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## **Speech on Managed Migration and Earned Citizenship**

20 February 2008

Speech by the Prime Minister the Right Honourable Gordon Brown MP on managed migration and earned citizenship delivered at the Camden Centre, London, on Wednesday 20th February 2008.

### **Read the speech**

[check against delivery]

The vision of British citizenship that I believe in - and that I believe will make us even prouder of Britain - is founded on a unifying idea of rights matched with responsibilities.

Today I want to talk about those rights and responsibilities in detail.

And I want also to describe what that concept of citizenship means for managing migration: that for people coming to Britain, and wanting to become British, citizenship should not only be a matter of their choice but should depend upon actively entering into a contract through which, by virtue of responsibilities accepted, the right of citizenship is earned.

First, let me make it clear why citizenship matters so much in the modern world.

Citizenship is not an abstract concept, or just access to a passport. I believe it is - and must be seen as - founded on shared values that define the character of our country.

Indeed, building our secure and prosperous future as a nation will benefit from not just common values we share but a strong sense of national purpose. And for that to happen we need to be forthright - and yes confident - about what brings us together not only as inhabitants of these islands but as citizens of this society. Indeed there is a real danger that while other countries gain from having a clear definition of their destiny in a fast changing global economy, we may lose out if we prove slow to express and live up to the British values that can move us to act together.

So the surest foundation upon which we can advance socially, culturally and economically in this century is to be far more explicit about the ties - indeed the shared values - that make us more than a collection of people but a country.

This is not jingoism, but practical, rational and purposeful - and therefore, I would argue, an essentially British form of patriotism.

Patriotism is the sense that 'all-of-us' matters more than 'any-of-us'. It defines a nation not by race or ethnicity, but by seeing us all as part of a collective project from which we all gain and to which we all contribute. Society is - as the great thinkers have long told us - a contract, even a covenant, in which we recognise that our destinies are interlinked. For rights only exist where people recognise responsibilities; responsibilities only exist where people have a sense of shared fate; and shared fate only exists where there is a strong sense of collective belonging. So Britain is not just where we are but in an important sense part of who we are.

This is the context in which I will set out my proposals today.

And the idea of citizenship can be addressed more cogently here in Britain than elsewhere because for centuries Britain has been made up of many nations. As the first - and probably the most successful - multi-national state in the world, we have always had to find ways of bringing people into a United Kingdom.

Put it another way: geographically, Britain is a group of islands; historically, it is a set of ideas that have evolved over centuries: brought together uniquely across traditional boundaries and today united not by race or ethnicity but by distinctive values that have, over time, shaped the institutions of a multinational state.

I said at the Labour Party conference that I am proud to be British; that I believe in British values.

And it is my view that these values are founded first of all on the enduring British commitment to the ideas of:

liberty - the concept of freedom under the law which has to be renewed every generation, about which I spoke in the autumn;  
of civic duty;  
of fairness;  
and of internationalism - a Britain that sees the channel not as a moat that isolates us in narrow nationalism, but as a highway out to the world that for centuries has given our outward-looking nation an unsurpassed global reach.

But that these values are founded secondly on a vision of citizenship that entails both responsibilities and rights.

So for all citizens, I want us to emphasise - and, to some extent, codify - the rights they have:

to offer where necessary new protections for the freedoms of speech, assembly and religion - and for the right to protest and the right to information - ensuring that every policy is judged by the advance of liberty for the individual;  
and to be more explicit about other rights of citizenship too: the right to vote and to stand for election; the right to live in a thriving economy and to participate in it; the right to help if we are sick, homeless, unemployed, or in our old age.

But alongside these entitlements of citizenship, there are also duties.

I stand for a British way of life where we, the people, are protected from crime but in return we obey the law;

Where we, the people, expect and receive services but in return pay our fair share in taxes and have the obligation to work, and gain the skills for work, where we can;

Where, as a country, Britain supports families and communities but also expects families to take care of their own, and people to take care of their local environment and to treat one another with respect.

This is one of the reasons why it makes sense - as we have announced - to consider amending the Human Rights Act to create a new British Bill of Rights and Duties which emphasises not just what people are entitled to but what they are expected to do in return in order to make ours a society we all want to live in.

And this reciprocity of rights and responsibilities also shapes the new concept of 'earned citizenship' we are advancing today.

The fact is that we now face new circumstances in which these issues have to be confronted and resolved. In a world of unprecedented mobility, increasing numbers of people will live for at least some time outside their country of birth. And all countries are having to consider the best means to forge societies that harness the economic opportunities of globalisation and reflect both diversity and common identity.

Over many years, Britain's global economy has enriched us as a nation. Indeed, attracting skilled migrants to work in our businesses and students to study at our universities is essential to our continued economic success.

But as people are ever more mobile, it also becomes ever more important to develop a new approach to managed migration. This should be founded on an affirmation of Britishness in a covenant that has as its heart the rights and obligations of modern

citizenship. And it should set immigration within a clearer framework of social responsibility that makes sure migration benefits us as much socially and culturally as it does economically.

