

Identity Crisis

Stuart Perry

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1976—A national identification card, as well as 53 other “proposed solutions” to the problems of false identification, drug smuggling, fugitives, welfare abuse and check fraud are currently under debate by the Federal Advisory Committee on False Identification (FACFI), according to a recent issue of *Counterspy* magazine (Spring ’76).

A “voluntary authority,” FACFI is made up of representatives from interested (to say the least) parties from both the public and private sectors, including the FBI, LEAA, CIA, Immigration and Naturalization Service, several U.S. Departments (including Justice and Defense), the American Bankers Association, American Express Company, Sears Roebuck Co., Interpol and the National Sheriff’s Association.

The suggestion for national I.D. “proposes that we use all of the technology that we currently possess to make one document that is a foolproof verification of identity and only that,” though, of course, files would have to be maintained “for the purposes of renewing or updating the card.”

“Application for the card,” the proposal further states, “is seen as purely voluntary.” The same paragraph, however, observes that “incentive to obtain the card would be set up if the Federal Government would accept only the card for verification of identity in applying for privileges, benefits, or government employment.” Some voluntary.

Other proposals tendered by the FACFI include an updated Alien Registration Card complete with photograph, fingerprints and “encrypted personal information;” a similar card for all welfare and food stamps recipients (both of these appear at present to be in the preparation stage); standardizing and cross-indexing of state drivers licenses, with mandatory photograph and prohibition against individual possession of more than one license; a national clearinghouse for false I.D. information, closing public access to vital statistics records; and an international conference on false I.D. to begin international standardization of identity.

Oh, and a recommendation that they be re-chartered for another year to push through their proposals.

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1976—the year in which all “patriotic” Americans are celebrating 200 years of so-called freedom, may be the year to bring about some of the most totalitarian legislation in this nation’s history.

Indeed, nearly all politicians, liberals as well as others of authoritarian persuasions, are clamoring for yet another law to “protect” our freedom—in this case, the introduction of national identification cards.

As the proponents of this legislation see it, there are too many people traveling around with and using fraudulent identification. They substantiate their claims with stories of impossible-to-find underground terrorists, welfare cheats who collect under scores of different names, tax dodgers and credit card cheaters who use aliases to escape payment and punishment.

For politicians and their supporters, this represents an alarming nightmare. It is most difficult and cumbersome to reign over and push around subjects who are able to shed their “official” state registered identities at a moment’s notice.

This author personally remembers one person who “registered for the military draft under about ten different names and played along with the Selective Service System (S.S.S.) until all of these “people” were ordered to report

for induction into the armed forces. Then all ten “people” disappeared, never to appear again. Who knows how much time the S.S.S. has wasted looking for them?

Another friend outmaneuvered the Internal Revenue Service in much the same manner. When one considers that the S.S.S. was (and soon will be again) used solely for the purpose of conscripting—really kidnapping—people into the Armed Forces to kill other such Unfortunates from other countries, this action of gumming up the S.S.S. bureaucracy deserves applause.

And when one considers that the IRS is the direct and coercive supplier of revenues which the State uses to bully, intimidate and kill people (as well as pay various unproductive minions to keep the system functioning), any action messing up their bureaucracy deserves commendation as well.

Banks Hit by Fake I. D.

Banks and credit agencies are also angered over the use of false identities. There have been many episodes—some of which have been publicized by the capitalist media—in which people have allegedly obtained credit or loans under false names, and then dropped out of sight when payment fell due. Several billion dollars, the media whines, have been taken out of bankers’ pockets. In actuality this loss is used by the financial lords to hike up interest rates which will much more than offset the “loss.”

When this fact is mentioned by bankers in their more honest moments, it is done in order to anger the public into supporting a much stronger identification network, which will keep permanent track of everyone and will, of course, save the public the money being stolen by the illegal chiselers.

Of course, Protestant work ethic-loving Americans never are told that the large bankers and lenders of credit make idle fortunes off the hard-earned money of the average worker; in fact, the amount of money stolen in this “legal” fashion is immensely greater than the amount made by all the small-time anonymous rip-off schemes. But this is another story.

