

Pentrehafod School, Swansea Contribution for the Civil Rights Around the World project by Hadley Middle School, Wichita, USA

**British Citizens:**

**British Citizenship** British citizenship is one of the six different forms of British nationality. Some of these were defined in the British Nationality Act 1981, which came into force on 1st January 1983. The laws that define how citizenship can be obtained changed on that date.

Of these, only British citizens have an automatic right to live and work in the United Kingdom and to apply for a British passport. Those with other forms of British nationality must obtain permission to live and work here. They may be entitled to register as British citizens in certain circumstances.

You may already be a British citizen or be able to apply for citizenship or another form of British nationality:-

- by descent; or
- other than by descent.

This is a legal difference that affects whether or not a person can pass on citizenship to his/her children.

A person is a British citizen otherwise than by descent if he/she was:

- born in the United Kingdom after 1 January 1983 and one or both of his/her parents are British citizens, or were settled in the United Kingdom at the time of the birth; or
- adopted in the United Kingdom and one or both parents are British citizens

A citizen otherwise than by descent can pass on British citizenship automatically to his/her children born outside the United Kingdom. But any children born outside the United Kingdom will be British citizens by descent, and cannot normally pass their citizenship to their own children

born abroad. However, they can register their children as British citizens in certain circumstances.

A British citizen by descent cannot become a British citizen otherwise than by descent.

The position may be different for people born before 1 January 1983. In most cases, if you have a passport issued before 1983 which describes you as a British subject (or Commonwealth citizen) citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies with right of abode in the United Kingdom, you will automatically be a British citizen.

### **British Civil Rights:**

The convention guarantees the following rights and freedoms:

- right to life
- freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
- freedom from slavery and forced or compulsory labour
- right to liberty and security of person (subject to a derogation applicable to Northern Ireland)
- right to a fair and public trial within a reasonable time
- freedom from retrospective criminal law and no punishment without law
- right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion
- freedom of expression
- freedom of assembly and association
- right to marry and found a family
- prohibition of discrimination in the enjoyment of the Convention rights
- right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions and protection of property
- right to education (subject to a UK reservation)
- right to free elections
- right not to be subjected to the death penalty

## Parliament of the UK

Constitutions are designed to set out the rules and regulations within which governments operate.

They establish the composition, powers and functions of the institutions of the state, regulate the relations between these institutions, and enshrine the legal rights and duties of the citizenry.

## The Electoral System in the UK

In the U.K. you only get one vote for your MP every four or five years, but even then, your choice is limited because each party only offers you one of its candidates.

Thanks to the oddities of our First-Past-the-Post system, approximately two-thirds of the seats are 'safe' because one party has a huge majority and always wins, so your vote is unlikely to make a real difference. This leaves many areas of the country as 'electoral deserts' where a party has no hope of winning a seat despite having lots of supporters.

Perhaps it is no wonder that fewer and fewer people are bothering to vote, or even to register. Frustrating, isn't it? But there is a better way...

### Background

- First-Past-the-Post is not the only voting system. In fact, different systems were used to elect MPs right up until 1950. In recent years we have seen different, often fairer, voting systems being used for elections to the Scottish Parliament, National Assembly for Wales, London Assembly, European Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly.
- The way in which we vote is important and will determine the style of government and the service that voters can expect from their representatives.

### Constituencies

- First-Past-the-Post relies on single member constituencies. Each of the 646 MPs in the UK is the sole representative for his or her

area. Some systems use larger constituencies, each electing more than one MP.

- With this type of system, there is likely to be more than one party with MPs in each area. Other systems do not have constituencies as we understand them, just large regions or even a single electoral area for the whole country.

### **Voter Choice**

- First-Past-the-Post allows voters only to place an X against a single candidate. Some voting systems allow voters to rank candidates 1,2,3 and so on. This is known as preference voting. It gives voters more choice and means there is more chance that their vote will count. If their first preference vote does not count, then their vote is transferred to their second choice or even further until it counts.
- A simple form of preference voting, using single member constituencies, is called the Alternative Vote (AV). AV gives voters more choice than First-Past-the-Post but does not necessarily produce a result, which is more proportional overall.
- First-Past-the-Post means that each party only has one candidate, chosen by that party rather than by the electorate. so a person who wants to vote for their favourite party has no choice of candidate.