So the Government is proposing that as well as emphasising the rights and duties of citizenship for everyone living in Britain today, we also recognise the principle that for newcomers to Britain the prized asset of citizenship must be earned.

In this vision of British citizenship for the 21st century, newcomers will pass through three stages:

on entry, as temporary residents;  
then, if they wish to stay, in a new category of probationary citizens;  
and finally as full British citizens or - for those who can't or don't want to become citizens but who meet the test - permanent residents.

And in future the aspiring citizen should know and subscribe to a clear statement of British values, proceeding toward a citizenship explicitly founded not just on what they receive from our society but what they owe to it.

Over the last few months, the Nationality and Immigration Minister - Liam Byrne - has been round the country talking and listening to the British people about these issues.

Today, the Home Secretary - Jacqui Smith - is publishing a Green Paper setting out our proposals in more detail.

And I want to explain to you this afternoon how we will achieve our aims.

We will consult on this idea of earned citizenship with clear rights but also stronger obligations at each stage of the immigration system. And there will be a tougher test for citizenship.

Included in the responsibilities will be the expectation that newcomers - whether workers here under the points-based system or those applying to stay permanently - will normally be able to speak English.

We will consult on the proposal that those who have not made the commitment to be full citizens or permanent residents cannot expect the same rights - for example, to benefits or social housing - as those who have demonstrated their commitments and responsibilities and met the test for citizenship.

We will consult on a new fund to ensure that newcomers and probationary citizens are contributing to the services they are provided, and to relieve the impact on communities at a local level.

And alongside all these reforms we will continue to put in place tough measures to tackle illegal immigration and to protect our borders.

I believe this new approach is essential in a world of rising global migration: a world where millions of men and women born in one country now want to live in another, and have the resources to travel; where the United Nations estimates that at least 185 million people worldwide live outside their countries of birth, more than double the number three decades ago; and where migration across the globe is projected to grow even more in the years ahead.

To the benefit of our economy, Britain wants to attract the best, the most highly skilled of this new mobile generation; and for those who want to stay, Britain wants to help them on a path to integration and citizenship. That is what today's proposals are designed to achieve: to ensure that as with other aspects of globalisation, Britain is best-placed - has the clarity of purpose, the right rules and systems, and the right investment - to harness the economic opportunities of globalisation while managing the challenges and protecting against the risks.

At present, around 1 in 10 of the UK population is foreign-born compared to around

1 in 4 in Australia and Switzerland and around 1 in 8 in Sweden and Germany ----- and let me acknowledge today the many hard working men and women who have come to Britain in recent years and have made a huge contribution to our country and to our prosperity by adding flexibility to our labour market, helping make a success of our businesses, working hard and paying taxes, and in some cases by supporting our most essential public services including the NHS.

We must - and will - continue to ensure that we attract the skilled workers from overseas that our businesses need.

And we will at all times maintain our tradition of giving refuge to those fleeing persecution - and of tackling racism and discrimination.

But we must also set a policy that serves the British national interest --- that acknowledges that what we need economically, what strengthens our society and our communities, must come first.

So we must ensure that British citizenship is a set of obligations as well as a guarantee of rights. And that British citizenship is a prized asset to be aspired to and cherished.

So we will strengthen the standards we apply when people want to enter our country - and when they wish to stay.

And we will emphasise what binds us - showing that our tolerance and fairness are not to be taken advantage of - without diminishing the diversity we hold dear.

It is a fact that a generation ago, migrants tended to come here expecting to settle permanently or at least for decades.

Now the picture is more mixed - some want to remain, but others come to visit, or to study, or to work for a period and then return home.

But despite this I believe it is right to encourage - indeed expect - demonstrations of commitment from all ----- and greater demonstrations of commitment from those who want to stay here permanently.

Let me put it plainly: for those who do wish to make this their country, no one should acquire the rights of citizenship without also acquiring the responsibilities of citizenship.

We already ask people who want to settle in Britain, or to become citizens here, to show that they understand some key things about what it is to be British by passing a test called 'Knowledge of Life in the UK'. And we also demand a minimum standard of English.

But at the moment we do not make enough of a distinction between those who want to reside here temporarily and those who want to become full British citizens.

The main difference now is that to become a citizen, you must have lived in Britain for a certain period of time. The only additional rights you get - although they are important - are the right to vote and the right to hold a British passport.

I believe we must now do more - and demand more.

So what are the specific changes we propose?

At entry we are introducing from the end of this month a points based system, based on the Australian model.

