by identity cards. The detailed issues involved are considered further in the attached Annexes.

III. The Major Difficulties

10. The two most serious problems faced by any identity card system in Northern Ireland are to ensure that:-

- (a) each individual applies for and receives only one card and that card contains current information; and
- (b) the inevitably less stringent arrangements for visitors do not undermine the value of the scheme.

11. Option A seeks to tackle these problems directly. To minimise fraud during the critical initial distribution of cards, all individuals would be required to attend local police stations in person with the required documentation and be photographed by the police.

12. There is no alternative to the use of the police to administer the initial procedures if the risk of fraudulent applications is to be minimised. Postal applications allow too much scope for incorrect addresses and applications under different names. Staff in the only other organisations with effective Province-wide coverage - Post Offices and social security offices - would be vulnerable to intimidation in some areas; and the buildings used might well become terrorist targets. Only the RUC possesses both the manpower and the installations needed to guarantee a consistently rigorous approach.

13. The technical features and production of the card do not represent a constraint. (Annex A refers). The capacity exists to produce enough cards within the time constraints, and sufficient security features could be built in at reasonable cost to make forgery an unattractive option. Anti-forgery devices are of course only of value if the initial information on the card is accurate.

14. The problem of visitors is however more difficult. Republican terrorists are likely to carry Irish identity documents rather than NI identity cards, and have a proven capacity to steal or forge Irish passports etc. The integrity of a rigorous identity card system would therefore inevitably be compromised to some extent; and without the co-operation of the Garda in checking addresses from the Republic (which could not be taken for granted) this would be a serious flaw which would undermine the effectiveness of the obligatory system. The question of visitor control is considered further in Annex D.

15. Option B starts from the premise that complete accuracy of information and population coverage are unattainable, at least without incurring unacceptable costs in community relations, police time, and Anglo-Irish cooperation, all of which themselves have security implications. It accepts the security forces' view

that a widely used voluntary system would still be of operational value. In this perspective the priority becomes to achieve maximum voluntary acceptance of identity cards within the law-abiding population leading to some speeding up of most identity checks and a sound basis on which a more restrictive scheme could subsequently be constructed. The priority in relation to visitors would be to accustom them to carry some identity, accepting that it will not always be possible to confirm it definitively. Even under the voluntary system, forgery of cards, provision of false information etc would be serious crimes, subject to sanction by the courts.

16. This approach could be introduced without the need for contentious primary legislation. It also represents a much smaller administrative burden on the RUC. Annex F considers the detail of an optional scheme and a timescale for implementation, including the option of making it compulsory at a later stage.

IV. Other Constraints

17. In the terrorist context the identity card is of necessity a blunt instrument. It requires the provision of some 1.2 million cards in order to acquire more rapid and reliable information about the less than 2,000 individuals actively engaged in terrorist or paramilitary activity. It is therefore for consideration whether any more accurately targeted schemes could produce the same result with less administrative difficulty, eg a limited pass system for border areas. This note does not pursue this possibility.

18. More generally, the introduction of a compulsory identity card would offer significant opportunities for hostile propaganda, individual defiance and mass civil disobedience.

19. The RUC would have to enforce whatever legislation on identity cards is introduced. This would have negative

repercussions for their community policing role, particularly if identity cards become viewed as a sectarian measure aimed at the Nationalist population. These issues, and possible Government sanctions including withdrawal of social security benefit from those who refuse to apply for cards, are considered in Annex E. The possibility of a link between the identity card number and the health service databank is discussed in Annex H.

20. Any decision to issue cards to vulnerable groups in the population - the old, the mentally or physically infirm - would offer scope for effective anti-government propaganda. This might be reduced with minimal loss of effectiveness if it were decided to exclude all these over a certain age, perhaps those in receipt of a pension, from the obligation to possess an identity card.

21. There is also the question of cost, considered in Annex B. An obligatory system would cost at least £8m and at a conservative estimate require 130 additional posts to set up, of which 100 would have to come from the RUC, and at least 40 to run. In addition there would be a continuing cost of police time which has been estimated at around 4% of the total activity. A voluntary scheme would be cheaper, at least initially, and use civilian rather than RUC personnel. The opportunity cost of these resources must be weighed against their value elsewhere.

22. The form of legislation required for the introduction of an obligatory identity card scheme is considered at Annex C. Primary legislation would be needed, with provision for amending Statutory Instruments. Assuming sufficient Parliamentary time could be found for the introduction of a Bill this Session Royal Assent is unlikely before July 1989, and a further year would be required to implement an obligatory system without placing unrealistic demands on police resources. It could not therefore become fully operational before mid-1990 at the earliest. The only timing constraints on the introduction of a voluntary scheme are administrative; and it should be possible to begin issuing cards in the course of 1989 (see Annex F).

✓

23. Annex G summarises the type of identity documents in use in other Community countries. The mechanics of the systems vary, but all are characterised by a very high level of public acceptance. Municipal authorities tend to issue identity documents, as they are best placed to confirm the validity of individual applications. Foreign visitors are normally expected to produce passports, and to apply for special documents if they are resident for a certain time. All documents issued, whether voluntary or compulsory, can be used for foreign travel purposes. There are however no real parallels with the terrorist threat faced in Northern Ireland; and no country shares an open border with a neighbour without a similar identity document system. The lessons to be learnt from foreign experience relate more to how best to organise a system than to its underlying policy justification.

24. It should be noted that if a decision is taken to introduce a particular identity card scheme it would have to be applied rigorously. It would be damaging to our overall policy stance to introduce obligatory identity cards which were in practice ignored by a significant section of the population, including those of most interest to the security forces. A voluntary scheme would clearly involve much less commitment of Government credibility. Any public pronouncement about identity card policy should therefore only be made after detailed decisions have been taken about how best to ensure its satisfactory implementation.

18 October 1988

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LIST OF ANNEXES

- A Type of Card and Method of Issue
- B Estimated Costs
- C Legislation Framework
- D Control of Visitors
- E Opposition and Government Response
- F Voluntary Card System
- G European Experience
- H Form of Identity Card Number

1. TYPE OF CARD

- Small enough to fit into wallet
- contain: card number, perhaps based on NHS number
name and address
photograph etched directly onto card
expiry date
date of birth
- validity: 4 years until age 40; then 10 yrs ?
- machine readable through secure magnetic strip

2. METHOD OF ISSUE

(a) Police Station or police run identity card centre.

- police only group not susceptible to intimidation
- police stations already well-defended so major new physical security measures not required
- police could take photograph using approved equipment
- police have local knowledge of area, and of those likely to falsify applications

or

(b) By post.

- easier for applicant
- follows driving licence/passport precedent
- no need for a large network of offices throughout the province
- cheaper to administer; less security risk

A decision would be needed on the manner of issue of an obligatory card. The most straightforward would be to call up individuals by alphabetic group : A-D, then E-K etc. But other options should be considered eg geographic regions, age groups.

ESTIMATED COSTS OF SETTING UP IDENTITY CARD SYSTEM

Assume 212 working days per year; 7 working hours per day.

1.	(a)	Cost of Card Watermark security card containing magnetic strip embedded in plastic and photograph etched onto card £3.00 each.	
			<u>£ million</u>
		1.2 million cards	3.6
	(b)	Computer system including input terminals (4 discs of 200 million characters)	0.5
	(c)	<u>Staff Costs</u>	
		100 police officers to administer (8 mins per card)	3.0
		20 keyboard operators to process data	0.4
		10 operation staff	0.3
		3 project staff	0.1
			—
		Total first year costs	7.9
2.		Continuing costs (per annum).	
		Renewal/replacement of cards - 200,000 pa'	0.6
		20 police years	0.6
		other staff costs	0.5
			—
		Total	1.7

Note 1. This assumes that 30,000 new applications enter the system each year, 120,000 renewals 20,000 are lost/stolen and 30,000 relate to changes of address etc

IDENTITY CARDS: OUTLINE OF A POSSIBLE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

A Bill would introduce the requirement for there to be a register of all persons resident in Northern Ireland on or after the appointed day (a day appointed by the Secretary of State by order).

2. The register would set out: the name, sex, age [occupation and marital status] of each person registered.

3. [] ("the Registrar") would be responsible for compiling and maintaining the register.

