

The Scottish National Entitlement Card: an exercise in wholesale systematic deception

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Abstract

Early in 2006 national identity cards were reintroduced into the United Kingdom for the first time in fifty-four years. The subject of identity cards is always a controversial one for the British, and so it is surprising that their reintroduction was given almost no publicity and met with minimal opposition. The reason for this is quite simple - nobody was told about it. What happened is that the elderly and disabled citizens of Scotland were invited to apply for a new kind of travel card. But unbeknown to them, what they were subsequently issued with was not a travel card, but a multi-purpose identity card. Moreover, this card and its associated centralised database are so intrusive that they would not today be permitted by law in Germany. The present paper outlines the nature of this 'Trojan Horse' identity cards project and the wholesale systematic deception which it involved.

N.b. This report can be downloaded from: www.jwelford.demon.co.uk/snec.html

1 Introduction

*Oh, what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive.*

Sir Walter Scott

What was the best kept secret of 2006 in Scotland? Without any doubt it will prove to have been the widespread introduction of a new national identity card north of the border. But how come - for surely the UK government is not proposing to issue identity cards for at least another two years? Correct. The reason is that this particular identity cards project is being promoted, not by the Home Office in London, but by the Scottish Executive in Edinburgh.

Identity cards were last issued in this country during the Second World War and when there was a serious risk of German occupation. The cards were used for a brief period after the war, but were eventually abolished in 1952 by Winston Churchill's government. And so for more than fifty years the country has managed without ID cards. How come then that all of a sudden out of the blue they were reintroduced in 2006? And why just in Scotland (and Wales also) - and why was nobody told about it?

Identity cards always prove to be a highly controversial issue, and particularly so in common law countries, such as the UK, Australia and the United States. At an early stage, therefore, the Scottish Executive evidently decided that if it was going to introduce ID cards and do so without risking controversy then it would need to do this in total secrecy. In the ensuing project this crucial initial decision to disguise its objectives inevitably came to involve it in an astounding multilayered 'tangled web' of deception. Among those deceived include - most shockingly - the Scottish Parliament itself, as well the media and all but a small handful of individuals.

The central purpose of the present paper is to put on record the major elements of this Scottish 'exercise in wholesale systematic deception'. It will not seek to present the case for or against ID cards, since this debate is being comprehensively promoted elsewhere (see, in particular, www.no2id.net [1]). But what it will do is to explore this remarkable Scottish project as an example of comprehensive government dishonesty, almost certainly the worst incidence of its kind in Scotland since devolution took effect in 1999.

2 The project

The project at the heart of this scandal concerns what has been officially referred to as the Scottish National Entitlement Card (SNEC). But it is important at the outset to be clear that this is not a wholly Scottish initiative, but rather is merely the flagship for a much larger UK government-wide project. There are clearly echoes, therefore, of Margaret Thatcher's Poll Tax project within such a strategy, based on the notion that you should try out your new ideas on the Scots first, and if they are successful you can then confidently roll them out across the whole nation. But given that the Poll Tax experiment led to widespread dissent, rioting and ultimately failure, it seems surprising that the government should have risked going down this same path once again.

Central to current New Labour thinking on the provision of government services is that these can be completely streamlined and made efficient by what they choose to call 'transformational government' [2], or in more common parlance 'joined-up government'. And central to this concept is a requirement to allocate a unique number to every citizen, which would then allow the integration of all government databases and records, permitting the linkage of all the information about each individual. Although superficially this could possibly lead to more efficient government, the deep concern expressed by opponents is that it would risk destroying people's privacy, putting enormous intrusive power into the hands of the state and inevitably leading to a Big Brother-type society. Many IT experts also consider that such centralising of key personal information would seriously risk the security of the data, and provide a honeypot for those engaged in identity theft

and other criminal activities [3].

