



IDENTENTACLE

You may think that David Blunkett's hundreds of new laws, harsh use of the Terrorism Act, hard line on immigration, and proposed Civil Contingencies Act are going to limit your freedom. David, however thinks that "Freedoms are not only embedded in our democracy, but in the very way we live our lives". Maybe that's why he is so keen on biometric ID cards that will "be a real benefit to individuals who want to establish their identity". What 'real benefit' they will bring is not exactly certain. Blunkett claims the cards, which he calls 'entitlement cards' will "protect and increase our liberty", and is pressing on with the scheme against massive opposition.

The cards will allegedly protect us from 'illegal immigrants' and 'terrorists'. But how they would protect us from Al Qaeda members travelling on legitimate foreign passports is unclear. Biometric cards wouldn't have prevented 9/11 or the Madrid bombing either. Dave's a bit doubtful too, telling parliament "I accept that it is important that we do not pretend that an entitlement card would be an overwhelming factor in combating international terrorism". So why do we need them then?

What is sure is that the cards will cost YOU a lot of money, £3.1 billion, or about 51 pounds for every man woman and child, according to the Home Office. Last March a leaked government report said that more than £1.5 billion in taxpayers' money has been wasted on other botched IT schemes over the last six years! Hopefully the cost of all the equipment needed to read the hi-tech cards, recognise iris scans and fingerprints has been taken into account by the corporations brought in to manage the scheme. Going by the Home Office's record on large public projects though, the figure will rise significantly as interested companies always brag that they can sort the contract out for a lot less than it ends up costing.

Schluming it!

The implementation and running of the system is likely to be taken up by Schlumberger Sema, a company which is already conducting trials with the Passport Agency to produce biometric ID cards. Schlumberger, who have been bought by Atos Origin, say that their "best of breed solutions can help your company achieve a smart and robust level of security." Sounds great.

Schlumberger have a history of ever-so-slightly-less-than-popular schemes, extracting tax payers money to make a quick buck and at someone else's expense. Under the government's 'Benefit Integrity Project' people receiving benefits because of illness or disability were asked to prove they couldn't work. Usually it takes around an hour for a doctor to check someone's illness or disability. But Sema, who were often paid by the visit, managed to rattle off check ups within a matter of minutes. As a result thousands of people lost their benefits. The government eventually scrapped the programme due to "a serious error of judgement".

The company does have some experience in the spying game though. Sema's got the benefit of John Deutch, disgraced former Director of the CIA, on its board. Deutch has a bit of a murky track record in the Pentagon too, helping to oversee the US invasions of El Salvador, Nicaragua and Grenada, which led to thousands of deaths during the 1980s. His experience with data security's not too hot either. He was dismissed from the CIA for keeping 17,000 pages of, according to the CIA, "enormously sensitive material at the highest levels of classification," on his home computer which was also used by his children for school work and surfing the net.

A track record like that on the protection of sensitive data might be problematic as Blunkett has justified the scheme on the basis that "our liberties will be strengthened if our identity is protected from theft". Privacy International's Director, Simon Davies, however, warned "The technology gap between governments and organised crime has now narrowed to such an extent that even the most highly secure cards are available as blanks weeks after their introduction. Criminals and terrorists can in reality move more freely and more safely with several fake "official" identities than they ever could in a country using multiple forms of "low-value" ID such as a birth certificate."

But it might not just be criminals who are after our data. The scheme will rely on computers being used with all our private information by thousands of people, especially the Boys in Blue. The Police Complaints Commission has admitted that "there will always be a few officers willing to risk their careers by obtaining data improperly." And that's the

CRAP ARREST OF THE WEEK

For having a laugh...

A woman in Germany was fined for enjoying herself, after a neighbour complained she made too much noise when she had friends round for the night. The neighbour reckoned she was a serial-laughter, frequently laughing late into the night. 'It is against the law in Germany to make noise after 10pm,' he said.

The woman says she only had some colleagues round for a drink on one evening, and the first she knew of the problem was when the police called. A few days later a fine arrived in the post. 'It was laughable', she said.

police! We don't think there's any danger of private companies misusing our information to make a bit more money though.

Another important question: how do the Home Office hope to establish an applicant's true identity before issuing a new secure ID card? With an existing form of ID? If these aren't secure, what's to stop a rapidly growing number of enemies using these to get new fake ID?

The government's also got an appalling track-record on using hi-tech private firms to deliver its services. In the Summer of 1999, half a million passport applications built up after Siemens were contracted to introduce a new computer system for the Passport Agency. Then there were the Criminal Records Bureau checks handled in true piss-up-in-a-brewery style by SchNEWS favourites C(r)apita, in which "computer errors" led to delays for new teachers starting work (and an extra week's holiday for some lucky kids).