4. The procedure for registration would be contained in regulations made by the Secretary of State. Certain persons would be under a duty to supply information. [Persons aged 16 or over who are resident in Northern Ireland would be under a duty to take all reasonable steps within their power to ensure that they become registered.] Breach of any duty under the regulations would be a summary offence.

5. It would be the duty of the Registrar to cause identity cards to be issued to all persons aged 16-[65] [with the exception of certain classes of persons specified in the regulations, eg, servicemen and diplomats]. Regulations would provide for the identity card system, including the form of the card and its contents.

6. Regulations may also provide for the issue of other documents in specified circumstances (eg, visitors' cards to persons arriving at an airport in Northern Ireland).

7. A constable in uniform or any member of HM forces on duty may stop any person [who appears to him to be aged 16 or over] and require him to produce -

(a) his identity card, if he is a person to whom one has been issued;

(b) any other document issued to him in pursuance of the regulations (see paragraph 6 above);

(c) if he falls within neither category above, satisfactory documentary evidence of his identity.

A person aged 16 or over shall comply with any request under this paragraph. Failure to do so would constitute a summary offence. [Alternatively: Failure to do so within the prescribed time - eg, 2 days - at the prescribed place - eg, the local police station - would constitute a summary offence.] Where a person who is stopped fails to produce his card or other documentary evidence as required he may be required to furnish - orally or in writing - particulars as to his name etc as in paragraph 1 above.

Offences and penalties

8. The summary offences mentioned above - failure to produce identity card or other documents, failure to comply with regulations - would be punishable with 6 months' imprisonment.

9. Additionally, there would be other offences designed to support the integrity of the system:

- (a) making false statements in giving information for the purposes of the Bill;
- (b) making false representations that one is the person to whom an identity card relates;
- (c) allowing another person to have possession of an identity card for which one is responsible.

These would all be triable either way and punishable with 2 years' imprisonment on conviction on indictment.

10. Forgery of identity cards and other documents under the regulations would by virtue of the Forgery and Counterfeiting Act 1981 already be punishable with 10 years' imprisonment.

CONTROL OF VISITORS

If a rigorous identity card scheme is to function effectively we must ensure that:

- (i) all visitors, in particular from the Republic, are correctly identified, and
- (ii) that the arrangements for identifying them exclude the possibility that citizens of Northern Ireland can successfully show false visitors' identity when challenged.

(a) Visitors from Republic

2. There are approximately 900,000 recorded visits per annum to Northern Ireland and an unknown number of crossings to and from the Republic. It would be critically important to make effective provision for their control and identification in any obligatory identity card system in Northern Ireland.

3. The most obvious form of identification for citizens of the Republic to carry in Northern Ireland would be a passport. This is already accepted under the 1971 Immigration Act defining the Common Travel Area between the Republic and the United Kingdom as a suitable form of identification. There is no other document which would adequately perform this role; indeed there is no other suitable personal document containing a photograph generally available in the Republic.

4. The FCO stand ready to take the matter further with the Republic once Ministers have decided on the preferred scheme. But there are no indications that the Irish are ready to consider

issuing identity cards. The Irish would probably be resistant to an identity card scheme of their own in the context of Northern Ireland alone, but might react differently in the context of a UK wide scheme. Indeed even if they were to do so, unless we had adequate assurances that the criteria for handing out such cards were as rigorous as those used in the North they would be of little value to us.

5. The same problem presents itself in the case of Republic of Ireland passports however. We know that the IRA have the capacity to acquire forged passports. Indeed these have been used on various terrorist operations. They are not therefore a foolproof form of identification. But they are the best which we are likely to be able to achieve; and can be requested without great administrative complications. The police already have the legal powers to ask for passports or another document within one mile of the Border under the 1984 Prevention of Terrorism Order. But to insist on the presentation of an Irish Passport would be perceived as touching on the emotional issue of sovereignty and would be likely to lead to a hostile reaction from Dublin.

6. A passport would therefore become a required document for short-term visitors from the Republic. We would wish to encourage those who visited the North on a more regular basis, or those who stayed for a considerable period - say longer than one month - to apply for a Northern Ireland identity card. But we would not wish to issue these without making exhaustive enquiries in the South as to the identity of the person concerned; and we would in all probability need some assistance from the Garda to do this. This assistance is unlikely to be forthcoming.

7. The nature of the 300 mile border between Northern Ireland and the Republic makes it almost impossible to issue short-term passes at the Border for occasional visitors. There are too many crossing points. It would be expensive and a major security risk to set up a large number of checkpoints. Attempts to channel all

legitimate traffic through a small number of permanently manned posts have proved impracticable. Moreover it would not be possible to carry out any meaningful check on visitors' identities before providing them with temporary documents at the border. The least unsatisfactory identification available, would be a passport, and it would therefore be simpler to insist that Irish passports were carried at all times rather than to provide an additional short-term document, with the consequent delays and procedural difficulties, which did not provide any greater certainty of identification.

8. The advantage of issuing an additional document is that it would be possible to log the entry of citizens of the Republic into Northern Ireland - if they could be made to cross the Border at the approved points. However it would equally be possible to log in their passport numbers and use this as a de facto means of checking when they crossed the Border and then cross-checking this against the same number identified subsequently.

9. The conclusion must therefore be that the only practicable solution is to require that Irish citizens carry a passport at all times in Northern Ireland, on the same basis as identity cards are carried by the population of the Province; special arrangements could be made to provide NI identity cards to those Irish citizens who either came regularly or remained for a considerable period in the North. This would represent a major and perhaps critical weakness in our system and would be open to abuse by residents of the North, who when challenged might produce an Irish passport and claim to be resident in the Republic. But no feasible alternative could offer greater security.

10. A further problem arises from the fact that all residents of Northern Ireland are entitled to a Republic passport. We would need to take legal powers to ensure that nationalists resident in the North and duly issued with an identity card did not simply use the passport as their preferred identity document to avoid having to carry the card.

(b) Visitors from UK

11. Visitors from the UK are already covered by current legislation requiring those who visit Northern Ireland to carry some form of identification. Foreign visitors to Northern Ireland in transit through London could be expected to carry a passport and their identification should not therefore be a problem.

12. The simplest solution would be to insist that UK citizens should carry a passport in Northern Ireland. However this option is not available to us since a significant proportion, if not a majority, of those visitors to Northern Ireland from the Mainland might be expected not to possess a passport. It would be politically extremely difficult to insist on UK citizens carrying passports in a part of the UK; it would be impossible to insist that they acquire passports in order to visit Northern Ireland. Other forms of identity would therefore be required. Driving licences are unsuitable in that they do not contain a picture and relatively easily available. There is no other document which is sufficiently widely available and offers the necessary guarantees of identity.

13. We could provide temporary identity documents, at the major airports and ferry ports. To the extent that there are relatively few routes from the UK to Northern Ireland it would be administratively possible to set up the required structure, although it would probably be expensive, and close liaison with the airports and port authorities would be required. However the provision of identity documents at airport and ferry ports raises the question of the quality of information required to acquire such documents. If a driving licence is not considered to be sufficient identification in Northern Ireland, why should it be sufficient identification to receive a pass on the Mainland? But to photograph every visitor from the Mainland to Northern Ireland would be time-consuming and presentationally unattractive.

14. A practical solution might be to provide identity passes relatively easily but with a time-limit. As would be the case with visitors from the Republic those who would be staying in Northern Ireland for longer than, say, one month, or who were frequent visitors, would either be expected to carry a passport or to apply for an identity document similar to the card carried in Northern Ireland. Checks on suspect visitors could, as now, be pursued through Special Branch. In addition further thought would need to be given to how to deal with UK citizens entering Northern Ireland from the Republic by land since under the terms of the Common Travel Area no identification would be needed to enter the Republic but would be required on crossing the border back into the United Kingdom.

Conclusion

15. The cooperation of the Garda and the authorities in the Republic would be crucial to the success of any more rigorous control of visitors from the Republic. It is unlikely to be forthcoming. While it is administratively easier to check visitors from the mainland any system would be costly and offer little if any net increase in quality of identification. It is hard to avoid the conclusion that only an identity card system introduced throughout the United Kingdom and the Republic would represent a genuine improvement in control and prove a significant deterrent to terrorists.

16. The non-statutory second best option would be to make clear to all visitors the extent of the security forces powers to arrest people to check their identity, so encouraging them to carry an adequate identity document in their own interest. This would at least help in allowing speedy checks of the majority of bona fide visitors.