The allocation of unique numbers to citizens normally requires some kind of registration procedure, which is usually completed by the issuing of an identity card. And it is this implicit numbering which is, of course, the central concern for many, bringing to mind images of cattle being branded and, rather more ominously, victims of genocide being branded in wartime concentration camps. It is largely for this reason that the issuing of identity cards and unique citizen numbers has come to be so hugely controversial. One exception to this occurs in some countries, such as Germany, where confidentiality legislation firmly prohibits the allocation of unique numbers to citizens. As a result, ID cards in these countries present a considerably reduced threat to individual privacy, and so are less feared.

Given the controversial nature of identity cards it is therefore at least understandable why a government wishing to introduce them might be tempted to disguise what it is doing. But the issue is more than unusually sensitive in Scotland, since a majority of MSPs voted in February 2005 not to allow the UK identity card to be required for access to devolved services [4]. Therefore, this position having been agreed, it would clearly be a national scandal if the Scottish Executive were to ignore this vote and secretly proceed with its own identity cards scheme.

But amazingly this is precisely what has happened. On the first of April 2006 the Scottish Executive introduced its own identity cards for devolved and local services. In the initial phase it has issued the cards to the most vulnerable members of society first, viz. the elderly and the disabled. But at the beginning of 2007 it extended the project to include the next most vulnerable members of society, viz. school-age children. This 'Trojan Horse' project is proceeding, therefore, in a very gradual way, so as to avoid arousing suspicions. However, the Executive has at no stage engaged in a public debate with the Scottish people about its long-term objectives, and, of course, the term 'identity card' has never been uttered in relation to the scheme. On the contrary, it has gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that its true long-term intentions remain well and truly hidden. This policy has been effective to date, and the project continues. But given such a divergence between what was agreed in Parliament and what the Executive managed to get up to behind the scenes, one is forced to ask what twisted kind of devolved democracy has been established here in Scotland.

3 The web of deception

The Scottish Executive's web of deception has been multilayered and many stranded. Rather like the skins of an onion, you can peel off one, only to discover another and another ... and yet more. The following are the seven primary skins of this onion:

3.1 Transformational government

The most fundamental deception is concerned with what the true purpose of the Executive's project is. Ostensibly it concerns the distribution of the Scottish National Entitlement Card. But this is not the case. Fundamentally the purpose of the project is clearly to use Scotland as a test bed for transformational government and data linkage, and in particular to evaluate its potential use for devolved and local services. Assuming the test is 'successful', the plan is then to roll out the project in England from 1 April 2008.

Central to transformational government is the need to allocate unique person numbers to citizens and then to set up their personal details in an associated national population database. It is possible that the Scottish Executive may have already set up such a database, albeit in some embryonic form. But certainly when it does so this will be the first ever such national database in the UK. And once this database is in place it will then become possible to link all citizens' records together into a vast linked superdatabase. The inevitable consequence of this would be the state having a level of population surveillance and control unprecedented anywhere else in the world.

The two central elements of the scheme, the unique person number and the database, are the most controversial aspects of the scheme - considerably more so even than the ID card itself. And as already pointed out, there are countries, such as Germany, which have ID card systems, but which expressly forbid the use of such techniques because of the risks to confidentiality.

It is no surprise therefore that these highly controversial conceptual dimensions of the scheme are not comprehensively communicated to those who apply for a card. Instead, they are included in one brief paragraph, tucked away in the small print on the back page of the application form.

3.2 What the card is called

Words mean exactly what I want them to mean.

Lewis Carroll

A fundamental form of deception is to mislead by deliberately calling something by the wrong name. Consider the following by way of illustration. If you examine one of the national identity cards

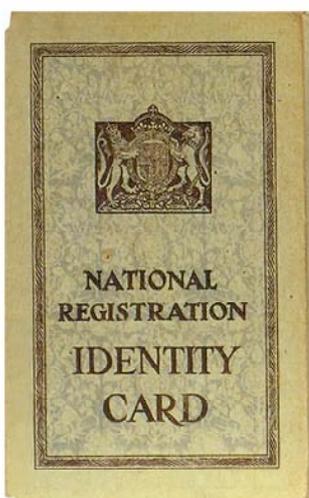


Figure 1 UK Identity Card

issued during the Second World War you will be instantly struck and perhaps even impressed by the stark honest integrity of it. For in large letters across the front is printed very simply 'IDENTITY CARD' (see Figure 1). This was very much an innocent age, when people would take pride in 'calling a spade a spade'.

