

## Compulsory ID is on the cards

By Mark Howarth

Never been one for conspiracy theories. JFK, 9/11, the Queen Mum's a 12-foot lizard etc. But here's something that will set your paranoia buzzing. It's called Section 57. This nasty piece of law is buried away in the Local Electoral Administration and Registration Services (Scotland) Act. Whatever that is.

But just see what frightening powers the Executive has awarded itself here. In short, they can now seek out, store and pass on any information about you that they want. And I mean ANY. Your debts, politics, sex life, what you buy at Tesco. Friends, phonecalls and favourite websites. Even the latest tittle-tattle about you from the pub gossip. And there's not a damn thing you can do about it.

Ladies and gentlemen, we've just out-KGB'd the KGB.

Fine - you say I'm nuts. You say, ach, so it's a blank cheque for a surveillance state - they'll never cash it. It's only an unloaded semi-automatic machine gun. But what if a bad, bad man became First Minister and did decide to use these powers? Never happen here? That's what the Dutch thought when they completed their wonderfully detailed ID database. *In 1939.*

So what's going on? FACT: Labour want us all to have compulsory ID cards. And if they can trick the Scots into having them - using Section 57 and cuddly "entitlement cards" instead - they reckon they can con the rest. That's why London's watching these events unfold in Scotland so very carefully. Still think I'm nuts?

Look what's tucked away in an obscure Whitehall briefing document I found this week ... "Given that progress with this is well advanced ... we recommend that the development and lessons learned should be monitored, the situation held in review and that contacts between the ID card team and the devolved administration be strengthened." This is serious stuff, folks. There is scaffolding going up around us without distinct form and reason.

And when it comes to ID cards - just like the poll tax - it's obvious who England's lab rat is. So how much does Scotland love her liberty? Is freedom just a 90-minute big-screen bunk-up with an Australian actor? Or does our Braveheart FM Alex Salmond actually have the balls to tell London the show's over? Let's find out.

If Section 57 is all a big whoopsy-daisy, then we can sort it out. Holyrood can scrap it. We've all made mistakes. I'm quite willing to believe that useless MSPs innocently missed the plot and haven't a clue what they've done. But how come Jack McConnell's Executive managed to leave Section 57 out of not one but TWO public consultations? Just happened to mislead two Holyrood committees as well? Somehow drafted the legislation so badly, the safeguards are about as butch as Larry Grayson's PJs?

And then - oops! - forgot to tell us that they've now got the skeleton key to all our closets ... even though it's been on the lawbooks for a year.

But like I say, I'm not a great one for conspiracy theories. So it must just be coincidence, eh? Whatever the truth, Section 57 is in the building. Let's make its visit a short one. While we still can.

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