OPPOSITION TO IDENTITY CARDS AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSEa) Potential of Opposition

1. What are the options available to those who do not wish to co-operate in an identity card system?
2. First and most obviously there would be a refusal to take any steps to acquire an identity card. Sinn Fein would certainly seek to enforce a boycott of the scheme in areas where they have influence if they considered this to be tactically advantageous. The SDLP might feel obliged to follow them, in order to avoid appearing to co-operate with legislation which would no doubt be portrayed as oppressive in some nationalist circles. This would mean that a majority of the nationalist population - some 300,000+ voters - would be encouraged not to apply for cards. Much would depend upon the extent to which people were prepared to risk sanctions. If sufficient pressure was kept up over time a significant proportion though probably not all of those initially opposed might be expected to apply for cards.
3. While some Unionist politicians might be expected to welcome the scheme, at least initially, others would be warily neutral. As it would apply to Northern Ireland only, the scheme would be perceived in some Unionist circles as accentuating the differences between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom.
4. If a significant proportion of the minority community were allowed to reject the requirement to carry cards Unionists might also react against them on the argument that double standards were being applied. However if the scheme is seen to work there should be no real opposition from the majority community; though there may be genuine anxiety in both communities that identity cards

could be used by paramilitaries to single out targets for sectarian shootings.

5. Even if broad acceptance of cards within both communities is achieved there would remain considerable scope for hostile propaganda to be made out of vulnerable members of the community, pregnant women, the handicapped, etc, being forced to queue outside police stations to register. Identity cards would offer an additional policy open to criticism by unsympathetic commentators, particularly abroad, and we would need to be ready to commit resources to counter any propaganda campaign in the USA or elsewhere.

6. It would be open to individual hardliners opposed to identity cards to flaunt their opposition and seek to force the authorities to take action against them. The level of sanction would depend on whether there was a refusal even to apply for a card or merely a failure to show it when requested, with the former as the more serious offence. Sensitive treatment of such cases by the authorities would be needed to prevent or at least minimise the extent of such individual "martyrdom".

Government Response

7. It is clearly in the Government's interest to stress the advantages attaching to identity cards. The most significant of these would be its validity as an accepted travel document within Western Europe. The FCO are currently considering how best to ensure that an identity card would be accepted by other countries as a valid travel document, and will report back. It would also be helpful if the major banks made clear that the identity card was a preferred means of identification for cashing cheques, etc.

8. Nonetheless sanctions will be required to ensure that all the designated inhabitants of Northern Ireland do apply for a valid identity card. Statutory penalties for non-possession would be

laid down in the legislation (see Annex C). These would involve fines rather than imprisonment. However additional sanctions would also be necessary.

9. The two most promising areas are the suspension or withdrawal of entitlement to social security benefits; and making the right to vote conditional on the presentation of a valid identity card.

10. It is probably not practicable to insist that an identity card be shown on each occasion on which benefits are claimed. Most benefit payments are made by post, and it would be relatively easy for paramilitaries to put pressure on staff in Social Security offices in certain areas to make payments whether or not an identity card was shown. We could not reasonably argue that identity cards were needed to prevent social security fraud, though they would no doubt have a certain role in this area, because the DHSS has itself rejected this justification.

11. Alternatively it might be argued that it was the duty of all citizens to obey the law and acquire an identity card. Those that failed to do so could not expect to benefit from the normal social and economic advantages of citizenship. In particular they would not be entitled to claim social security benefit. This would not be an argument about the need for correct identification before payment could be made, but a principled decision to exclude those who challenged the structure of the state from enjoying its benefits.

12. The reduction or withdrawal of social security benefits, if it could be implemented, would be a flexible and effective sanction against those who refused to apply for identity cards. But it would be criticised as a draconian measure which penalised the innocent - dependants, children etc - and portrayed as a politically motivated attack on one community. It also seems very likely to run contrary to the terms of the European Convention on Human Rights which prohibits indirect and disproportionate penalties (see attached Home Office legal advice).

13. To make voting conditional upon presentation of a valid identity card would certainly help to limit electoral fraud. It would also act as a major incentive to Sinn Fein and others potential opponents to acquire cards, since otherwise their voting strength would be diluted. The Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1984 provides that the Secretary of State may list specific documents to be produced as proof of identity before a ballot paper is issued; it would be possible to make the identity card the only valid document for electoral purposes, though this would probably require primary legislation. The attached legal advice concludes that such a law would be consistent with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Conclusion

14. A range of sanctions may therefore be open to the Government if it chooses to enforce an identity card scheme. However the key sanction - deprivation of social security benefits - seems likely to face successful challenge under the European Convention of Human Rights and must therefore be ruled out. It is clear that there is considerable scope for both political and legal confrontation on this issue, and it would be better not to enter into a trial of strength with those opposed to obligatory identity cards unless the Government could be reasonably certain of winning it.

NON-POSSESSION OF IDENTITY CARDS - SANCTIONS - INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS

This note considers the implications for the UK's international obligations - principally under the European Convention on Human Rights - of the suggestions that -

- (a) on convicting a person for not possessing an identity card a court should have power to order the suspension or withdrawal of entitlement to social security benefits (or this would follow automatically upon conviction); and
- (b) the right to vote should be made conditional on the presentation of a valid identity card.

2. To the best of my limited knowledge such measures would be unprecedented.

Suspension or withdrawal of entitlement to social security benefits

3. As I understand it, some social security benefits are contributory - eg, sickness benefit - and others are non-contributory - eg, child benefit and income support. Many contain an element of family support: they are increased to take account of the number of dependants for whom the beneficiary is responsible. But in all cases, depending on the fulfilment of certain conditions, there is an entitlement to benefit.

4. Action to suspend or withdraw such entitlement would be challenged under various heads of the European Convention on Human Rights. Where the benefits in question are contributory, and there may well therefore be an element of expropriation, the likeliest challenge will be under Article 1 of the First Protocol:

"No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law."

5. In any case, whether contributory or not, challenge could be brought under Article 8 of the Convention:

"Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life"

6. It would also be possible to mount a challenge under Article 14, taken with Article 8. Article 14 provides as follows:

"The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status."

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In such a case the argument would be that the sanction was a means of discriminating unfairly between persons of different political opinion.

7. Whichever route of challenge is adopted, there are various ways in which the UK might seek to defend itself. Under Article 1 of the First Protocol we would have to plead "public interest"; under Article 8 of the Convention the defence would be that the measure was -

"such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety for the prevention of disorder or crime ..."

And under Article 14 the European Convention and Court on Human Rights would look for an objective and reasonable justification of the measure and a reasonable relationship of proportionality between the means employed and the aim sought to be realised.

8. What all this boils down to is that in practice, whichever Article is under consideration, the Commission and Court would home in on whether the measure was necessary in a democratic society for one of the aims listed in Article 8. It would be incumbent on the UK to demonstrate -

- (a) that without the sanction in question - which itself is unprecedented in the criminal law - the other deterrent penalties available to the criminal court - notably

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imprisonment and fine - would be inadequate to persuade people to carry their cards; and

(b) that the sanction employed was proportionate to the aim.

9. The Commission and Court would take into account the fact that the sanction would penalise directly the innocent dependants of an accused person; that the sanction is not a punishment for a past offence but is intended to be coercive for the future; that the sanction would be likely to work in an arbitrary and open-ended fashion. Many of the judges would be approaching this question - and the one below on voting rights - from their knowledge and experience of identity card systems operating in their own countries, about which I know nothing. What is done, or not done, in other countries would weigh heavily in the balance. Doubtless you may be looking at other legal systems in due course.

10. In my judgment and on my present state of knowledge I believe that the UK would fail the proportionality test at (b) above, even if it succeeded under (a) above, which is doubtful. We would then be obliged to legislate to bring our law back into line with the Convention.

11. For completeness, I would also draw your attention to Article I, (12) of the European Social Charter:

"All workers and their dependants have the right to social security."

And also to Article 9 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

"The States Parties recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance."

12. Breach of these Conventions could result in an adverse report being made against the UK.

No vote unless identity card presented

13. Article 3 of the First Protocol provides that:

"The High Contracting Parties undertake to hold free elections at reasonable intervals by secret ballot, under conditions which will ensure the free expression of the opinion of the people in the choice of legislature."

