

CASNIC

Campaign to STOP the National Identity Card

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Writing to the National Press

If we inundate the National Press with anti-ID Card letters, they will print a few and might even do a feature on the subject. Since they want to sell papers, they will be keen to reflect the majority of reader's views.

Writing a 'Letter To The Editor' could be the subject of an entire book – it is quite an art to get your letter published. Here are a few tips to be going on with:

TIP #1: Keep it short and to the point.

Avoid waffling at all costs!

This is the single biggest mistake people make when writing to their newspaper (or MP). They waffle-on for page after page of green biro on lined notepaper – the subject sprawls to cover 'everything which is wrong with the world'.

Here is a humorous (but not SO far from the truth) example:

Dear Sir

I wish to complain in the strongest possible terms about the introduction of Identity Cards into the UK. Surely we didn't fight two world wars to have this happen to us? It's the same with graffiti and vandalism – what the hell is happening to this country? Immigration is another case in point – and the trains don't run on time any more, which they always used to (although the food is, admittedly a lot better, fair play to them). It's time someone cleaned up this sewer – for such, I'm afraid, Britain has become.

PS I waited TWO HOURS for a bus yesterday – that's how bad things have got.

TIP #2: Read TIP #1 again!

Shorter letters have a VERY much higher chance of getting printed than longer ones because:

1. The editor can find a space to squeeze it in to.
2. They want as many letters as possible.
3. Shorter letters are read 10x more often than long ones.

TIP #3: Make the journalists' life easy.

Don't make them have to work hard to edit your letter down to something they can use. Give them a polished piece of work which they can use with few, if any, changes.

TIP #4: Stick to just one point only.

There are ten or more good arguments against ID cards. You must pick just one, and no more, to make your point. You are not trying to write an essay which covers all the bases. **Just one, short, sharp punch is what you are after.**

TIP #5: Keep it *topical* if possible.

Something is always hot, right now. Next week it will be gone. Always try to link your ID card tirade with some current hot news item (see examples below).

TIP #6: Don't Rave!

It makes you seem unbalanced and the reader will discount your view.

Sir,

I am incensed and furious at this idiot Blunkett and his asinine proposals on ID cards. Surely this man should be locked away as he must be insane? And that spineless poodle Blair can join him. We should all join together and overthrow this sordid government by violence and revolution if necessary.

Yours

TIP #6: Always give your name and address.

Papers simply will not publish your letter if you send it anonymously. You can ask for it to be withheld if you want, but you must supply it.

TIP #7: Bring in personal experience if relevant.

If you are an ex-prison warden, air force pilot, policeman, security official etc. it is powerful to bring relevant experience to your letter as it adds credibility.

Dear Sir

As a security officer for a major High Street retailer....

As an ex-policeman, I want to assure you that we rarely had trouble identifying criminals, just catching them. This makes nonsense of David Blunkett's....

When I was in charge of Card Fraud for a major Credit Card Company...

I work in the Social Security office and I can assure you we get very little identity fraud. Most fraud is people under-stating their circumstances. Why, then is the government proposing....

As a teacher I am appalled at the prospect of fingerprinting our young people in preparation for a National Identity Card. What sort of world do we want these children to inherit?

Here are some example letters to the editor:

Sir,

I see that the Westminster Bomber is none other than a home-grown boy from Essex who attended Eaton (Guardian Sat 9th January 2005). Can someone explain to me how a compulsory National Identity Card would have prevented *that* act of terrorism?

Yours

Sir,

I was interested to read that Social Security Identity fraud is the smallest section of benefit fraud (the largest by far being under-statement of means) and totals a meagre 0.1% of the Social Security budget. (The Times, Feb 19th 2005) Can someone please explain to me why we are contemplating spending £3 BILLION pounds to issue ID cards to all citizens and create a massive government citizen database?

Yours

[The figures in the above letter were invented, so please do not quote them in your own letters.]

Sir

I was intrigued, but sadly not surprised at your lead article on corruption and fraud at the Passport Office (Independent, July 2005). Doubtless we can look forward to a similar level of incompetence when they issue everyone with a National Identity Card. I have heard estimates that the going rate for fake ID will be around £500 a time. As ever, terrorists and criminals will laugh at the law and ordinary law-abiding citizens will have yet more of their freedom and privacy curtailed. I have yet to hear a satisfactory explanation from the government about exactly how a compulsory National Identity Card, with its associated Citizen Monitoring Database will have a significant impact on crime or terrorism. Presumably, rapists, muggers, murderers and thieves will join all terrorists in leaving these shores forthwith because the little bit of plastic which they all dutifully carry will make their evil work impossible. Or did I miss something?

Yours

Sir,

I see there are calls to fingerprint every person in the United Kingdom as part of the government's ID Card fiasco. I always thought that fingerprints were for suspected criminals – or are we all now suspects, guilty until proven innocent? Who, exactly, gave this government permission to start a file on each one of us and issue us with a 'Permission To Live' – for such will the Identity Card swiftly become.

Yours

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