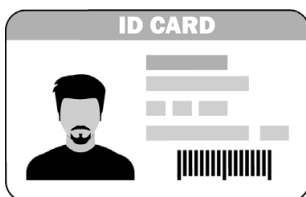


Letters: The danger of taking liberties with ID cards



Letter 1

Sir, Matthew Parris (“I was wrong about ID cards – we need them”, Nov 12) should have the courage of his original convictions. They remain a solution in search of a problem. There is much handwaving about the “amenity” that would be offered by such a scheme. In 20 years of serious interest in the subject I have seen no end of muddled thinking, often tied to an idealistic view of government as infallible and benevolent, or an inability to distinguish the various authentication functions we need in life from an authoritarian “name, rank and number”. It is odd that someone as pragmatic and liberal as Parris is willing to throw away a free society on the basis of a vague change of mood.

Guy Herbert

**General secretary, NO2ID,
London W1**

Letter 2

Sir, Matthew Parris may have recanted about ID cards but as one who voted against their introduction in the House of Lords a dozen years ago I have yet to be convinced. They suffer from three fundamental challenges. First, will it be a legal requirement to carry the card at all times? The suggestion that one should be able to produce it later at a police station gives a free pass to the very people we are seeking to identify, who will disappear immediately. Second, what will be the grounds for being asked to produce the card and who may request it? The controversy surrounding stop-and-search powers shows what a complex question this is. Third, who assesses the penalty and how is it collected? These questions must be answered in a way that 13. Otherwise we are going to see the courts full of 20-year-olds who forgot to take their card to the pub, members of minority communities who feel unduly picked upon and our police force under yet more strain.

**Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts
House of Lords**

Letter 3

Sir, Matthew Parris is at last seeing the sense of the last Labour government's attempt to introduce identity cards. But I must quibble with him when he says a smartphone app is a way forward. At our church we host hundreds of rough sleepers for lunch. They also take the opportunity to charge their phones. In between visits they have no power and no connection. A system dependent on access to electricity 14.

David Hallam

Local preacher, City Road Methodist Church, Birmingham

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