14. This provision does not guarantee an individual the right to vote and under the jurisprudence of the Convention it is generally recognised that certain limited groups of individuals may be disqualified from voting. The question to ask is: does the measure affect the free expression of the opinion of the people? The same question might be asked in our case, even though the measure falls short of disqualification. Any

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challenge under the Convention would be likely to involve Article 14 and would be based on the charge that the Government was seeking to discriminate unfairly between the two communities, thereby impairing the election. But it would be a tall order to prove such a charge and I would be fairly confident that what would in effect be simply the modest substitution of the identity card for the various documents in section 1 of the Elections (Northern Ireland) Act 1985 would be acceptable under the Convention.

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VOLUNTARY CARD SYSTEM

Details on card as at Annex A.

2. The card could replace entirely part one of existing driving licence. This would ensure that all new applicants and eventually all licence holders if they wished to continue driving legally would need to apply for an identity card.

3. Assuming cooperation of relevant DENI staff in Coleraine, issue of identity cards could be taken on by an expanded team in the driving licence centre. This centre issued 800000 new computerised driving licences in the 3 years 1985-87 and so has a proven capability to operate the kind of system required. Liaison with RUC for security, CCTA for technical specifications and, if NHS numbers can be used as identity card numbers, DHSS would be needed.

4. No immediate Parliamentary legislation would be required. However it would be advisable to introduce a Bill, perhaps in the 1989-90 session, to set out the penalties for false use of the card and perhaps to give the Secretary of State a power to make the possession of an identity card obligatory.

5. The issue of cards to those requesting them would, on the driving licence precedent, take some 2-3 years, ie from 1989 to end 1991. Towards the end of that period it should be possible to make identity cards compulsory from a position where a high proportion of the target population would have chosen to carry them voluntarily, given the advantages in terms of commercial identification and foreign travel. A continuing publicity campaign aiming to highlight the card's advantages for different groups would be needed from the time of its launch. Maximum penetration would depend on the card not becoming viewed as essentially aimed at the nationalist community; and its optional status would be a helpful selling point from this perspective.

BELGIUMOwn Nationals

Requirement: Compulsory from age 12

Cost: BF100 (£1.60) + VAT + any local levy (passport
BF100 for each year of validity up to five years
+ VAT + any local levy)

Issued by: Administration Communale, but are manufactured centrally from the information provided locally *local authority*

Documentation: 'Carnet de Mariage' which contains marriage certificate of parents and birth certificates of all children by that marriage

Validity: Holders aged 12-22 valid five years; holders aged 22+ valid 10 years. Renewal automatic provided communal registration is up to date. Change of address must be notified within 15 days.

ID required: Must be carried at all times by law and presented on demand to the police or local authority. Failure to do so punishable by fine.

Local uses: To claim social security, or other welfare benefits or services and for banking and other commercial uses.

Travel: Valid as travel document to Council of Europe Convention signatories. Provisional ID cards issued for emergency travel.

Local attitude: ID system well established, no public resistance.

Features: Not machine readable, but security design features incorporated. Takes two months to issue.

Info stored: Central national register of population. Access to information held controlled by privacy laws.

Forgeries: Little abuse of the system. Centralisation of procedure precludes registration in more than one commune.

Foreign Nationals

ID cards compulsory for those staying longer than three months. Subject to same rules and regulations as own nationals.

Passports

Passports issued by local commune only if ID card not valid for travel, and if applicant is free from judicial, police or military service requirements.

June 1988

MH1AAA

DENMARK

Own Nationals

Requirement: None, but all citizens need a 'central personregister' (CPR) number. This is noted on a card issued to the citizen, but it is not necessary to carry the card

Cost: None (passport DKr400, approx £34)

Issued by: Local authority

Documentation: Issued at birth

Validity: Indefinite. Changes of address must be notified to commune within 48 hours

ID required: Police can challenge individual at any time to prove identity, but possession of CPR number or card is not accepted as proof of identity.

Local uses: CPR widely used by government and private sector for state benefits, taxation, marriage, passports (which carry CPR number), bank and credit accounts and police records. Possession of CPR number, but not card, is essential for everyday life.

Travel: CPR numbers enable Danes to travel to Nordic countries without passports.

Local attitude: Formal ID would not be welcomed by Danes, particularly on the left. Would be seen as further inroad by Brussels into individual rights.

Features: Hard paper card, no security features, not machine readable.

Info stored: CPRs are recorded on computers at central and local levels.

Forgeries: System open to abuse. Blackmarket in CPR numbers where buyers are mainly illegal immigrants.

Foreign Nationals

Once residence is established CPR numbers are issued to foreign residents by the commune. Subject to same rules and regulations as own nationals, except that foreigners must carry their passports (or ID cards if in common travel area) at all times.

Passports

New passports are machine readable in standard EC form and carry CPR number.

June 1988

MH1AAA

Own Nationals

- Requirement: All Germans over the age of 16 are required to possess ID cards unless holding a standard passport. Non-compliance incurs a fine.
- Cost: DM 10 (approx£3.60), but can be waived in cases of need (passport DM 30, approx £10).
- Issued by: ID card authorities, which are part of municipal or communal authorities.
- Documentation: Certificates of birth, marriage, nationality as appropriate. Applications must be made in person.
- Validity: Valid 10 years. Renewal automatic on production of previous ID card or passport.
- ID required: Police can demand an individual to produce his ID or passport, but these need not be carried at all times.
- Local uses: Both passports and ID cards used for state benefit claims, police records as well as bank and other commercial uses.
- Travel: ID card valid travel document within member states of the Council of Europe, Switzerland and Austria.
- Local attitude: ID cards well established and accepted. But new cards issued since 1987 are machine readable, and widespread objection to this. Fears are that 'bar code' will contain details not decypherable to holder.
- Features: Takes several weeks to issue. Incorporates many security design features.
- Info stored: Information stored with local authorities only. Centralised records are unacceptable to the general public.
- Forgeries: Germans claim them to be forgery-proof.

Foreign Nationals

Foreign visitors must hold national passports or ID cards. Residents must apply to local registration centre and to the aliens police for a permit. Permits are not issued beyond the current length of the holders passport or ID card.

Passports

Inter-changeable with ID cards for most internal purposes.

MM

FRANCE

Own Nationals

Requirement: None, but widespread voluntary use
 Cost: F115 (passport F350)
 Issued by: Prefecture of Police, following application to the local mairie
 Documentation: Birth Certificate and registration, normally 'fiche d'etat civile'.
 Validity: 10 years. Automatic renewal on production of previous card
 ID required: Police have power to challenge individuals to prove identity at any time. An ID card is considered best for these purposes, although other documentation may be produced
 Local uses: Can be used to support claim for state benefits, also for some commercial uses eg to back credit cards
 Travel: Valid for travel within EC and to certain Francophone countries (22 countries in all)
 Local attitude: French long-used to having ID cards, no feeling of their being an infringement of civil liberties. In fact, no widespread knowledge either by media or by public that the ID card is not compulsory
 Features: Machine readable, takes 7-10 days to issue
 Info stored: With local authorities only
 Forgeries: Forgery is common

Foreign Nationals

All foreigners resident in France must possess an appropriate residence card, and it is an offence to remain in France without one. Foreigners must register with the prefecture where they are living, and must re-register if they move to another prefecture. In such cases their residence permit is cancelled and replaced by one giving their new address.

Passports

Procedure for obtaining passport is less rigorous than for an ID card. No link between ID number and passport number.

NB The French are currently trying out a pilot scheme in the department of Hauts-de-Seine. This includes central computer records and a machine-readable card. Safeguards of the privacy of the information held are currently under discussion. If the pilot scheme is a success, it will be introduced throughout the country by 1992.

June 1988

MH1AAA

Own Nationals

Requirement: Compulsory for all citizens over the age of 14 years
Cost: Nil (passports £3.20 for one year, £11 for five years)
Issued by: Police in town/city of residence
Documentation: Birth Certificate, witnesses, fingerprints
Validity: Indefinitely or until details change
ID required: An individual must be able at all times to prove his identity. ID must be produced on demand to police. Form of police control of wanted persons.
Local uses: Necessary for obtaining a passport and most other state benefits and services. Also used for commercial purposes.
Travel: Will eventually be accepted for travel within the EC
Local attitude: Greeks welcome convenience and do not see ID as infringement of civil liberties
Features: Not machine readable. Includes right thumb print of holder. Takes two months to issue.
Info stored: At local police station only.
Forgeries: Would be easy to forge ID but little abuse of system is known.