How times have changed. Now fifty years on you are able to compare this card with the next generation of national identity cards, viz. the Scottish National Entitlement Card (see Figure 2). And examining this you suddenly find yourself plunged into a new world of ambiguity, confusion and spin. For this new ID card carries no hint of what it is or what it might be used for. There is certainly no indication that it might be an identity card, or even an entitlement card, whatever that might be. There can be little doubt that the ITSO symbol [5] in the top left-hand corner will be meaningless to most cardholders. Meanwhile, on the card's reverse there is a 'one edinburgh' symbol (at least for those cards issued in Edinburgh), but this is the nearest that the card comes to any kind of meaningfulness.



Figure 2 Scottish National Entitlement Card

The truth is that the SNEC card is quite simply an identity card, and it should properly be labelled and referred to as such. There are many types of identity card in use throughout Europe, each with its own characteristics and functions. But despite the differences, the two defining properties which they all share are that they are used to verify people's identity and they are multi-purpose, unlike bus passes and library cards, which are single-purpose.

According to these criteria the SNEC card must clearly be regarded as an identity card.

The decision of the Executive to distribute its identity card as a so-called 'entitlement card' has been a blatant piece of spin. But the choice of the term 'entitlement card' is also a somewhat curious one. It is in fact a throwback to the time five years ago when David Blunkett, as the then Home Secretary, was attempting to make his identity card proposals more acceptable by referring to the cards as entitlement cards. However, after sounding out the idea with focus groups, and discovering that people were not duped, he resorted to calling his cards 'identity cards' instead [6]. Such an option was not, of course, available to the Executive, otherwise the cat would have been well and truly out of the bag, and so it was forced to adopt some alternative, and 'entitlement card'

it was. But recalling the recent Blunkett episode, some people smelled a rat immediately.

3.3 What is the card for?

Apart from supplying a misleading name for the card, the next most crucial deception has been to introduce confusion over its function. The Executive achieved this in a very cunning way by disguising the true multi-purpose properties of the card, and instead selling it to the elderly and the disabled essentially as a single-purpose card. As a result, the whole application process was totally slanted so as to fool people into believing that what they were actually applying for was merely a new kind of bus pass. Thus:

1. The associated application form and covering letter were not issued by the Scottish Executive, as they should have been for a national multi-purpose identity card. Rather, they were sent out by the Head of Transport of the local city or county council.
2. The application form was clearly headed:
"Application for Scotland-Wide Free Bus Scheme for Older and Disabled People".
This was most evidently not an application for a multi-purpose identity card!
3. An accompanying glossy explanatory leaflet had the following displayed prominently and boldly on its front page:
"From April 2006, your current free local bus travel pass will be replaced by a new Entitlement Card that will allow you to travel anywhere in Scotland on a bus for free."

There is, therefore, little doubt that there is a deliberate consistent attempt here to mislead the elderly and disabled into believing that what they are applying for is a new kind of single-purpose bus pass. Indeed, just two weeks before the 2007 Scottish Parliament election the then First Minister Jack McConnell was proudly boasting on TV that Labour had introduced 'the free national bus pass' [7]. And this strategy of deception has worked brilliantly, for most elderly people now refer to the card simply as their new 'bus pass'. However, most of the print media has been equally taken in. For example, the Edinburgh Evening News consistently refers to the card as 'the Scottish Executive's national travel card' [8]. Nobody mentions its planned multi-purpose functions or refers to it as an identity card.

We must next turn to the more subtle aspects of the deception. Because these deal with the more technical and legalistic aspects of data management and because they tend to get discussed in the small print sections of an application form it is certain that their significance will not have been fully grasped by many elderly and disabled applicants.