Ten years ago no political party would have dared say they were going to introduce ID cards. Now that Tony and his chums have found us a whole range of new and dangerous foes, ID cards are on the agenda. The Home Office promises that only a limited amount of information will be stored on the cards but 10 years on, if Britain is the target of a terrorist attack, ministers will undoubtedly call for an increase in the amount of information held and the potential 'pre-emptive' uses of it. Just as terror suspects can now be detained for posing a 'potential threat to security' so you might be detained in the future for being a potential 'crap arrest of the week' based on information gathered on your ID card.

* For more on the fight against ID cards www.privacyinternational.org

* The Register Idiot's Guide to the UK ID Card. www.theregister.co.uk/2004/05/05/complete_idcard_guide

* There's an anti ID meeting happening on June 1st at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd., Brighton 5.30pm

DON'T D9 IT!

Caterpillar are commonly associated with boots and construction equipment, but one thing the company are less keen to shout about is their D9 Bulldozers, which have become the weapon of choice of the Israeli army for demolishing homes in the Occupied Territories.

Last Wednesday the Caterpillar Out Of Palestine collective arrived at Caterpillar Financial Services (UK) Ltd near Solihull to give the 'Homewrecker of the Year' Award as "recognition for its outstanding contribution to the fields of home demolition, collective punishment, land theft and ethnic cleansing." But overcome with shyness, nobody came out of the building to accept the award.

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency recently reported that 131 civilian homes had been destroyed in Gaza in the first ten days of May alone thanks to this kind of bulldozer. Families and communities have been dismantled because of this. "Of 14,852 people made homeless since October 2000 by Israeli Defence Force house demolition, two-thirds are from Rafah." They clear a 100 meter wide strip along

the border with Egypt and they want to increase it to 500 meters which will make thousands more people homeless.

Khaider Hasuna who had his house demolished on Wednesday said "They started demolishing the room that we were sitting in. My wife and I were screaming and our children were terrified. We took the children and went out to the yard. I saw a tank about twenty meters from my house. The tank began to open fire on the house." On the same day 3,000 demonstrators who marched down Rafah's main street towards Israeli lines to protest against the demolitions were fired at by a helicopter. At least 10 Palestinians were killed and 60 wounded.

The bulldozers are also used in the building of Israel's 'Apartheid wall', splitting Palestine into a series of ghettos separating hundreds of thousands from their lands. www.rafahkid.net
* Read the Amnesty International report www.amnesty.org

* To find out about demos against the demolitions 020 7700 6192 www.palestinecampaign.org

SWEETCONNED

The ban on genetically modified food, in the EU, which has been in place for nearly six years, was lifted yesterday when the European commission approved a type of genetically modified sweetcorn. This will allow fresh and tinned genetically modified sweetcorn to be imported into EU states for human consumption. Farmers are already allowed to use the sweetcorn in animal feed.

The Commission voted in favour of the sweetcorn, which is marketed as Bt-11 by the Swiss company Syngenta, after the governments of member states failed to reach an agreement. Under new EU laws, the sweetcorn must be labelled as genetically modified before it can be sold in shops. Friends of the Earth has serious doubts about the safety studies carried out on Syngenta's Bt11. A report by the Austrian Government gives a damning verdict of the safety tests carried out by Syngenta, concluding that the safety of Bt11 is based on theoretical argument rather than evidence.

The commission is totally ignoring public opinion, in a survey last winter 86% of the British public said they were against GM food. Sue Mayer of Greenwatch UK said "It shows how the commission and Europe are being bullied by the US and the WTO." The European Commission has ignored the people it represents and given in to pressure from big business, the World Trade Organisation, the US, Canada and Argentina. The EU wants to avoid more 'trade wars' with the US.

However the hostile public reception of GM foods means the ruling will not mean GM sweetcorn will be sold in many British shops. "I don't know anyone who will even give it a trial because of the consumer attitude to GM," said David Southwell of the British Retail Consortium.

IRVING DECAMPED

Last Saturday anti-fascists stopped a meeting by David Irving, the prominent holocaust denier and neo-nazi. Both the main and back-up venues for the talk were occupied which forced Irving to slink off back to London, but not before all his books and videos were destroyed. His own unintentionally hilarious account of the failed meeting, complete with references to Jews and homos and washing his hair "as thoroughly as I can. Because who can say that one of these queer folks and thugs was not HIV-positive?" He assigns blame to everyone involved in organising the day's events with of course the exception of the great man himself. Although no longer the intellectual arm of the neo-nazi resurgence that he once was, Irving seems to be trying to cash in on popular revulsion with the war in Iraq. However don't be deceived, Irving is still peddling the same racist and anti-semitic doctrines as ever. A swift glance at a few neo-nazi websites confirms the fact that he is still held in high regard in those unsavoury circles. Irving's tour of the U.K is now taking him up north to Halifax, see you there Davey!

Read Irvings account www.antifa.org.uk

...and finally...