Foreign Nationals

Permanent residents require permits obtained from aliens police. Photographs and personal details included in permit. No separate ID is required.

Passports

Must have an ID card and voting book in order to obtain a passport. Takes two days to issue.

June 1988


IRELAND

Ireland does not issue ID cards. Local police powers to challenge an individual to prove his identity are only justified under the Offences Against the State Act , which primarily deals with matters of political dissent.

There is no obvious philosophical argument in Irish public opinion against ID cards, and they have recently been advocated to curb under-age drinking.

June 1988

MH1AAA

ITALY

Own Nationals

Requirement: Not compulsory, but voluntary use widespread
Cost: Approx £2
Issued by: In cities, by the 'Circoscrizione' (district office), in towns by the office of the commune
Documentation: A driving licence, a passport or two witnesses
Validity: Five years. Renewal automatic on production of previous card. Changes of address need to be notified.
ID required: Police have wide-ranging powers to stop people and to demand proof of identity. An ID card is acceptable for this purpose, but so is a driving licence or passport
Local uses: ID used for making claims for state benefits and for some commercial matters where proof of identity is required
Travel: ID card must be endorsed for travel purposes and can then be used instead of a passport within EC and to Austria, Switzerland and Turkey
Local attitude: ID cards viewed with indifference. Most people carry them as a matter of convenience
Features: Handwritten, not computer accessible nor machine-readable. Takes 4-5 days to issue
Info stored: In local offices, no centralised records
Forgeries: There is abuse of the system, but no means of assessing its extent.

Foreign Nationals

Foreign residents and visitors must hold valid national passports or ID cards. Residents should also hold a residence permit issued by the police. Long term residents can apply for Italian ID cards which would show their nationality. Changes of address must be notified to both police and the commune.

Passports

No link between passport and ID numbers.

June 1988

LUXEMBOURG

QQ

Own Nationals

Requirement: Compulsory from age 15 unless in possession of a standard passport
Cost: FL20-FL150 (30p-£2.25) (passport FL100 for 1 Year, FL200 for 5 years)
Issued by: Local authorities, except in large towns where police issue in the name of the mayor
Documentation: 'Livret de famille' or birth certificate. Details verified by reference to local authority records in place of birth
Validity: Indefinite or until domicile or marital status changes, or appearance no longer corresponds to photograph. Renewal automatic on production of previous card
ID required: Police may call upon anyone to prove his identity at any time by production of an ID card or passport
Local uses: Universally accepted as proof of identity by banks, post offices, shops etc
Travel: To all EC countries and to certain others by special agreement
Features: Not machine readable. Address not entered, only name of district where issued
Info stored: With local authorities only
Forgeries: Readily falsifiable, blanks are often stolen. There are moves to adopt a more secure system

Foreign Nationals

Foreign visitors are required to hold either national ID cards or passports. Long-term residents must obtain ID cards from the aliens police, and must re-register if they move from one commune to another.

Passports

Same procedure for issuing as ID cards. No numerical link between the two. Interchangeable with ID card for internal purposes.

June 1988

NETHERLANDS

Own Nationals

ID cards are not issued in the Netherlands. Dutch citizens may not be asked to give proof of their identity without due reason. There is no constitutional objection to requiring proof of identity, but issue of ID cards would have to be handled carefully. Advantages of movement within EC may be used by Government in the future as reason for their introduction which is under consideration.

Foreign Nationals

All foreigners must hold a valid national passport or ID card. Long term residents also need a residence permit issued by the aliens police. Changes of address must be registered with the aliens police and the town hall.

June 1988

MH1AAA

Own Nationals

Requirement: Compulsory for all nationals from 14 years
Cost: Approx £3 (passport approx £6)
Issued by: Local police stations
Documentation: Set of fingerprints and photographs
Validity: Normally for five years. Renewal is automatic on production of previous card unless there has been a change in domicile or marital status
ID required: It is compulsory to carry a card at all times. There is a small fine for not doing so. Police may challenge an individual at any time to prove identity, but grace period is given if ID card cannot be produced immediately
Local uses: To back credit cards and cheques. The ID number is inscribed on a driving licence, electoral register and other public/private documents which require identification of signatory. This includes all claims for State benefits and taxation
Travel: Valid for travel within EC and certain other European countries
Local attitude: Widely accepted as useful administrative tool
Features: Not machine-readable, but card number gives access to its details via a central computer control. Takes ten days to issue. Incorporates security design features
Info stored: In central computer system
Forgeries: Little abuse of system, but occasional cases of falsification are not easily detectable without special equipment

Foreign Nationals

(No info)

Passports

An ID card must be produced in order to obtain passport. Issued by local police station. No link between ID number and passport.

June 1988

PORTUGAL

Own Nationals

- Requirement: Not compulsory but de facto essential for everyday affairs
- Cost: Escudos 240 95p (passport Escudos 2640 £10.48)
- Issued by: Criminal and Civil Identification Centre in Lisbon only. Application forms can be submitted to five regional Centres, or to Civil Registry Offices in major towns and cities
- Documentation: Five years up to age 40, ten years to age 60 and indefinitely thereafter. Renewal automatic on production of previous card. Changes of address must be notified within 30 days
- ID required: Police can challenge an individual to prove his identity only with reasonable suspicion. If an ID card cannot be produced immediately, the suspect is taken to a police station to verify his identity.
- Local uses: Needed to open bank accounts, enrol at college, for marriage and divorce, to back a cheque. Necessary for making claims on the State and for taxation
- Travel: Valid within EC and signatories of Council of Europe Convention
- Local attitude: Generally favourable. ID cards in existence for 70 years and for vast majority they are a fact of life
- Features: Not machine-readable. Takes 2-3 days to issue in Lisbon, slightly longer if application was submitted through a regional or town centre
- Info stored: Central computer records have been held since 1971
- Forgeries: Most frequent abuse is substitution of the photograph by nationals of former colonies, mainly for purposes of travel.

Foreign Nationals

Nationals of Brazil and Macao, who have freedom to enter and to settle in Portugal are issued with ID cards.

Passports

An ID card is essential for obtaining a passport. The ID number is written on the application form, but does not appear on the passport itself.

June 1988

MH1AAA

FORM OF IDENTITY CARD NUMBER

Should the personal identity card number draw on an existing database or be completely independent?

2. If it is possible to use an existing number a valuable double check is introduced into the system. Further information is also thereby provided on the identity card.

3. The most obvious candidate is the National Health Service number on the Master Patient Index (MPI). The MPI number was developed when NHS numbers were computerised in 1984. NHS numbers were themselves derived in 1948 from the old identity card numbers. All general practitioner registrations are now held centrally, and each has an MPI.

4. In total there are some 1.7m MPI registrations in Northern Ireland. This is at least 200000 more than the total population, due to the fact that those who emigrate from the Province do not always notify their GPs, and deaths are not immediately notified centrally, as GPs have a financial incentive to delay reporting a fall in the number of their patients for as long as possible. The Authority therefore assume a 4% inflation factor in total registrations; this appears to be conservative.

5. Patients issued with medical cards from the new central computer system over the last four years have immediate access to their MPI. This is about half of them. Others would be able to get their MPI from their GPs.

6. The MPI itself is a 10 digit number. Six digits are the date of birth. The next three are a serial number relating to the sequence

of registration on that date. Males are given an odd number, females an even number. The final digit is a check digit. Against this number are held the surname, forenames, address and GP registration of the individual. It is also possible to use the computer to learn an individual's MPI number knowing his name and address.

7. The computer system is run centrally from Belfast by the Health Service. About 12 employees are used to programme it with updated information. The DHSS provide the computer service but are not directly responsible for its operations.

8. Use of the MPI number on identity card would mean that date of birth did not need to be shown separately and would provide at least a rough check of validity. However the problems in the MPI database - death, emigration etc are classically those which are used for electoral fraud, and will no doubt be exploited for identity card fraud. It is therefore by no means a fool-proof check though it would be better than nothing.

9. The main argument against using the MPI number is that by raising the spectre of Big Brother it would greatly increase the level of public opposition to even a voluntary identity card system. The thought that by applying for an identity card one's medical record would become open to inspection by the security forces would no doubt be used as an argument by those opposed to any identity card schemes. Even though there would in fact be no direct access to medical records, the Authorities would have their work cut out in preventing this accusation from gaining credence.