3.4 Data protection

The application form covered four A4 pages, and on the back of the form was a section headed: Information on Data Sharing And Data Protection. Normally when you see the term 'Data Protection' on a form it gives you a reassuring feeling that the people who are about to collect your data are going to act responsibly: they will look after your data carefully, and your privacy is going to be properly protected. With such a feeling of reassurance many will be inclined to skip over much of the small print.

This would be a grave mistake with the Scottish Executive's form, because the back page turns out to be extremely controversial. What this section is in fact doing is seeking the applicant's permission to allow the Executive effectively to turn the Data Protection legislation on its head. One of the central principles of the current legislation is that information that has been gathered for one purpose should not be used for any other purpose. This is provided so as to protect both the privacy and security of the individual's personal information. But on the back page of the form the Executive is trying to persuade you to sign away these protections and allow your data to be shared across unspecified government departments and made accessible to countless civil servants and others. The supposed advantages of this kind of data sharing are carefully and

disarmingly explained under five bullet points. However, there is no suggestion made anywhere that there could possibly be any disadvantages in signing away your privacy rights, nor is there an indication that data sharing might possibly breach one of the central tenets of Data Protection. This is truly shocking, with government blindly promoting its own self-interested agenda and at the same time deceiving citizens into losing their statutory rights. In any other non-governmental context such an action would undoubtedly be treated as a serious criminal offence.

As a footnote to this particular point, it is of interest that early in 2007 the idea of data sharing was suddenly presented by the UK government as an interesting possibility worthy of serious consideration, and former Prime Minister Tony Blair was proposing that 'citizens panels' should be set up to discuss it. Meanwhile up here the Scots appear to have been living on a completely different planet. There have been no citizens panels and no public discussion, and yet the Executive has already been busily pushing ahead with its data sharing agenda.

3.5 The opt-out

Despite the unreasonable and wholly dishonest pressure on applicants to sign up to data sharing, nevertheless the Executive currently has a statutory requirement to seek permission and offer an opt-out. On the first page of the form, therefore, there is included a section headed:
Part 3: Request for consent to share data.

This is followed by a brief explanation, and then you are presented with two options, from which you must select one. These are:

- (a) I agree to my personal details being processed for the purposes stated above
- (b) I do not wish my personal details to be used for any purpose other than processing my application for free national bus travel

As stated, this seems to be fairly reasonable as an opt-out. However, unfortunately it appears to make no difference whatsoever whether you select (a) or (b), you will still receive the same multi-purpose identity card, together with the same explanatory leaflet spelling out the multi-function properties of your new card. For example, it includes the statement: "In time the Entitlement Card will include your CHI number which is your unique number for the NHS in Scotland."

Any reassurances from the Executive that the card's inbuilt RFID chip will contain a marker saying that this card is for use only as a travel card must be taken with a large pinch of salt by those who have chosen option (b). Citizens are not provided with a set of legally-binding 'Terms and Conditions', and so it would be all too easy for the Executive to update the legislation, throw a switch and instantly convert everyone's card to full multi-purpose ID card status.

Finally, it is of interest to note that Freedom of Information disclosed figures indicate that more than a third of card applicants have selected option (b) [9]. Given the heavily biased encouragement to choose option (a), this reveals that there is a significant proportion of the elderly and disabled who are unhappy with the government's data sharing agenda. And had the arguments been presented in an honest unbiased fashion, it seems likely that the majority would have opted out of data sharing.

3.6 Is the ID card voluntary?

If the opt-out were genuinely intended it would surely imply that for those who do not favour joined-up government a completely parallel set of arrangements was going to be provided. In other words, those who tick box (a) will receive the full multi-purpose identity card, while box (b) tickers will be able to obtain a range of separate single-purpose cards for bus travel, health, library services, etc. I hardly think that this is what is seriously intended. I am quite sure that the New Labour dream is ultimately to introduce whatever legislation is necessary to make transformational

government and ID cards obligatory for all.