In the interim, the media, from *Newsweek* to *Readers Digest*, is ablaze with angry stories of how terrorists, welfare chiselers and millions of “illegal” aliens are using the cloak of false identification to hide their whereabouts and steal \$12 billion from our pockets. My, isn’t that terrible!

Isn’t it also terrible that these same “honest and humanitarian” publications are grieving over the fact that the Pentagon, whose sole purpose is to manufacture weapons to annihilate human beings (pardon me, economists; to provide jobs too, of course), is getting a “paltry” \$105 billion from our pockets? Isn’t it also terrible that the CIA and NSA (National Security Agency) and other spying organizations, who keep files on all of us “to protect our freedom,” extort only \$30 billion or so from us?

Because of the collective frustration of the government and large financial interests, a computerized national identification card system could very well be on the immediate horizon. Since most European countries already have such systems, it is fairly easy to visualize what an American version will be like. Every citizen will be required to carry a computer card which will state the carrier’s name and birth date. Also on the card will be a picture of the individual, his or her fingerprints, and an identification number.

At all state and federal government offices where one obtains any other identification (passports, birth certificates, driver’s licenses, voting cards, etc.), there will be a computer linked up to a central computer in Washington, that-can immediately cross-check to see if the individual has a fraudulent card. A similar computer will also be installed in all banks and credit agencies.

It is almost redundant to say at this juncture that one’s identification number will be the number by which one’s personal file will be titled. Into this file will enter any criminal record one has, as well as all of the normal data which a government gets its hands on: i.e. tax records, property and car deeds, school records, insurance records, ad nauseum. By pushing one set of digits in a computer, any government agent, financial bigwig, or even a prospective employer—liberal double-talk concerning privacy notwithstanding—will be able to obtain a virtual life history of the person in question.

Sweden—View of the Future

Perhaps the best way to view the future is to examine an instance in the present. Sweden is one country which already has a system of identification such as is outlined above. At birth, everyone is given a ten-digit number which becomes his or her person number or lifetime identification. This number is included on one's birth certificate, school records, driver's license, employment records, property registrations, and even one's death certificate.

One is allowed no rights or privileges in Sweden without this number; thus existence is fully created and allowed by the State. Between this system and the various large credit systems which exist in Sweden, the government knows everything about an individual citizen—from tax records to bra and waist size. From the cradle to the grave, one's life is an open and controlled book for government authorities in Sweden.

A Swedish citizen's record is like a permanent tattoo; it is impossible to erase. All mistakes in one's lifetime—whether it be charge of murder or doing badly in early school—are never erased or forgotten by the computer.

In America, it is still possible for one to shed one's past life and start anew. It's certainly true that this is harder to accomplish than ever before, but hundreds of thousands still attempt and succeed every year. Most of the people who assume new identities are not, as many ivory tower liberals and conservatives fantasize, welfare cheaters, "illegal" aliens, terrorists, credit and bank rip-off artists, or even people who desire to gum up government bureaucracies. Most of these anonymous Americans are those who have tried and failed to lead a fairly straight life.

An arrest (one in America has a criminal record if she or he has ever been arrested; no conviction is even needed to place this unwashable stain on one's record), financial bad luck, bankruptcy, honestly ruined credit (or computer mistakes, which have ruined the credit rating of thousands) and severe family problems are the usual reasons why one tries to assume in as honest a way as possible, a new name, identity and life.

With a national identification card system, the option of starting anew will no longer be available for people. The only ways to escape severe mistakes of one's past will be death or suicide. As in Sweden and too many other countries, one's past will be totally open to government authorities.

Inherent in this proposed legislation is the trend toward the cessation of all human activity outside the confines of the State; individuals are reduced to ciphers, privacy becomes anti-social—the anonymous power of the State becomes the reigning power in our lives.

Any and all opposition to the introduction of national identification cards is the order of the day.

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