10. It is therefore for political decision whether the organisational advantages of being able to check identity card against the best available Northern Ireland database are outweighed by the possible loss of acceptability of the card.

S E C R E T

11. The alternative second best option would be to use a modified driving licence number. This is already issued, could be kept for individual merely renewing their licence and enlarged to cover the remaining of the population. It would provide some check on the 800000 or so individuals who already have licences, although again the quality of data could not be guaranteed. It could be presented publicly as no more than a logical extension of the existing, widely accepted driving licence system.

S E C R E T
Page 3 of 3

CONFIDENTIAL



ELIZABETH HOUSE
YORK ROAD
LONDON SE1 7PH
01-934 9000

19

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON SW1H 9AT

18 October 1988

Dear Douglas,

IDENTITY CARDS

at top
Reading through the correspondence stimulated by your letter of 3 August to John Wakeham, I am disappointed to find that the case for the identity card has received so little support.

I believe that we can afford to take a more relaxed view of the libertarian arguments against identity cards than would have been possible 20 or 30 years ago. People today are entirely accustomed to the need to be able to identify themselves. Credit cards, driving licences, student and pensioner rail cards, passports and other forms of travel document, conference passes and soon football club membership cards are familiar to people of all ages and occupations. A means of identification is no longer regarded as an imposition but much more as a means of securing one's rights and even protecting one's safety or property.

I hope therefore that the possibility of introducing a voluntary scheme, like several European countries, will at least be kept open. As the technology of such things develops, it might be possible for a voluntary scheme to be converted to a compulsory scheme with a very wide range of social and commercial uses.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of yours.

*Yours ever
Kenneth*

CONFIDENTIAL

HOME AFFAIRS : Identity cards. Aug 88



CONFIDENTIAL



WJ

Treasury Chambers, Parliament Street, SW1P 3AG

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
50 Queen Anne 's Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

11 October 1988

Dear Home Secretary,

IDENTITY CARDS

Thank you for copying to me your letter of 3 August to John Wakeham.

I see a compulsory identity card scheme as potentially unattractive, not least because it would be extremely costly to introduce and to try and enforce. There clearly are benefits from such a scheme but, on balance, I believe they are outweighed by the disadvantages. I also find it difficult to envisage the advantages that would accrue from a voluntary scheme. While charges might be set to cover the cost of a scheme this alone does not justify the expansion of the public sector that would be necessary to operate it. If we are to consider this seriously I think that we need a clear assessment of the costs and benefits of a voluntary scheme (with an estimate of likely take-up and the level of charge that would be necessary to cover costs). In assessing the benefits that might be gained it could be useful to look at wider experience than that in the European Community.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, other members of H Committee, Geoffrey Howe, Patrick Mayhew and the Lord Advocate and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely,

P. Wanless

PP JOHN MAJOR

[Approved by the Chief Secretary and signed in his absence.]

HOME AFFAIRS: National
Identity Card A-988



dti

the department for Enterprise

CONFIDENTIAL

The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton OBE, MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and
Minister of Trade and Industry

Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP
Home Secretary
Home Office
Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

Department of
Trade and Industry

1-19 Victoria Street
London SW1H 0ET

Switchboard
01-215 7877

Telex 8811074/5 DTHQ G
Fax 01-222 2629

Direct line 215 5147
Our ref
Your ref
Date 23 September 1988

Dear Home Secretary,

IDENTITY CARDS

Thank you for copying me your letter of 3 August seeking views on a national identity card scheme.

I do not believe that any convincing case has yet been made for the introduction of an identity card scheme (whether voluntary or compulsory). Before we can consider introducing identity cards we would need to be absolutely certain that such a scheme would produce real benefits which would justify the cost of administration and the controversy that such a scheme would be bound to cause.

That apart, there is a marginal DTI interest in the introduction of an identity card scheme as a result of our interest in the Single European Market. With the introduction of identity cards internal security checks would become easier and, arguably, checking of entrants to the UK could be reduced at frontiers without jeopardising our objectives on immigration, terrorism, etc. Identity cards could also be used as passports for travel within the Community and this would have a marginally beneficial effect on free movement of people within the Community.

TN2AAP

dti

the department for Enterprise

Home Affairs: National

Identity Cards

Aug 88

These arguments would lead me to look more favourably on any identity card scheme which was introduced for other reasons, but they are not compelling.

I am copying this letter to other members of H Committee, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Attorney General and the Lord Advocate. Copies also go to the Prime Minister and Sir Robin Butler.

Yours sincerely,

Cinda Joyce

PP

TONY NEWTON

(Approved by the Chancellor and signed in his absence)

TN2AAP



cc All

HOUSE OF LORDS,
LONDON SW1A 0PW

CONFIDENTIAL

22 September 1988

MS Am

Dear Douglas,

IDENTITY CARDS

I have seen a copy of your letter of 3 August to John Wakeham, and some of the responses to it, on the question of whether the Government should consider the introduction of a system of national identity cards.

From a narrow Departmental point of view there would be certain advantages if everyone were to carry an identity card. But these potential benefits are marginal compared with the general question of whether or not a national identity card scheme would be both politically acceptable and practicable. Without going into detail, I recognise that there is considerable political sensitivity to the introduction of national identity cards in this country. In particular, as Patrick Mayhew has pointed out, a compulsory scheme is likely to be a non-starter.

The experience of other European countries is not conclusive one way or the other but I can foresee considerable practical difficulties both in setting up, administering and policing a national identity card scheme, whether compulsory or voluntary, and I wonder whether the benefits to be gained would justify the cost. It is difficult to see how one could set up a reasonably foolproof system (perhaps involving finger-printing as Patrick Mayhew has suggested) without establishing a substantial administrative machinery. In doing so, one would run the risk of alienating sections of the population who might well object to such information being kept on a central register.

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
Queen Anne's Gate
London
SW1H 9AT

In short, therefore, I remain to be convinced that the benefits of a national identity card system would outweigh the costs and I would counsel caution in taking this suggestion forward.

I am sending copies of this letter to the recipients of yours.

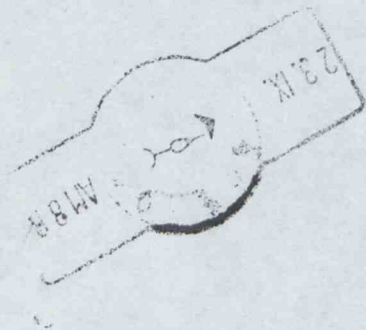
Yours ever,

James

CLL4S13

HOME AFFAIRS: Natural
Identity Card

Aug 80





DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Richmond House, 79 Whitehall, London SW1A 2NS

Telephone 01-210 3000

From the Secretary of State for Social ~~Services~~ Security

copy

CONFIDENTIAL

NBM do his desk

*REC 6
14/9*

The Rt Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
LONDON
SW1H 9AT

14 September 1988

Douglas Hurd

My

IDENTITY CARDS

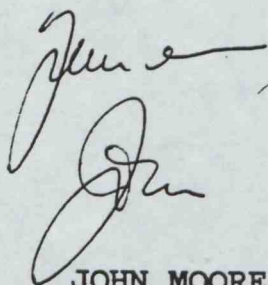
Thank you for copying to me your letter of 3 August to John Wakeham about the suggestion that a system of national identity cards should be introduced.

A national identity card could be of some help to us in the prevention of social security fraud and I note that the use of cards for social security purposes is common throughout the countries which do have such cards. I have little doubt that if a card were to be introduced, we would incorporate its use into anti-fraud measures. However, we do not think they would help a great deal and I would not want to claim anti-fraud measures as a justification for the introduction of a national identity card. The most common social security fraud offence is of working while being in receipt of a social security benefit and it is difficult to see how identity cards would help resolve that problem.

Another theoretical advantage is the use of the card as a means of proving identity while making a claim to benefit. Here again, there would appear to be no significant advantage in relying on a card, since most claimants can already provide adequate evidence of identity. Furthermore, we have in recent years been moving away from dealing with claims from the public in person to a system of postal claims, where an ID card would be of limited value.

In an increasingly technological society, more and more of us are carrying a growing number of cards of identification out of choice. In the long term the attraction of a single national identity card system may ultimately overcome historical objections. All in all however, I could not mount an argument for the introduction of an identity card for social security purposes and share the Attorney General's view that, as yet, the advantages of introducing such a card compulsorily do not outweigh the political aggravation that it would undoubtedly cause. I do however see major advantages if a system were voluntary.