But for the present there remains a huge fault line over the voluntary nature of the card between the views which have been expressed in the Scottish Parliament and the current agenda of the Scottish Executive. On 10 November 2005 in response to a question in the Parliament, Labour Minister Tom McCabe said that he could “confirm that it is still the case, as stated in my answer to S2W-16501, that no-one will be denied access to the services that they are entitled to because they do not have a citizen’s account card (national entitlement card).” [10] And so this seems very clear - there is to be no linkage between an entitlement and the card.

Despite repeated assurances, the Scottish Executive has deliberately turned its back on this stated position, and is implementing compulsory linkage instead. Nowhere in the explanatory information about the card does it explain what to do if you wish to obtain the entitlement without applying for the card. This is what is displayed prominently on the front cover of the main explanatory leaflet:

“From 1st April 2006 anyone aged 60 and over, and eligible disabled people, are entitled to free bus travel anywhere in Scotland provided they have applied for, and received, the new National Entitlement Card.”

Thus, while our elected political representatives were being led to believe that we have a benign, voluntary Entitlement Card, the Scottish Executive was forcing people to accept it - or else forfeit their entitlements.

3.7 The citizen’s account

As already indicated, the Scottish Executive has introduced not only national identity cards, but also unique person numbering and an associated national population database. It is no surprise, therefore, that these highly controversial features of the scheme have not been comprehensively described in the application documentation. Instead, they are touched on in one brief paragraph, tucked away in the small print on the back page of the application form. But what is perhaps even more shocking is that within this paragraph there is no actual reference to the national population database as such. Instead the Orwellian term ‘citizen’s account’ is suddenly dragged in. This is what it says:

“This (personal reference number) will allow us to create your own personal record (a ‘citizen’s account’), and you can then be provided with joined up public services.”

Apart from the term ‘entitlement card’, the introduction of ‘the citizen’s account’ represents the most cynical use of Orwellian terminology in the entire application. For the emphasis on ‘citizen’ suggests that ‘your own personal record’ will be something that is essentially private to you and will perhaps be the kind of thing that might live securely in the bottom lockable drawer of your desk at home. The reality is the complete opposite. Firstly, your citizen’s account will not belong to you, it will be a computer dossier held in a vast state database. What is more it will be available for use by thousands of civil servants to enable them to gain immediate access to all kinds of personal records which relate to you. What is more, the ‘joined up’ nature of this design will inevitably lend itself to widescale security breaches, unwarranted invasion of your confidentiality and intrusive surveillance by an increasingly centralised and powerful state bureaucracy.

4 Function creep and the Ann Widdecombe school of identity management

Softly, softly, catchee monkey.

West African saying

In the previous section we examined a number of strands of the Scottish Executive's 'web of deception' concerning its introduction of identity cards. In this section we turn to what might be called its underlying developmental psychology/philosophy. This is centred around what is commonly referred to as 'function creep' - or alternatively 'mission creep'.

Function creep can be defined as the process by which a procedure or system seemingly designed for one specific purpose can end up serving many other entirely different purposes. At one extreme function creep can be accidental and benign; at the other it can be deliberate and malign. In its malign form it can, for example, be exploited by an unscrupulous government to introduce systems which nobody wants by using a gradual stepwise strategy so that people are progressively and unknowingly conditioned into accepting it.

I recall hearing Conservative MP Ann Widdecombe on a BBC 'Any Questions' programme recommending just such an approach to achieve the successful introduction of identity cards. Berating New Labour's UK Identity Card project, she said that the scheme was much too elaborate, with fingerprinting, the use of databases, implicit compulsory registration and the imposition of a charge. Such an approach, she said, would serve only to frighten people, and she has undoubtedly been proved correct on that score.

The alternative approach, as proposed by Widdecombe, would be much gentler and more gradual, the chief requirement being not to alarm people in any way. And so she recommended starting with a very simple registration procedure and a simple card. With regard to biometrics there would just be a passport-type photograph, and so no fingerprinting. The scheme would be entirely voluntary, and there would be nothing to pay up front for the card.

