

ID CARDS ARE HERE

Since November 2009 non-European Economic Area (EEA) citizens resident in the UK on study or marriage visas have been required to have ID cards. The cards display their photograph, name, date of birth, nationality, immigration status and an electronic chip with biometric details, which holds fingerprints and digital facial image. All this information will be indefinitely held on the UK Identity Service database.



Soon other 'foreigners' will be issued with ID cards. Once tested on migrants, airport workers will be forced to register. Next year the cards will be available 'voluntarily', though required to access student loans, before being paired with passports in 2011. The date cards are compulsory for everyone hasn't been named, though it has been repeatedly stated that this is the intention.



This is the thin end of the wedge. The government is upfront about its plans, and has repeatedly stressed they consider that "border control can no longer be a fixed line on a map". This first blow against everyone's liberty is part of a wider government plan to internalise borders within the UK so everyone can be numbered and monitored.



Immigration law already gives the Home Office powers it would like to exert over everybody. Under a cloud of anti-immigration hysteria the government is increasing its social control and attempting to usher in unprecedented powers of surveillance over the whole population.



Non-EEA 'students and spouses' in Wales and the West of England have to attend the Cardiff office of the UK Border Agency at 31-33 Newport Road for interrogation, photographing and fingerprinting. In targeting a largely voiceless group, with plenty to lose by not complying, the government is following a familiar path for repressive regimes throughout history. It is only through solidarity with the first people to be 'registered' that we can hope to oppose this scheme.

The Cardiff UK Border Agency office is also where people seeking asylum have to 'sign in' on a regular basis while their claims are being processed and where decisions are made about who gets detained, deported or in rarer cases granted leave to remain. If applications fail, it is from here that snatch squads leave to conduct dawn raids, taking families to a detention centre or deporting them into an uncertain future, often to countries the government knows are unsafe. A number of protests have been held outside these offices to draw attention to the activities that take place there, more are planned for the future.



No Borders South Wales is a collective of people who organise for freedom of movement for all, spread information, set up anti-deportation campaigns and take direct action against controls on migration. We work on a non-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian basis, using consensus decision making. We meet every thursday at 7pm in The Wyndham Centre, Wyndham Street, Cardiff, all welcome though discrimination isn't. For more information please visit noborderswales.org.uk or e-mail noborderswales@riseup.net