

Young Property

Solidarity Federation

Autumn 1998

Discipline and punish. The cycle of abuse continues. Young people are cheap property, or worse still, play objects for brutal games.

Before “Cheap Labour” was elected to power last year, Jack Straw, then Shadow Home Secretary, advocated a curfew for children. He planned to ban children from the streets after 9pm. The curfew plan was couched in terms of ‘empowering local communities’. It would have little effect on the children of the rich, but it would severely infringe the lives and liberties of working class children, who have only the street in which to play.

At present, the curfew plan is one plank on a raft of repressive measures which have originated from one of Cheap Labour’s many expensive think-tanks. Near the top of the Government’s wish-list, is the idea of a national identity card for young people.

Initially the scheme is voluntary, and carrying the card will be mandatory for young people wanting to prove they are legally old enough to purchase scratch cards, alcohol, cigarettes, solvents, and to hire videos. The Citizen’s Card, as it will be called, may not be compulsory, but it has all the trappings of any National Identity Card, including photo and hologram. It is the thin end of the wedge, and will lead to a National ID card for everyone, regardless of age. The government has chosen young people as an easy target, so that we will become used to the idea of young people being asked to prove their identity wherever they go. And when they are ‘old enough’, they will be ‘offered’ a New Deal (which one is not permitted to refuse), and be put to work on ‘market’ wages – because Cheap Labour don’t believe in a minimum wage for younger workers.

The Citizen Card Planning Group is currently negotiating with 16 Trade Associations, the National Lottery and Railtrack. In addition, there have been pledges of support from the Tobacco Manufacturers Association and the National Federation of Retail Newsagents. Businesses and industry have been asked for £330,000 to start the scheme up. And by the way, all card applicants will be asked to pay £5 and provide their own photos.

The Citizen Card and those corporations supporting it should be rejected and boycotted. On the latter, older people need to be prepared to help out with the boycott of cards. Why co-operate with a card which (a) is designed to assist in strengthening Government information networks, not merely prove age, and (b) will be expanded – so it will be YOU next? Unless, that is, the Citizen Card is deemed unenforceable. Don’t give it a chance, give young people a chance instead.

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