

PREP

To the Editor:

The director of the U.S. Passport Office, Frances Knight, is quoted as advocating all U.S. citizens be required to carry national identity cards. She avers that "the U.S. government owes every American citizen a true national identity . . ."

It is doubtful that such a blessing is high on the list of what most citizens believe their government owes them, but it is certainly consistent with the political philosophy of the administration from which she is a holdover.

Such documents—in effect, real or latent internal passports — are the *sine qua non* of travel in the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries, are used in certain other European countries not noted for concern with civil liberties, and are quite common in Latin America.

In Peru one cannot obtain inter-city transportation without presenting the information contained thereon; in Bolivia upon registering at a hotel this data is immediately communicated to the police; in Cuba, where the documents have recently been instituted, they have been found to be a boon to the secret police.

The identity card at a minimum violates the tenets of personal privacy. At a maximum it is a tool of political intelligence to be used for domestic suppression.

The only thing that can be said for the introduction of the cards is that they might save taxpayer dollars by reducing the cost of investigating the private lives of citizens by the CIA or other government agency.

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