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Don't tell them your name, Pike! [1]

Written by **Tim Worstall** [2] | Monday 18 February 2008

Iain Martin points out the latest glories on offer [3]:

> *Daily, ministers unveil the latest interfering scheme to tackle a problem either real or imagined. All 14-year-olds are to have their exam results and personal records placed on an electronic database which will follow them through life. It will cut down on fraud, say officials, who neglect to ask if employers have been hit by an epidemic of employees pretending to have a B in GCSE Maths when they actually were awarded a C. So what do civil servants really want to do with all this information? In the Whitehall mind, more data means a better decision, so there must be a use to which it can be put. Officials will think of something.*

My own (resolutely non-paranoid as I am) view is that this is simply a way to get everyone enrolled into the National Database. There are those, like myself, who will simply refuse to carry the ID card, and will change citizenship rather than be entered into the Database. But we will all die off at some point and everyone who has ever been 14 will indeed be in the database and ready to be issued with their barcode tattoo, forehead for the use of.

Sir John Cowperthwaite had the right idea [4]:

> *Cowperthwaite took the lesson to heart, and while he was in charge, he strictly limited bureaucratic interference in the economy. He wouldn't even let bureaucrats keep figures on the rate of economic growth or the size of GDP. The Cubans won't let anyone get those figures, either. But Cowperthwaite forbade it for an opposite reason. He felt that these numbers were nobody's business.*

As Martin says, officials will think of something to do with the information and it will be misused by policy fools. Better to not let them collect it in the first place.

Something of a sadness that those bureaucrats with the right ideas, like Sir John, were only allowed to operate in colonial outposts rather than here at home.

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