Once the card had been accepted by the majority, function creep could then be introduced as necessary to turn the card into whatever the government would want it to be. For example, the card's functions could be progressively increased, making people more and more dependent on it. The technology could also be further developed over a period of time, by introducing unique person numbering, database linkage mechanisms and additional biometrics. At a later stage the scheme could be made compulsory, and at an appropriate final stage it could then be made compulsory to carry it at all times. A few individuals would be likely to raise objections about particular steps being taken, but because the approach is so very gradual the majority would tend to go along with it and might not even be aware of some of the more subtle changes taking place.

It is fairly clear that the Scottish Executive, with its hidden agenda, has fully signed up to the Widdecombe approach and to function creep from the very start. Indeed I am sure that she would greatly admire the Executive's adoption of harmless-sounding terms like 'entitlement card' and 'citizen's account'. Moreover, she would no doubt regard the initial rolling out of the ID card as essentially just a new type of free bus pass as a brilliant master stroke!

Nevertheless, such an approach represents a most insidious and duplicitous psychology. But it is clear that this is precisely how the Scottish Entitlement Card has been introduced. It has been rolled out in an apparently friendly, benign voluntary way in order to achieve acceptance, with future function creep waiting in the wings to take us where most would obviously not want us to go.

The most potent image of the deadly power of function creep involves two frogs and a pan of boiling water. If you take the first frog, and plunge it into boiling water it will reputedly jump out, and so save its life. But if you take the second frog, place it in a pan of cold water, and then heat up

the pan very very slowly, something entirely different happens. The frog, unaware of the slight temperature change taking place, is not sufficiently alarmed to jump out and save it's life. Eventually it dies. The Scots have been immersed in their pan of cold water, and the heat has been switched on ...

5 The application process - a case study

During the past year I have developed a vital interest in the progress of the Scottish Entitlement Card initiative, primarily because I am over sixty years of age myself and therefore qualify for the free bus travel entitlement. I am therefore in a position to present a brief personal case study of my experiences and findings to date. The major steps in the process have been as follows:

5.1 Applying for the card

I completed my application form, and submitted it on 3 February 2006 at my local library. Not wishing my data to be shared between government departments I selected option (b) in Part 3 of the form.

5.2 Receipt of the card

In due course I received the card. Two things worried me about it. Firstly, it was identical in format to cards being issued to those who had selected option (a) in Part 3 of the form. I had hoped that it would be labelled distinctively as a limited 'travel pass' only, but it appeared that I had been issued with the full multi-purpose Entitlement Card. My initial worry was confirmed when I read the explanatory leaflet which accompanied the card. It said quite plainly: "In time the Entitlement Card will include your CHI number which is your unique number for the NHS in Scotland."

It was quite clear that, despite my selection of the opt-out I had been issued with what I realised was a full multi-purpose ID card. I immediately came to two conclusions. Firstly, since I have always been resolutely opposed to compulsory ID cards and have vowed never to accept one, I could not on principle make use of this card. And therefore after my old bus pass had expired (at the end of June), I reverted to paying cash for all of my bus journeys. Secondly, convinced that I had a statutory entitlement to free bus travel, but had been falsely denied the travel-only card that I had opted for, I was determined to claim my rights.

5.3 Data subject access request

The fact that the opt-out had not apparently been honoured convinced me that I was probably going to have my data shared and that it was likely, therefore, that I had already been allocated a citizen's account, i.e. a database dossier. I was aware that under Data Protection legislation I could submit a data subject access request to Edinburgh City Council to find out whether this was indeed the case. This process incurred a massive delay of almost three months. And at the end of it all I was informed in a letter dated 14 July only that "As yet no Citizens Accounts have been created", i.e. the Executive had not yet got around to building its large national database. It was also stated that in the information held about me it was recorded that I had selected option (b), and so "no Citizen's Account will be created for you." Given my other findings, I had little confidence that this would indeed turn out to be the case in practice.