A copy of this letter goes to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate, other members of H and to Sir Robin Butler.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John Moore', with a stylized, cursive script.

JOHN MOORE

HOME AFFAIRS

ID cards Aug 88





FCS/88/154

HOME SECRETARY

Identity Cards

cc PU
1. Mr. Powell - to see
2. Mr. M...
REC 6
13/9

flap

1. Thank you for copying to me your letter of 3 August to John Wakeham. I agree that a review of the Government's position is timely, given increased public interest in the idea of introducing a system of identity cards.

2. A clear distinction between compulsory and voluntary systems for ID cards is important. I believe that a compulsory system for the United Kingdom as a whole is out of the question for the foreseeable future. But I see advantage in our encouraging wider discussion of the case for voluntary ID cards in a standard format. There are good practical arguments for creating the option of a more efficient means of identification in this way. It might, for example, effectively replace the British Visitors' Passport - about which, as you know, I have some misgivings on security grounds - for European travel.

3. I should be interested in discussion this further in the light of the reactions of other recipients of your letter. Copies of this reply go to them.

(GEOFFREY HOWE)

HOME AFFAIRS: Identity cards AUG 88.



CONFIDENTIAL



File - DSG
eBG

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

30 August 1988

Dear Philip,

IDENTITY CARDS

The Prime Minister has seen the Home Secretary's letter of 3 August to the Lord President. She has noted the content of this, and has commented that with regard to Northern Ireland, there may have been some change in view since the letter was written.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the members of H Committee, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Attorney General, the Lord Advocate and to Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours sincerely,
Pat Gey*

PP P. A. Bearpark

Philip Mawer, Esq.,
Home Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

SM



QUEEN ANNE'S GATE LONDON SW1H 9AT

3 August 1988

Dear John,

Prime Minister²

IDENTITY CARDS

There has been a sharp surge of interest in the last few months in the proposal that the Government should introduce some system of national identity card. The proposal has been put in a 10 Minute Rule Bill and in Questions to the Prime Minister and myself in the House of Commons. It has been discussed favourably in several press editorials. It dominated a recent meeting which I had with the national executive of the National Union. It surfaces now at most political meetings with a Home Office flavour.

In these discussions no clear distinction is drawn between a compulsory and a voluntary system. It is variously argued that a system of national identity cards would help us to deal with football hooliganism, with under-age drinking, with the supposed abolition of passport control in Europe in 1992, and also with terrorism, illegal immigration and AIDS among other medical problems. In short, for some people a national identity card has become virtually a talisman against a range of social problems.

The Prime Minister and I have made it clear that we are not persuaded at this stage of the advantages of a compulsory universal identity card. However, we clearly need to review our position as a Government and decide how to respond definitively to this upsurge in interest. Many colleagues are involved and I am writing this letter to seek their views.

So far as the Home Office is concerned, the main question has always been whether the reintroduction of identity cards would help the police to deal with crime. The traditional police response to this question has been "No". They have calculated that the extra work and aggravation of their relationships with the community outweighed any advantages which they might derive. However the Commissioner of Police, Sir Peter Imbert, recently indicated some degree of support for identity cards. We clearly need to remove doubt on this point and I have asked the Association of Chief Police Officers to let me have a considered view. They have undertaken to provide this but the necessary consultations will not be complete until about the end of the year.

The traditional police objection has been to a compulsory system. It would be possible to imagine a voluntary system where the citizen would pay for a national identity card which for reasons of convenience he could use as an addition or a substitute for the various cards which most people now carry for one purpose or another. This is the practice in some European countries and was advocated in a recent leading article in the "Economist".

The Rt Hon John Wakeham, MP.

/over....

BELGIUM

Own Nationals

Requirement: Compulsory from age 12
Cost: BF100 (£1.60) + VAT + any local levy (passport
BF100 for each year of validity up to five years
+ VAT + any local levy)
Issued by: Administration Communale, but are manufactured } local authority
centrally from the information provided locally
Documentation: 'Carnet de Mariage' which contains marriage
certificate of parents and birth certificates of all
children by that marriage
Validity: Holders aged 12-22 valid five years; holders aged
22+ valid 10 years. Renewal automatic provided
communal registration is up to date. Change of
address must be notified within 15 days.
ID required: Must be carried at all times by law and presented on
demand to the police or local authority. Failure to
do so punishable by fine.
Local uses: To claim social security, or other welfare benefits
or services and for banking and other commercial
uses.
Travel: Valid as travel document to Council of Europe
Convention signatories. Provisional ID cards issued
for emergency travel.
Local attitude: ID system well established, no public resistance.
Features: Not machine readable, but security design features
incorporated. Takes two months to issue.
Info stored: Central national register of population. Access to
information held controlled by privacy laws.
Forgeries: Little abuse of the system. Centralisation of
procedure precludes registration in more than one
commune.

Foreign Nationals

ID cards compulsory for those staying longer than three months.
Subject to same rules and regulations as own nationals.

Passports

Passports issued by local commune only if ID card not valid for
travel, and if applicant is free from judicial, police or military
service requirements.

June 1988

MH1AAA

DENMARK

Own Nationals

Requirement: None, but all citizens need a 'central personregister' (CPR) number. This is noted on a card issued to the citizen, but it is not necessary to carry the card

Cost: None (passport DKr400, approx £34)

Issued by: Local authority

Documentation: Issued at birth

Validity: Indefinite. Changes of address must be notified to commune within 48 hours

ID required: Police can challenge individual at any time to prove identity, but possession of CPR number or card is not accepted as proof of identity.

Local uses: CPR widely used by government and private sector for state benefits, taxation, marriage, passports (which carry CPR number), bank and credit accounts and police records. Possession of CPR number, but not card, is essential for everyday life.

Travel: CPR numbers enable Danes to travel to Nordic countries without passports.

Local attitude: Formal ID would not be welcomed by Danes, particularly on the left. Would be seen as further inroad by Brussels into individual rights.

Features: Hard paper card, no security features, not machine readable.

Info stored: CPRs are recorded on computers at central and local levels.

Forgeries: System open to abuse. Blackmarket in CPR numbers where buyers are mainly illegal immigrants.

Foreign Nationals

Once residence is established CPR numbers are issued to foreign residents by the commune. Subject to same rules and regulations as own nationals, except that foreigners must carry their passports (or ID cards if in common travel area) at all times.

Passports

New passports are machine readable in standard EC form and carry CPR number.

June 1988

MH1AAA

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Own Nationals

- Requirement:** All Germans over the age of 16 are required to possess ID cards unless holding a standard passport. Non-compliance incurs a fine.
- Cost:** DM 10 (approx£3.60), but can be waived in cases of need (passport DM 30, approx £10).
- Issued by:** ID card authorities, which are part of municipal or communal authorities.
- Documentation:** Certificates of birth, marriage, nationality as appropriate. Applications must be made in person.
- Validity:** Valid 10 years. Renewal automatic on production of previous ID card or passport.
- ID required:** Police can demand an individual to produce his ID or passport, but these need not be carried at all times.
- Local uses:** Both passports and ID cards used for state benefit claims, police records as well as bank and other commercial uses.
- Travel:** ID card valid travel document within member states of the Council of Europe, Switzerland and Austria.
- Local attitude:** ID cards well established and accepted. But new cards issued since 1987 are machine readable, and widespread objection to this. Fears are that 'bar code' will contain details not decypherable to holder.
- Features:** Takes several weeks to issue. Incorporates many security design features.
- Info stored:** Information stored with local authorities only. Centralised records are unacceptable to the general public.
- Forgeries:** Germans claim them to be forgery-proof.

Foreign Nationals

Foreign visitors must hold national passports or ID cards. Residents must apply to local registration centre and to the aliens police for a permit. Permits are not issued beyond the current length of the holders passport or ID card.

Passports

Inter-changeable with ID cards for most internal purposes.

