

Just who are you, and can you prove it?

State ID needed to exist

Stuart Perry

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“You are going to complain? You? And just who are you? You are no American. Prove it. Come, come, show us your passport. Or your sailor’s card...You have no passport. In any civilized country he who has no passport is nobody. He does not exist for us or for anybody else.”

— from *Death Ship* by B. Traven

The second to last paragraph of the article “Identity Crisis” which appeared in the September 1976 *Fifth Estate*, stated: “Inherent in this proposed legislation (national ID cards) 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.”

The conclusion which this author has come to is that it is basically impossible for one to exist now “outside the confines of the State,” even though national ID cards don’t exist as such at this point. In other words, State approval is needed for one to exist. How is this so?

To begin with, one is usually sucked into the confines of the State by being forced to sell and alienate his or her labor (make money) in order to survive. All would agree that money in capitalist regimes (all countries) is permission to live. Without it, one cannot survive, since everything necessary for survival has been turned into a commodity.

Since money is permission to live for all of us, most of us try—or rather are forced—to seek some security in this regard. If one does not, obtaining food, shelter, and the other necessities of daily life become a hit-and-miss proposition. For most of the non-rich this means selling a good chunk of one’s life in return for a weekly paycheck—one becomes an employee. Nearly all employees are required to have and show social security numbers, which are used for tax purposes.

Hence, by transition, a social security number becomes permission to live. If one submits a forged or fake number, the person is discovered at year’s end by IRS computers. Needless to say, an individual needs the social security card to collect unemployment or welfare benefits. These are tied in with employment records. The same, of course, applies with credit cards.

SS Card to be National ID?

A social security card is also demanded at other times in people’s economic lives. In order to open a bank account (unless you wish to place excess cash under the rug, in a safe deposit box or are rich enough to have an unnumbered Swiss bank account) you must have a social security card. This is now true whether the account is a savings or a checking account. That probably means that all bank records and transactions are sent to the IRS which compares income with savings and expenditures. Since one’s social security number is required at the door

in most medical, savings and credit programs, it is very easy to imagine the day when a social security number will lay bare all financial information to the IRS minions.

The requirement of a social security card for a checking account is a rather recent requirement. As recently as three years ago, you could open up a checking account under a fictitious name; usually no ID was even needed to purchase items with these checks either. Alas, this has all changed as the State and financial institutions work hand-in-hand to eliminate individual privacy.

In fact, there has been much talk recently of making the social security card a national ID card for each individual. Everyone would be issued a computer card with his or her number on it along with a photograph, signature, and address. Supposedly, this would weed out the “illegal” aliens (many of whom are undocumented), to give the rest of us the jobs they take up. Of course, this would end what little privacy we have left.

Until a year or two ago, it was possible to obtain a social security card fairly anonymously. You could just go to the local SS office, fill out a form and have the card mailed to you in about a month. And you could use any name that you desired.

However, the over-hyped “illegal” alien scare changed all of that. For the last year or two, one has had to show a birth certificate or similar document to obtain a social security card, if one is a native-born American. Foreign-born Americans and “legal” aliens have had to show their naturalization papers or alien registration cards, respectively. This is done to “protect” jobs for native-born Americans and State-approved foreigners.

Can You Prove You Are Really You?

However, having a social security number does not mean that one is home free. More and more, a driver's license or State ID card is also needed as “proof” of one's identity. If you don't present this upon demand to any arrogant, questioning representative of the State repressive mechanism, you can be locked up as a vagrant. You are who you say you are, only if you have the State as an ally in saying so.

In most communities, for the past twenty years or so, you have had to show a birth certificate or a similar document (naturalization papers or alien registration cards) to get a driver's license or State ID card. Again, only State approved citizens need apply! Outside of driving a car, a driver's license (State ID also applies here) is needed in many other situations which crop up from day-to-day. It is needed to conduct any but strict cash transactions. It is needed to open a bank account or to cash other people's checks at their bank or to cash money orders of any kind.

Most landlords now demand a driver's license before renting property. Although this is supposedly done to protect them against a tenant walking out without paying the rent, this dog-eat-dog rationale further breaks down our privacy. Other transactions in which you must possess State approval include purchasing firearms, getting a fishing license or obtaining land. For each of these examples, the reader can undoubtedly think of thousands more. You cannot live outside the State in the seemingly private sectors of this society.

In Michigan, it is the driver's license through which the State can keep its totalitarian eye on everyone. If you make the mistake of failing to notify the Secretary of State's office when you move, your license (and hence a large part of your permission to live) can be taken away. Remind a liberal of that the next time they compare America favorably with “those countries where you have to tell the government whenever you move.”

Some people rebel against the State's effort to number, file and categorize every move they make by forging or obtaining phony documents. While we might applaud these actions, these rebels are begging the question: Why can't people organize and control their lives and activities as flesh and blood humans rather than being forced to have some identification number?

A conversation that I had at my local post office recently underscored how everyone is compelled to identify themselves to the State's satisfaction. This conversation happened as I was cashing a money order from someone for whom I performed a “service.”

To get it cashed, I showed “I was me” by my driver's license. I asked the cashier, “Suppose I didn't have a driver's license?”

“Then I'd have to see a State ID card.”

“Suppose I didn’t have that?”

“Then I’d have to see a passport.”

“Suppose I didn’t have one?”

“Then I’d have to see a social security card, though I don’t know if that would be enough. But why are you asking these questions?”

“I’m curious, that’s all.”

“Well, if you didn’t have any of the documents I mentioned, you’d be in a terrible predicament.”

Indeed, I would. Once a government is formed, it always seeks to add to its power and become the dominant force in the lives of people. National ID cards would only complete a process that is almost done now.

So, you’re disgusted with it all; can’t stand it! You wish to leave this country and go someplace where you won’t be forced at every turn, by State and non-state people, to identify yourself with State documents. That is a most understandable reaction. However, to leave America and go to such a place—if one exists—you need a passport. For this—the king-daddy of the documents—you need both a birth certificate and a driver’s license!

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