The struggle against the introduction of ID cards in the UK

Anarcho

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This means that economic power will place a key role in determining how "voluntary" this embedding will actually be. But it does raise an important issue, namely why should the words "private property" make an action acceptable or not? If governments did what bosses habitually do, such as ban free speech (no talking back), ban freedom of association (no unions), tell people want to wear, how to behave and what to do, few people would fail to label it for what it is: tyranny. That people can leave a democratic state hardly makes restrictions on their liberty valid. The same applies to the voluntary feudalism of capitalism.

All in all, this is a door we would be wise keep closed in both the private and public sectors.

Despite the hopes of the left for a revolt Labour MP's in Britain have voted for the introduction of ID cards. This does not mean the struggle against them is over, we can use direct action to them. But it would be a mistake to think that it is only the state which seeks to track our every movement. Capital does so too and in the free market, demand will be supplied

Resist ID cards!

Hopes that Labour MPs would develop a backbone and reject the government's more insane plans were, unsurprisingly, squashed when they supported ID cards. In spite of previously admitting that ID cards would not have stopped the bombs in July, the spectre of terrorism was used by the government to pass the bill. And why do we face an increased possibility of terrorism? Because of the imperialist policies of the government.

So one stupid, failed, authoritarian policy is being used to introduce another. Is this what Blair meant by "joined up" government?

Unless we act, we can look forward to yet another government IT farce with all the familiar features: profiteering by the private sector at the public's expense; inadequate and contradictory requirements semi-met by a technology arbitrarily picked to further political or career needs rather than suitability to the project; late delivery combined with hugely inflated costs; continuous post-delivery rework; and a system which does not actually do the task it was required to do.

Rest assured, though, ID cards are "voluntary." However, once ID cards are introduced, we can expect them to be used in more and more areas of life, making it impossible not to have one. So "voluntary" will become mandatory quite quickly. Now they are merely linked to passports. That means if you want to leave the country, you will need to get an ID card. Any

society which claims to be free should be based on its members being able to move around freely and, if they wish, to leave it. This was, at one time, considered a key difference between democracies and totalitarian states. However, being unable to get the necessary documentation to leave the country without also submitting to having an identity card is fundamentally at odds with this. As is the idea that you need to inform the state when you move address.

The government is downplaying the amount of information the new ID cards will hold, but obviously they must hold more information than a passport contains otherwise there would be no point to them. Equally, they note that other European states have ID cards. However, they fail to mention two things. Firstly, these cards are not linked to a national database which stores the same kind of significant personal information Blair wants nor are they biometric. As such, they are not really comparable. Secondly, these cards were all imposed by fascist regimes and, consequently, their populations could not resist them when they were initially introduced. That, subsequently, people have got used to them is hardly a great defence for introducing them in the first place. People, unfortunately, often get used to many restrictions on their freedom.

Britain is not, yet, a totalitarian state, although New Labour is continuing the drift towards it started by Thatcher. It is no coincidence that ID cards were first proposed by the Tories (and opposed by Labour) in the 1990s. That New Labour is foisting them on the public suggests that this is desired by the state bureaucracy. As such, it is about social control. It also, incidentally, confirms the anarchist analysis that while a party may be in office, they are not in power. Rather than change the system, the system will change the politicians.

All is not lost, though. We can resist. As anarchists have always argued (and our representatives have just shown), we cannot rely on others to defend our liberties. We need to look to ourselves and our own strength to resist those in power. As

with the poll tax, we can use direct action to resist ID cards and end them. Anarchists should be at the forefront in organising such a movement.

Don't tell Blair…

With ID cards on the way, it would be a mistake to think that it is only the state which seeks to track our every movement. Capital does so too and in the free market, demand will be supplied. In Ohio, a company has embedded silicon chips into two of its employees ("**US group implants electronic tags in workers**", Richard Financial Times, 12/2/2006).

This is the first known case in which US workers have been "tagged" electronically as a way of identifying them. The company claims to be testing the technology as a way of controlling access to a room where it holds security video footage for government agencies and the police. As a side effect any implanted device can be used to track the employee without their knowledge.

Needless to say, the company has its defenders who argue that it is acceptable as long as it is not compulsory. Presumably, this means that it is "voluntary" in the sense that if you do not agree to it, you will not be employed for long. Given the high levels of job insecurity and lack of decent jobs in America, the demand is likely to find willing takes. And, of course, if this technology gives the company a competitive advantage, then market forces will ensure that more and more workers will have to "volunteer" to be tagged.

This has even wider implications, of course. Given New Labour's love affair with big business, will it be a matter of time before they will be urging us to replace our ID cards with embedded chips? Think of the spurious arguments they could utilise to justify this! After all, the innocent will have nothing to fear…