June 1988

FRANCE

Own Nationals

Requirement: None , but widespread voluntary use
Cost: F115 (passport F350)
Issued by: Prefecture of Police , following application to the local mairie
Documentation: Birth Certificate and registration, normally 'fiche d'etat civile'.
Validity: 10 years. Automatic renewal on production of previous card
ID required: Police have power to challenge individuals to prove identity at any time. An ID card is considered best for these purposes, although other documentation may be produced
Local uses: Can be used to support claim for state benefits, also for some commercial uses eg to back credit cards
Travel: Valid for travel within EC and to certain Francophone countries (22 countries in all)
Local attitude: French long-used to having ID cards, no feeling of their being an infringement of civil liberties. In fact, no widespread knowledge either by media or by public that the ID card is not compulsory
Features: Machine readable, takes 7-10 days to issue
Info stored: With local authorities only
Forgeries: Forgery is common

Foreign Nationals

All foreigners resident in France must possess an appropriate residence card, and it is an offence to remain in France without one. Foreigners must register with the prefecture where they are living, and must re-register if they move to another prefecture. In such cases their residence permit is cancelled and replaced by one giving their new address.

Passports

Procedure for obtaining passport is less rigorous than for an ID card. No link between ID number and passport number.

NB The French are currently trying out a pilot scheme in the department of Hauts-de-Seine. This includes central computer records and a machine-readable card. Safeguards of the privacy of the information held are currently under discussion. If the pilot scheme is a success, it will be introduced throughout the country by 1992.

June 1988

MH1AAA

GREECE

Own Nationals

Requirement: Compulsory for all citizens over the age of 14 years
Cost: Nil (passports £3.20 for one year, £11 for five years)
Issued by: Police in town/city of residence
Documentation: Birth Certificate, witnesses, fingerprints
Validity: Indefinitely or until details change
ID required: An individual must be able at all times to prove his identity. ID must be produced on demand to police. Form of police control of wanted persons.
Local uses: Necessary for obtaining a passport and most other state benefits and services. Also used for commercial purposes.
Travel: Will eventually be accepted for travel within the EC
Local attitude: Greeks welcome convenience and do not see ID as infringement of civil liberties
Features: Not machine readable. Includes right thumb print of holder. Takes two months to issue.
Info stored: At local police station only.
Forgeries: Would be easy to forge ID but little abuse of system is known.

Foreign Nationals

Permanent residents require permits obtained from aliens police. Photographs and personal details included in permit. No separate ID is required.

Passports

Must have an ID card and voting book in order to obtain a passport. Takes two days to issue.

IRELAND

Ireland does not issue ID cards. Local police powers to challenge an individual to prove his identity are only justified under the Offences Against the State Act , which primarily deals with matters of political dissent.

There is no obvious philosophical argument in Irish public opinion against ID cards, and they have recently been advocated to curb under-age drinking.

June 1988

MH1AAA

ITALY

Own Nationals

Requirement: Not compulsory, but voluntary use widespread
Cost: Approx £2
Issued by: In cities, by the 'Circonscrizione' (district office), in towns by the office of the commune
Documentation: A driving licence, a passport or two witnesses
Validity: Five years. Renewal automatic on production of previous card. Changes of address need to be notified.
ID required: Police have wide-ranging powers to stop people and to demand proof of identity. An ID card is acceptable for this purpose, but so is a driving licence or passport
Local uses: ID used for making claims for state benefits and for some commercial matters where proof of identity is required
Travel: ID card must be endorsed for travel purposes and can then be used instead of a passport within EC and to Austria, Switzerland and Turkey
Local attitude: ID cards viewed with indifference. Most people carry them as a matter of convenience
Features: Handwritten, not computer accessible nor machine-readable. Takes 4-5 days to issue
Info stored: In local offices, no centralised records
Forgeries: There is abuse of the system, but no means of assessing its extent.

Foreign Nationals

Foreign residents and visitors must hold valid national passports or ID cards. Residents should also hold a residence permit issued by the police. Long term residents can apply for Italian ID cards which would show their nationality. Changes of address must be notified to both police and the commune.

Passports

No link between passport and ID numbers.

LUXEMBOURG

Own Nationals

Requiemment: Compulsory from age 15 unless in possession of a standard passport
Cost: FL20-FL150 (30p-£2.25) (passport FL100 for 1 Year, FL200 for 5 years)
Issued by: Local authorities, except in large towns where police issue in the name of the mayor
Documentation: 'Livret de famille' or birth certificate. Details verified by reference to local authority records in place of birth
Validity: Indefinite or until domicile or marital status changes, or appearance no longer corresponds to photograph. Renewal automatic on production of previous card
ID required: Police may call upon anyone to prove his identity at any time by production of an ID card or passport
Local uses: Universally accepted as proof of identity by banks, post offices, shops etc
Travel: To all EC countries and to certain others by special agreement
Features: Not machine readable. Address not entered, only name of district where issued
Info stored: With local authorities only
Forgeries: Readily falsifiable, blanks are often stolen. There are moves to adopt a more secure system

Foreign Nationals

Foreign visitors are required to hold either national ID cards or passports. Long-term residents must obtain ID cards from the aliens police, and must re-register if they move from one commune to another.

Passports

Same procedure for issuing as ID cards. No numerical link between the two. Interchangeable with ID card for internal purposes.

NETHERLANDS

Own Nationals

ID cards are not issued in the Netherlands. Dutch citizens may not be asked to give proof of their identity without due reason. There is no constitutional objection to requiring proof of identity, but issue of ID cards would have to be handled carefully. Advantages of movement within EC may be used by Government in the future as reason for their introduction which is under consideration.

Foreign Nationals

All foreigners must hold a valid national passport or ID card. Long term residents also need a residence permit issued by the aliens police. Changes of address must be registered with the aliens police and the town hall.

June 1988

MH1AAA

PORTUGAL

Own Nationals

Requirement: Not compulsory but de facto essential for everyday affairs

Cost: Escudos 240 95p (passport Escudos 2640 £10.48)

Issued by: Criminal and Civil Identification Centre in Lisbon only. Application forms can be submitted to five regional Centres, or to Civil Registry Offices in major towns and cities

Documentation: Five years up to age 40, ten years to age 60 and indefinitely thereafter. Renewal automatic on production of previous card. Changes of address must be notified within 30 days

ID required: Police can challenge an individual to prove his identity only with reasonable suspicion. If an ID card cannot be produced immediately, the suspect is taken to a police station to verify his identity.

Local uses: Needed to open bank accounts, enrol at college, for marriage and divorce, to back a cheque. Necessary for making claims on the State and for taxation

Travel: Valid within EC and signatories of Council of Europe Convention

Local attitude: Generally favourable. ID cards in existence for 70 years and for vast majority they are a fact of life

Features: Not machine-readable. Takes 2-3 days to issue in Lisbon, slightly longer if application was submitted through a regional or town centre

Info stored: Central computer records have been held since 1971

Forgeries: Most frequent abuse is substitution of the photograph by nationals of former colonies, mainly for purposes of travel.

Foreign Nationals

Nationals of Brazil and Macao, who have freedom to enter and to settle in Portugal are issued with ID cards.

Passports

An ID card is essential for obtaining a passport. The ID number is written on the application form, but does not appear on the passport itself.

June 1988

MH1AAA

SPAIN .

Own Nationals

Requirement: Compulsory for all nationals from 14 years
Cost: Approx £3 (passport approx £6)
Issued by: Local police stations
Documentation: Set of fingerprints and photographs
Validity: Normally for five years. Renewal is automatic on production of previous card unless there has been a change in domicile or marital status

ID required: It is compulsory to carry a card at all times. There is a small fine for not doing so. Police may challenge an individual at any time to prove identity, but grace period is given if ID card cannot be produced immediately

Local uses: To back credit cards and cheques. The ID number is inscribed on a driving licence, electoral register and other public/private documents which require identification of signatory. This includes all claims for State benefits and taxation

Travel: Valid for travel within EC and certain other European countries

Local attitude: Widely accepted as useful administrative tool

Features: Not machine-readable, but card number gives access to its details via a central computer control. Takes ten days to issue. Incorporates security design features

Info stored: In central computer system

Forgeries: Little abuse of system, but occasional cases of falsification are not easily detectable without special equipment

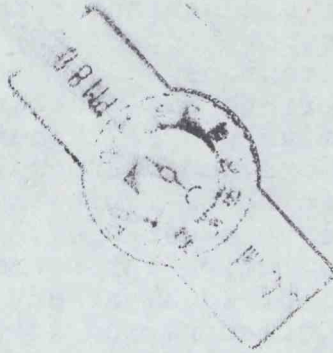
Foreign Nationals

(No info)

Passports

An ID card must be produced in order to obtain passport. Issued by local police station. No link between ID number and passport.

June 1988



Grey Scale #13



A

1

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M

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B

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