For three years 'Buddha Snot' sweets have been sold outside a temple in Nara, Japan. This has been getting right up the monks' noses, so they tried to get them banned, but could only stop the name being trademarked. The packet shows the Buddha picking his nose. Also look out for 'Deer Dropping' sweets. You can rely on SchNEWS to keep it sweet and pick 'n' mix the best stories for you...

Disclaimer

SchNEWS warns all doppelgangers not to leave home without their identity. Honest.

STOP PRESS

On Thursday there was a protest in Brighton against EDO MBM Technology who make equipment for bombs and missiles. Protesters blocked the road and climbed up onto the roof of the company's building - five people were arrested.

SchNEWS in brief

John Jordan will be talking about the book 'We are Everywhere' this Saturday (22) at the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd 5.30pm. Each chapter is written by people across the world on the front lines of resistance to capitalism and economic globalization ** On Thursday (27) **Ewa Jasiewicz** will be talking at the Cowley Club about her time in Iraq - 'Resistance and Solidarity in occupied Iraq - what's going on and what can we do from here?' 6pm. <http://cowleyclub.org.uk> ** **Indymedia Cinema** is showing 'Development Flows from the Barrel of a Gun', produced by Indian activists, on the state violence faced by indigenous people when they protests against 'development' projects, Thursday (27), 9pm The Other Cinema, 11 Rupert Street, London. £6.50/£4.50 020 7734 1506 ** **The Use Your Loaf Centre for Social Solidarity** has a Workday THIS Sunday (23) from 12pm. Help do up and repair the building, but bring old clothes. You'll get a free meal out of it! 227 Deptford High St, London 07984 588807 useyourloaf@btinternet.com. The Centre also needs cooks to help out at the Friday night café and the **South London Radical History Group** are meeting at the centre next Thursday (27) 8pm. ** **Faslane Peace Camp** celebrates 22 years resisting UK's nukes! They've planned a week of activities from the 7-13 June, workshops on direct action, stencil graffiti and more. Party Saturday with sound system and bands. 01436 820 901 www.faslanepeacecamp.org.uk ** **Sussex University's World Bank Recruitment Day** was cancelled at short notice due to planned demonstrations. The last time they came to town their rep got a pie in their face, literally, and the session was shut down as the seminar was occupied by demonstrators. The University tried to keep this year's visit under wraps, but word got out and demonstrations were planned. A success story you can Bank on! ** **Brian Haw** who has been protesting for 3 years in Parliament Square against sanctions and the war in Iraq appeared in court on Tuesday charged with assaulting a police officer and failing to leave a security cordoned area. He is bailed to appear again in court on 1st June, and would appreciate support. emma@drifting.demon.co.uk ** There's a **BASS (Brighton Alliance of Sound Systems)** benefit techno party next Wednesday (26) @ The Volks Tavern Madeira Drive. 10pm till late

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SHIPWRECKED

Greenpeace USA have been acquitted of all charges of "conspiracy and illegally boarding the ship" under the obscure, rarely used 1872 'sailor-mongering' law. In the last couple of weeks over 80,000 people have e-mailed Bush and Attorney General John Ashcroft to condemn this prosecution.

However, 36 Greenpeace activists may end up in court over protests against Exxon Mobil (ESSO), the world's largest corporate producer of global warming gases. Exxon are refusing to pay a \$5 billion damages cost over the Exxon Valdez oil spill. The activists who peacefully entered Exxon Mobil's headquarters in tiger suits now face felony charges. Felony charges are 'serious charges' which include crimes such as rape and murder and in some cases lead to the denial of voting rights www.greenpeaceusa.org/trial, Greenpeace UK Press Office 0207 865 8115.

Positive SchNEWS

Last year Adidas sponsored a series of 'Sports Training Days' in Edinburgh, but local kids were having none of it. After 'Adidas Man' came to visit, posing for photos with children kitted out in Adidas gear, the kids got together with anti-sweatshop group No Sweat, the Parent Teacher Council, TUC, Green Party and others, pushing to ban brands from schools. They are producing leaflets about sweatshops and human rights abuses in Far East factories by the big brands, and now the campaign is spreading to other parts of Scotland. A petition has been launched and No Sweat say Edinburgh Council are reviewing the guidelines on sponsorship in schools. www.nosweat.org.uk

RAMPART SQUATTERS

There's a new occupied social centre and 'creative space' opening in East London, with an opening day party this Friday (21). Called 'The Rampart', the centre will have a cinema, internet access, free shop, art gallery and theatre. People are urgently needed to volunteer and run the centre. People are also invited to organise events or run workshops.

Also needed are all kinds of tools, paints, fabrics, carpets, furniture, cooking tat, cutlery, plates, bowls, any stereo, computer or video equipment, locks bolts and toilet roll, oh ... and a kitchen sink. Also welcome is any stuff for the free shop - books, clothes etc.

The address of the hall is 7a Rampart Street which is off Commercial Road and Canon Street (nearest tube Shadwell - bus routes 15, 100, 115) 07050 618445 rampart@lists.riseup.net