

ARE YOU IRISH ?

HAVE YOU HEARD OF

THE BRITISH NATIONALITY ACT ?



LAMBETH

READ ON AND FIND OUT WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU.....

WHO DOES IT AFFECT !

In 1981 the British Government passed an Act of Parliament which has an effect on every Commonwealth citizen or Irish citizen who settled in Britain before 1st January 1973.

If you settled in Britain after that date you will not be affected and if you were born here you will also not be affected.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN ?

At present you have the right to register as a British Citizen (on form 'R') if you settled in Britain prior to 1st January 1973 and if you have continued to live here since that date.

The Home Office have recently hinted that they will adopt a reasonable approach to the length of time you have been in this country and will ignore brief holidays abroad (or even absences of up to one year unless the absence was to make a home in another country).

DO I HAVE TO REGISTER ?

No. Not unless you wish to do so.

SO WHAT ADVANTAGE IS IT TO ME ?

At present it is probably of more relevance to Commonwealth citizens as Irish citizens have many rights under EEC law which are not enjoyed by others (for example freedom of movement rights).

But, if you do register, you confirm your right to live in Britain for the rest of your life. However long you stay away from this island you will have the right to return and live here.

You also confirm your right to vote, hold public office and work for the British Government. These rights are currently held by Commonwealth and Irish citizens but, prior to the British Nationality Act 1981, the White Paper on British Nationality hinted that this might not remain the same in the future. While it cannot be said with any certainty that a future Government would alter this position it equally cannot be said that these rights will continue indefinitely.

By registering you also ensure freedom from deportation on the grounds of nationality.

And you gain the right to a British passport. (But you have to apply separately for this).

ARE THERE ANY DISADVANTAGES ?

Yes. If you decide to register, it will cost you £60. And the Home Office will not proceed with an application unless the fee is enclosed. If you are on Supplementary Benefit or low income you cannot get help from the DHSS to pay this £60 though it may be possible to obtain help from charities.

If you fail to register before 31 December 1987 you may only obtain British citizenship at the discretion of the Secretary of State (it will not be an automatic right) and the fee will be £170.

SO SHOULD I REGISTER ?

That is obviously a question that only you can answer.

Ireland allows dual nationality so that, if you do register, it will not affect your status as an Irish citizen. However, many Irish people may find it difficult to come to terms with applying for British citizenship. But it is worth bearing in mind that the situation in Britain with regard to citizenship is likely to change over the next decade and Irish people are likely to be affected by such changes. And it is also worth bearing in mind that in recent years there were moves to disenfranchise Irish people resident in Britain. There is little doubt that this Government is looking to reduce the numbers of people eligible for benefits in Britain (whether welfare rights, health service, employment etc) and this Act should be viewed in that context. At present Irish people enjoy rights which are in addition to their rights as EEC nationals. It is always possible that this may change in the future.

At the end of the day you must decide whether you feel more secure by registering as British or whether you feel that such action would go against your history, culture and politics as an Irish person.



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