

WHY CROOKS LOVE ID CARDS - A CRIMINAL WRITES

"If you have nothing to hide then you have nothing to fear!" That's what I tell my victims. "So, tell me where you keep your valuable jewellery or there'll be hell to pay."

Curiously, David Blunkett has employed the same kind of language to promote his identity card and National Identity Register. He optimistically asserted that these measures would protect us (that's *you!*) from crime and terrorism as well as tackling illegal working and benefit fraud. He claimed the support of 80% of the population and dismissed all opposition in a sweeping condemnation of "the chattering classes".

Many have questioned the veracity of this 80% figure but nobody has yet asked the obvious question: *Where does the average criminal stand on the matter?* Home Office statistics are rather slippery, but since the chattering classes tend not to be criminals and Mr Blunkett knows that the 20% are all chatterers, we can deduce that most criminals will be found among the 80%. Perhaps we criminals are idiots who don't know what is good for us, but if you read on then I will explain why I believe that Blunkett's ID card will soon become the criminal's friend.

Although the new system will undoubtedly curtail some criminal activity, many exciting new opportunities will present themselves. To begin with, we have noted the government's appalling record with IT projects, in which the failures were largely self-inflicted. Regarding the register, however, we can assume that criminals will waste no time in finding and then exploiting all the inherent weaknesses. Only last month finance companies expressed fears that criminal gangs might infiltrate their organisations. Gaining access to at least some of the information on the ID register would prove no obstacle to the ambitious crook.

There have always been policemen willing to sell information from police records - mostly to private detectives. In the future, not only policemen but also DSS staff, bank employees, pharmacists, doctor's receptionists, social workers, council officials and countless others will have access to supposedly secure information. The privatisation of large sections of government work will open the database to the likes of Jarvis, EDS, Capita, their employees *and* the agency staff, both at home and abroad. In this way the register will become a crime *creation* scheme, for even if the employee isn't corrupt to begin with, the temptation - and huge rewards - will prove hard for many to resist.

Then there is the card itself which, of course, we criminals will have no trouble forging. For us the card will be a welcome decoy. Soon we will learn to bask in the glow of misplaced confidence that an identity card inspires. Because, unless there is a full card-reader in every house and every shop, most of the card's work will be done with a quick wave. There won't be enough time to check all the biometrics at each visit to the shops. A laminated photocopy, confidently flourished, should be enough to pass most checks. As easy as passing a dud fiver.

The best thing about ID cards, from the criminal's perspective, is that it degrades the role of the police. To describe it simply: instead of being crook catchers they

become mere person checkers. That goes for other officials too. Instead of judging each case on its own merit the official merely covers his back: Identity check. Job done. No thinking! A good example of this occurred before the Madrid train bombing. On that occasion the police stopped the terrorists' van and checked their documents, which were all correct. Having done their job, the police allowed the bombers to go. We can only guess how different things might have been if only they had engaged their critical faculties. And then, the September 11 hijackers were allowed to pass through security checks because they were apparently in possession of correct documents (and Armani suits!). In fact, if you believe the CIA, Mr Atta's passport survived the inferno and floated down into an agent's hands even before the dust had settled. In both these cases the mistake was to believe that all criminals have a criminal record. Fortunately, that's not true. And more time spent checking the papers of innocent people means less time to chase us.

For a really powerful demonstration of how serious crime and state interference co-exist we only have to look at Italy. Berlusconi's Italy. The land of the Mafia, tax-dodging, rule-bending, corruption, state-sponsored murder, low-grade terrorism, illegal land deals, illegal immigration, reckless driving... ..and identity cards. Here, form filling and document checking occupy a large part of the civil service, and yet crime flourishes like nowhere else in Europe - from the top: the government, on whose behalf all the checking is done, is also complicit in much of the crime - to the bottom: seemingly endless bureaucracy dulls officials' senses to the real crimes happening under their very noses. In fact, the ordinary Italian criminal is unlikely to ever be caught, unless he is unlucky enough to find himself in competition with a senior politician - and here one begins to sense the true motivation behind the introduction of the UK identity card.



ID CARDS AND CRIME - THE ITALIAN CONNECTION

Italy just happens to be New Labour's favourite holiday destination. But what do they get up to there, apart from gawping at baroque fountains? We know that Blair is a regular guest of Berlusconi (this year at his modern Sardinian retreat), and they seem to have plenty to talk about. Perhaps they discuss the series of bribery and corruption trials that Berlusconi faces; or the leftwing bias of the judiciary (something that Tony can really identify with!); or the illegal development of the Sardinian coastline. Blunkett also takes holidays in Italy, but in his erstwhile professional capacity (he has just resigned as I write) he needed no excuses to meet his Italian counterpart Minister of the Interior Giuseppe Pisanu. They discussed illegal immigration and terrorism, but did Blunkett ever ask about Pisanu's links with the murderous masonic lodge P2?