5.4 Legal advice

I decided to obtain appropriate legal advice about my human rights. In due course I therefore contacted an appropriate lawyer, and had meetings at the beginning of October 2006 and at the end of February 2007.

5.5 Taking action

On 3 October 2006 I wrote to the Head of Transport at the Edinburgh City Council. I enclosed my Entitlement Card, requesting that it should be destroyed, and I asked for any associated database or registration records to be erased. I also requested that I should be issued with an alternative suitable form of single-purpose travel pass or voucher equivalent. I made it clear that according to statements made in the Scottish Parliament I had a full statutory entitlement to free bus travel, whether or not I accepted an Entitlement Card.

The Head of Transport stated that the Council's role was limited only to administrative functions relating to applications for cards, and that the matter would need to be referred to two Scottish Executive agencies: Transport Scotland and the Improvement Service.

5.6 The Improvement Service

I subsequently corresponded with the two agencies, but it was primarily the Improvement Service which had the main responsibility for co-ordinating the delivery of the National Entitlement Card and the free travel scheme and therefore which needed to address the issues which I had been raising. In my letter of 21 November to Mr Jim Kinney of the Improvement Service my arguments had essentially boiled down to three primary claims that I was making, viz:

1. There is no semantic difference between an entitlement card and an ID card, and so the Entitlement Card is in reality an identity card.
2. There is no linkage between a citizen's right to services and the need to have an Entitlement Card. This had always been the stated Scottish Parliament policy.
3. The card as issued comes with no set of legally-binding 'Terms and Conditions'. Assurances from civil servants are no substitute and can provide no adequate protection from function creep and arbitrary changes to the functions of cards and the long-term significance of any supposed data sharing opt-out.

5.7 Data Sharing and Standards Division, Scottish Executive

In response to my letter of 21 November Mr Kinney informed me that because the points I was raising related primarily to Scottish Executive policy, it would be necessary for the Scottish Executive to respond to me directly. I was told that I would be "hearing from them shortly". Five weeks later I had received no response, and so I enquired again with the Improvement Service. This was their response on 4 January 2007:

"Your query was passed onto the Public Service Reform and Efficiency Division at the Scottish Executive. We have contacted them this morning and they have assured us that a response will be sent to you very shortly."

After a further delay of three weeks, I received a brief response (dated 24 January) from Mr Stuart MacDonald, the Director of the Data Sharing and Standards Division. In three short paragraphs he did not provide the promised response to my letter of 21 November and did not contest any of the three primary claims that I had made. I therefore promptly replied, requesting a proper response.

On 12 February I received a reply from Mr Murray McVicar, Head of Policy Branch. He had been asked to reply since, as he informed me, Stuart MacDonald had now left the Executive. But once again I was given no proper response to the three specific issues which I had originally raised in my letter of 21 November. On 22 February I replied expressing disappointment that, despite waiting three months, I had still not been provided with the promised response. I concluded by saying that if this was not forthcoming by 12 March I would "feel it necessary to progress these matters elsewhere." On 12 March I received a further response from Mr McVicar, but once again he

carefully avoided addressing my specific questions.

On 18 March I wrote my final letter to Mr McVicar. For four months my letters to the Executive had been subjected to delay, denial and obfuscation. I concluded that the correspondence had run its course and that I must now seek redress elsewhere. Meanwhile, despite the fact that I have a full statutory entitlement to free bus travel, I am still being denied a travel card. As a result I am significantly inconvenienced and already more than £400 out of pocket.

6 Conclusion

War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength

Nineteen Eighty-Four, George Orwell

Few people may be aware that the first draft of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four was written here in Scotland, on the Isle of Jura. Now 61 years later it is intriguing to imagine what Orwell might have made of the Scottish National Entitlement Card project. Curiously, in the novel there is not a single reference to identity cards, nor because it was written in pre-computer days is there any reference to vast intrusive state databases. The nearest to ID is the allocation to Winston Smith of his unique number: '6079 Smith W'.