### **Proportionality**

- Because First-Past-the-Post is a 'winner takes all' type of voting system, it often leads to very disproportionate results. A party can get a much larger or smaller share of the seats than it gets share of the votes. Many people think that this is wrong and that the number of seats each party gets should be roughly the same as its share of the votes.

## **Polling Day**

A national holiday is taken on the day of the poll. Throughout each constituency disused buildings (usually schools and libraries) are taken over by the army and made ready for voting. Printed on each polling card is a secret code number, which the voter must read to the invigilator (usually an old woman), who says "what love?" before writing it in the official book. After the count the code number may be used to match the polling card with the name and address of the voter, assuring complete confidentiality. When the votes are counted, the party with the highest number of MPs wins, and they will be officially asked by the Queen to form the next government. By its unique, tried-and-tested system of constituency MPs, British democracy ensures that no small parties are allowed anywhere near the reigns of power.

## **The Welsh Assembly Government**

The Welsh Assembly Government is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Wales, including the economy, health, education, and local government.

The role of the Welsh Assembly Government is to exercise functions devolved to it in order to: make decisions on matters which affect people's daily lives; develop and implement policy; make subordinate legislation (eg regulations and statutory guidance) and propose Assembly Measures (Welsh laws).

The Welsh Assembly Government consists of:

- The First Minister
- The Welsh Ministers (as described in the Government of Wales Act 2006)
- The Counsel General
- The Deputy Welsh Ministers

The provisions of the Government of Wales Act 2006 allows up to 12 Welsh Ministers and Deputy Ministers. This means that the maximum size of the Welsh Assembly government will be 14, including the First Minister and Counsel General.

## **Cabinet Ministers**

The First Minister of Wales is the Rt. Hon. Rhodri Morgan AM and he has appointed 8 Welsh Ministers to serve in his Cabinet, which is the main decision making body of the Welsh Assembly Government.

## **The Counsel General**

Carwyn Jones AM is the Counsel General, the Chief Legal adviser to the Welsh Assembly Government. Carwyn is also the Leader of the House and attends Cabinet.

## **Deputy Ministers**

The First Minister has also appointed 4 Deputy Ministers.

## **The Ministerial Code**

In the performance of their duties, Ministers are expected to behave according to the highest standards of constitutional and personal conduct. In particular, they are expected to observe the Seven Principles of Public Life and the principles of Ministerial Conduct. The Ministerial Code issued by the First Minister , provides guidance to Ministers on how they should act and arrange their affairs in order to uphold these standards. It applies to all Ministers, Counsel General and Deputy Ministers.

## **Women's Human Rights**

The freedoms inherently possessed by women and girls of all ages, which may be institutionalized, ignored or suppressed by law, custom, and behavior in a particular society. These liberties are grouped together and differentiated from broader notions of human rights because they often differ from the freedoms inherently possessed by or recognized for men and boys, and because activism surrounding this issue claims an inherent historical and traditional bias against the exercise of rights by women.

Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right: to bodily integrity and autonomy; to vote (universal suffrage); to hold public office; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to own property; to education; to serve in the military; to enter into legal contracts; and to have marital, parental and religious rights.

Women and their supporters have campaigned and in some places continue to campaigned for the same rights as modern men.

### Women's Rights in the U.K

Throughout the 19th century British women reformers developed their own dialogue through many various reforming groups until, by 1903, they had formed into two distinct organisations; the democratic National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, and the militant Women's Social and Political Union. Leaders in the struggle were the peaceful Millicent Fawcett and radical Emmeline Pankhurst with her daughter Christabel. Their fight also proved slow and frustrating. In 1918 the British Parliament finally passed a bill allowing women over the age of 30 to vote. In 1928 the age limit was lowered to 21.