

## Letter to the Editor (re: ID cards)

One of the reasons why I prefer to live in Britain rather than my home country Germany is the greater freedom I (still) sense here. I can walk the streets, without having to feel guilty or nervous if I don't carry my passport or any other piece of identifying paper or plastic. In contrast, it is perfectly possible in Germany to get temporarily arrested and fined for not carrying an ID and police don't need to give any reason for demanding the ID to be shown. What bothers me most about compulsory ID cards is the spirit of mistrust on which they are based and which they reinforce. At the moment, you would normally assume that a person is telling the truth when you ask them who they are. Compulsory ID cards work from the assumption that they won't tell you the truth, unless they can prove it. Am I really part of a small minority if I think of this as a personal insult by this government?

Compulsory ID cards are symptomatic for this society's ever increasing obsession with security that is spiralling into a collective paranoia. They may not make a big difference in one's wallet, but they help to infect us by this paranoia, and if this happens, we will lose the ability to live adventurously. Moreover, ID cards will almost certainly be (mis)used by the state to pester political protestors, street artists, travellers, homeless people, punks, etc. etc. The only people who really don't have to fear anything from the introduction of compulsory ID cards are terrorists and other hard-core criminals. It just adds a little nuisance to their task-lists.

**Klaus Huber** (whose German ID card expired in 2001)