

Ihre Papiere, bitte!

The later stages of the ID Card Bill

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The later stages of the Identity Cards Bill, held on 10 February 2005, witnessed three modest Labour rebellions along with two fairly large Conservative backbench revolts. This short briefing paper describes the rebellions and identifies the rebels.

The debate provided an opportunity for plenty of Conservative and Labour MPs to express their grave reservations about the Bill. On the Tory backbenches, William Cash dubbed the Bill 'a serious invasion of the civil liberties of the people of this country'. Richard Shepherd was extremely sceptical about the ability of the technology to deliver a workable system, and felt that ethnic minority communities would be asked disproportionately to produce the card on demand. John Bercow argued that the Bill involved 'a fundamental change in the relationship between the citizen and the state, to the disadvantage of the citizen'. Edward Leigh claimed that one reason why ID cards were abolished in 1951 was that people remembered the cry in wartime Europe, "Ihre Papiere, bitte!" He said: 'I do not want to live in a 'Your papers, please' society.

On the Labour backbenches, Neil Gerrard described the Bill as 'fundamentally objectionable', believing that ID cards would become compulsory: 'We are going down a very dangerous road'. David Winnick, who had written a minority report for the Home Affairs Committee and had voted against the Bill at Second Reading, remained 'uneasy about the unnecessary infringement of civil liberties'. He did not believe that ID cards would be an effective tool against international terrorism. Mark Fisher was equally unconvinced: 'The more I have heard today and the more I study the Bill, the more my reservations, far from being resolved, have been aggravated'.

The rebellions

In the largest Conservative rebellion since Iraq (and the largest under Michael Howard's leadership), fourteen Tory backbenchers (along with five Labour rebels) supported a Liberal Democrat amendment that would have broken the link between applications for passports and ID cards. Three of the Tories – Paul Goodman, David Lidington and Ann Widdecombe - were voting against their party line for the first time since 2001.

Nineteen Labour backbenchers voted against the Bill's Third Reading (the same number as had voted against Second Reading), while eleven Conservatives defied their frontbench's advice to abstain by voting in the no lobby. Meanwhile, Ann Widdecombe was the only Conservative MP to defy the frontbench advice to vote in the aye lobby.

Earlier in the evening, five Labour MPs had joined both the two main Opposition parties in opposing the Bill's programme motion. Thirty-seven MPs, including 15 Conservatives and five Labour, had supported Richard Shepherd's EDM 684 that criticised the restricted time allocated to the remaining stages of the Bill. It also

¹ University of Nottingham. This paper draws on research funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Further details are available from www.revolts.co.uk.

regretted that the Standing Committee on the Bill (which lasted for only 28 hours) had been prevented from discussing clauses such as those relating to the issue of ID cards, their renewal and the rules relating to the use of information without an individual's consent. During last night's debate, John Gummer, one of the signatories to Shepherd's EDM claimed: 'Those of us who are in favour of identity cards now find ourselves progressively wanting to vote against the Bill, simply because we have not had the time to discuss these issues, and our constituents deserve an answer to those questions'. Later, Gummer, a supporter of the Government on Second Reading, said he would be voting against the Government on Third Reading, not because of the proposals in the Bill, but because of 'the abuse of this House on an important constitutional matter'.

The rebels

Since Second Reading, a total of 21 Conservatives and 26 Labour MPs have defied their frontbench advice during the passage of the Identity Cards Bill. We list those MPs in Tables 1 and 2 (below), showing the issues on which they voted against their whips.

The three Labour revolts mean that Labour backbenchers have now defied the party line on 30 occasions in the fourth session (with rebellions seeing an average of 13 MPs). This already makes the session the second most rebellious final session of the post-war era.

Table 1. Labour ID card rebels

	Reasoned Amendment, 2nd Reading	2nd Reading	Programming motion 1	Programming motion 2	Passports	3rd Reading
Bennett, Andrew	X	X		X		X
Clapham, Michael	X	X				
Corbyn, Jeremy	X	X	X		X	X
Dalyell, Tam						X
Dunwoody, Gwyneth	X	X				X
Fisher, Mark			X	X		X
Gerrard, Neil	X	X			X	X
Gibson, Ian	X	X				X
Hoey, Kate	X	X				X
Hopkins, Kelvin	X	X				
Jackson, Glenda	X	X				X
Jones, Lynne				X	X	X
Lewis, Terry	X	X				
McDonnell, John	X	X	X		X	X
Mahon, Alice	X	X				
Marshall-Andrews, Bob	X	X	X			
Mitchell, Austin						X
Sedgemore, Brian						X
Short, Clare	X	X		X	X	X
Simpson, Alan						X
Skinner, Dennis	X	X				
Smith, Llew	X	X				
Taylor, David	A	X				X
Wareing, Bob	X	X				X
Winnick, David	X	X		X		X
Wood, Mike						X

Note: A indicates a double vote abstention

Table 2. Conservative ID card rebels

	Reasoned Amendment, 2nd Reading	2nd Reading	Money resolution	Passports	3rd Reading
Bellingham, Henry	X (pro-govt)				
Bercow, John	X	X		X	X
Browning, Angela	X	X			X
Cash, William	X	X		X	X
Curry, David	X	X			
Fallon, Michael					X
Field, Mark				X	
Gibb, Nick	X	X	X		X
Goodman, Paul				X	
Green, Damian	X	X			X
Gummer, John				X	X
Hogg, Douglas	X	X		X	X
Kirkbride, Julie				X	
Leigh, Edward	X	X		X	X
Lidington, David				X	
Lilley, Peter	X	X		X	X
Shepherd, Richard	X	X		X	X
Swire, Hugo				X	
Taylor, Teddy				X	
Tyrie, Andrew				X	
Widdecombe, Ann					X (pro-govt)