In *Who's Who* Tessa Jowell declares "Italy" as one of her interests. That's one way of putting it! Her husband David Mills has been under criminal investigation in Italy relating to his part in the setting up of Berlusconi's media empire, the creation of offshore companies, tax-evasion and money laundering. One of Mills' tasks was to disguise Berlusconi's TV interests for the purpose of evading European media-ownership laws. Interesting,

given that Jowell is the minister for, among other things, Media. Incidentally, Mills was a director of the Benetton motor-racing team when Jowell, as health minister, retreated on cigarette advertising after Bernie Ecclestone's large donation to New Labour. By poetic symmetry, Mills is the brother-in-law of Barbara Mills, ex-chief of the Serious Fraud Office.

The Italian story of state interference and corruption should act as a warning, but instead it provides a blueprint for the increasingly shifty New Labour. Under their plans there will be no more bankrobbers, presumably because the banks will have already been raided by the directors, and no bribery or corruption because these will have been legalised. Meanwhile, the regular checking of ID cards will provide a means of controlling the poor and backing up the government's fabricated crime-fighting credentials.

Certainly the regular criminal will benefit from this legislation. We are adaptable. But isn't it an altogether more powerful type of crook who has most to gain? And the law-abiding citizen who has most to lose.

"Goldilocks" Davidson

LATEST NEWS ON GULF WAR SYNDROME AND DU

The campaign to recognise Gulf War Syndrome as a legitimate medical condition has received support from an independent inquiry, headed by Lord Lloyd, a former Lord of Appeal. His report, published in November, states that illnesses suffered by up to 6,000 Gulf war veterans should be recognised, and demands that they should be compensated by the government.

The report concludes that all scientific studies agree that Gulf War veterans are twice as likely as other veterans to suffer from illnesses, and accepts that the causes of these illnesses are likely to include inhalation of depleted uranium dust, low-level exposure to nerve gases, multiple injections of vaccines and exposure to the organophosphate pesticides used to spray tents.

Tony Flint of the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association said the report's conclusions justify what the veterans had been saying about Gulf War Syndrome for years. *"We've said all along that it exists, now we have an eminent body saying it as well. We call on the Ministry of Defence to accept the conclusions of the committee and take on board its recommendations."*

The inquiry was set up at the request of Labour peer Lord Morris of Manchester, the parliamentary adviser to the Royal British Legion, after the MoD refused an official public inquiry. The MoD refused to allow serving officials or military personnel to appear before the inquiry although it did submit written evidence. The Minister responsible for veterans at the MoD, Ivor Caplin, said more research was needed, and questioned the financial backing behind the independent inquiry.

The report draws on the research of a North Wales psychiatrist, Dr Dafydd Alun Jones, who has worked with about 450 Gulf War veterans at the Ty Gwyn Centre in

Llandudno. Dr Jones said *"The independent inquiry is saying exactly and precisely what we have been saying since at least 1997. The government should recognise the condition and compensate the men for the damage they have suffered. If it had happened in civilian life they would be looking at enormous compensation."*

Meanwhile, engineer Richard "Nibby" David has begun a High Court battle against his former employer, aerospace company Normalair Garrett of Yeovil, Somerset, who he claims failed to protect him from exposure to depleted uranium while he worked at the plant, polishing metal cylinders with a scouring pad. Mr David suffers from symptoms virtually identical to those experienced by Gulf War veterans, and tests by Canadian uranium experts have shown that Mr David's DNA has been mutated and his chromosomes damaged by ionising radiation.

Mr David says that his employers used "state secrecy" as a screen and totally disregarded staff safety. *"Because everything is classified as officially secret, workers are in a no-man's land in terms of regulatory protection."* Although he now suffers from irreversible lung and windpipe damage, a rare kidney disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, a bowel disorder and lumps on his skull, Mr David is representing himself in court in a bid to win damages against Normalair Garrett and gain a High Court judgement which acknowledges the dangers that DU presents to human health.

To read Lord Lloyd's report in full (downloadable pdf file), go to: www.lloyd-gwii.com/report/asp.

The Campaign Against Depleted Uranium has more information about the health risks associated with DU at: www.cadu.org.uk.