On the contrary, the central theme running through Nineteen Eighty-Four is the focus on the authoritarian Big Brother society and government's recourse to systematic state dishonesty, employing the techniques of doublespeak (these days referred to as 'spin') and doublethink. The present paper therefore to some extent echoes the Orwell emphasis, with attention focused primarily on the systematic dishonesty exhibited by government, rather than the identity card issue itself. This also has a resonance with scandals such as Watergate, where the political damage arose primarily because of the cover-up, rather than the original crime of the break-in and burglary.

What is without doubt is that a million elderly and disabled people in Scotland were during 2006 shamefully misled and abused over ID cards by their own devolved Labour government in Edinburgh. That such a wholesale deception must have been sanctioned and carried forward with the active collaboration of many senior politicians and civil servants, is a dreadful symptom of a deep dysfunction at the heart of our still young Scottish Parliament. If such a shocking misdemeanour is not curtailed and those responsible for it brought properly to account it will only serve to indicate that Nineteen Eighty-Four is already alive and thriving here in Scotland.

Notes

1. This is the website of NO2ID, the non-partisan national campaign against ID cards and the database state.
2. Information about the Labour government's plans for transformational government can be found at: www.cio.gov.uk/transformational_government/.
3. A warning about the 'honeypot effect' was sounded by Jerry Fishenden, chief UK national technology officer for Microsoft, and was quoted in the article 'ID cards will lead to 'massive fraud'', Gerri Peev, The Scotsman, 18 October 2005.
4. Scottish Parliament motion, S2M-2463 Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green): Identity Cards, 24

February 2005. MSPs voted 52-47 in favour of the motion, with 15 abstentions.

5. The term ITSO was originally derived from 'Integrated Transport Smartcards Organisation'. The corresponding symbol indicates that the card is an 'interoperable smartcard', designed in accordance with the ITSO specification. The extensive ITSO website (www.itso.org.uk) makes no claims as to whether its interoperable smartcards, otherwise referred to as 'multi-purpose citizen cards', could under any circumstances ever be regarded as identity cards. Indeed, curiously as far as this otherwise comprehensive website is concerned, the term 'identity card' has apparently been completely expunged from the English language! From this one can only conclude that the entire ITSO initiative has been cynically used to provide a 'Trojan Horse' rebranding of identity cards for the twenty-first century.
6. This name change was explained by Martin Linton (Battersea) (Lab), Hansard Debates, 20 December 2004, Column 1987 (pt 30).
7. The Politics Show, BBC1, 15 April 2007.
8. See, for example, '11,000 OAPs risk losing out on free travel', Edinburgh Evening News, 22 May 2006.
9. The statistics supplied by Transport Scotland as of 1 February 2007 were as follows:

total applications	1030763
total cards in use	978815 *
option a	595568
option b	359049
neither	68309
both	7837

* because of duplicate applications due to lost, stolen or damaged cards
10. Scottish Parliament questions and answers, S2W-19895 Patrick Harvie (Glasgow) (Green) (Date Lodged 18 October 2005). Answered by Mr Tom McCabe on 10 November 2005.

The author

Dr Welford, recently retired, worked in the information technology field for most of his employment. After working initially with International Computers Limited, many of his later projects were intensively involved with the handling of demographic data. For five years at the University of Edinburgh he was co-director with Professor Michael Anderson of the ESRC-funded 1851 Census National Sample Project. Also at Edinburgh he was the chief systems designer on the LAMSAC SASPAC Project, which enabled more than 150 local and national government computer installations to make effective use of the 1981 Population Census Small Area Statistics data for Great Britain. The subject of his Open University doctoral thesis was 'Nominal record linkage: the development of computer strategies to achieve the family-based record linkage of nineteenth century demographic data'. This makes him eminently qualified to discuss the technical issues concerning identity management, data linkage and the organisation of genealogical and population databases. Since November 2005 Dr Welford has been the Edinburgh local coordinator for the NO2ID campaigning group.

28 December 2007