This system will ensure that only those who possess the right skills, or can make the right contributions, will be able to come here to work and study. Over 80 different routes to the UK which have developed over the years in piecemeal fashion

will be replaced by a simple five tier system:

Tier One is for the most highly skilled, designed to attract the brightest and the best to Britain;  
Tier Two - which will replace the current work permit system - covers skilled workers who are needed to fill vacancies in the labour market;  
Tier Three is there in case there is a need for low-skilled labour - but we are currently not letting anyone into Britain through this route;  
Tier Four caters for international students who enrich our universities and colleges and carry out key research;  
and finally Tier Five is for short-stay workers such as visiting sports teams and orchestras.

Under the new system all employers, colleges and others who benefit from migration and wish to act as sponsors will need a licence under which they agree to fulfil certain duties like checking people really have the right to be here - strengthening our controls against abuse.

We will also make sure that this new points system fits with our principles on citizenship.

Up until now we have said we will require skilled workers to be able to speak English, but now we will work with employers to ensure other workers are normally able to speak English too. We will be sensible and listen to employers as we apply this test - for example, making special arrangements for intra-company transfers - but we will generally expect adults entering Britain to speak English and it will not be possible to become a probationary citizen without taking an English test.

In addition - as now - new arrivals will not be able to bring other relatives into Britain apart from their spouse and their children under 18.

Where the rules allow us to limit migration within the EU, we will also use them where appropriate --- as we have imposed restrictions on migrants from Romania and Bulgaria, in particular their access to our labour market. And we will make sure that where EU citizens do come to Britain they are exercising not an open-ended right but their treaty right which is a right to work --- we are able to remove EU citizens if they come here but are not employed after three months or are not studying or self-sufficient.

I believe that European Member States should work together to ensure EU migration works to the benefit of all and that EU migrants contribute fully to our society. The British Government will review access to benefits for EU migrants, and what more can be done to disincentivise and punish criminality - developing proposals to put to our EU partners later this year.

Taken together, these reforms will ensure that at the point of entry into Britain we are managing migration in Britain's interests.

The second stage will come when temporary residents have been in Britain for five years - or two years for dependents of British citizens - and want to stay longer.

Under our new proposals, they would have to apply to become probationary citizens and at that point would have to pass the same tests that currently apply for settlement --- evidence of continued economic contribution, of further progress in English, and knowledge of life in the UK.

If they fail the test, their right to stay would come to an end.

Those who pass would become probationary citizens - on the track to permanent citizenship or permanent residency.

But as we develop a stronger shared sense of rights and responsibilities, our proposal is that probationary citizens will not have the full rights which currently come with settlement. For that, they should wait until they become full citizens or permanent residents.

So we will consult on proposals that give probationary citizens access to some services only when they move to full citizenship or permanent residency -- including the right to post-18 education at the 'home rate', the right to permanent social housing tenancies, and the right to some social security benefits.

And, as with temporary residents, probationary citizens will not be able to bring anyone else with them to the UK other than their spouse and dependent children under 18.

Like all British citizens, both temporary and probationary citizens will be accountable for obeying the law. Serious crime will continue to be dealt with by deportation, but under our proposals lesser offences will now also count against any further progress towards citizenship - delaying or even ending the process.

At the same time, we will encourage probationary citizens to demonstrate their commitment to this country and their local area through volunteering and community service. We will consult on proposals including the possibility that people will be able to move more quickly towards citizenship if they have made a difference in their community.

We also propose in today's Green Paper that both temporary and probationary citizens be required to contribute to a new fund to help finance the transitional impact of migration on local public services.

The payments will be in addition to existing immigration fees, the additional finance we are already providing for public services, and the £50 million for community cohesion announced in the autumn. And it will be specifically aimed at making sure that temporary and probationary citizens are contributing to the services they are provided with and that public services can manage short-term changes in their population. We will consult on proposals that will mean small payments for workers who we know already contribute greatly to our economy; but larger contributions for dependent children and elderly relatives, who make a greater claim on public services.

Most fundamentally, unlike the current categories of settlement which are indefinite, probationary status will be just that - probationary.

If after a number of years in the 'probationary' category - a minimum of one year but a maximum of five, in other words between six and ten years in Britain altogether - people want to stay in this country, they will have to meet the test of full citizenship or permanent residency.

At that stage they will be tested again against the responsibilities they accepted on becoming probationary citizens:

- for those of working age, whether they have continued to make an economic contribution;
- for all, whether they have demonstrated an ability to speak English and knowledge of the UK and its traditions;
- whether they have lived by the law, and added to community life.

If their application is successful, they then acquire all the responsibilities but also the rights of full citizens - full access to public services, the full protection of the crown when travelling abroad, the right to vote, and rights to bring other dependent relatives into Britain in addition to their spouse and their children under 18.

If they meet the test but do not wish to take up citizenship - for example because they are nationals from a country which prohibits dual nationality - then they will be granted permanent residence but not a passport or the right to vote.

Full citizenship or permanent residency would include the right to sponsor other relatives for probationary citizenship - but for these family members citizenship would also not be automatic. They too will be required to learn English --- indeed, they will be asked to show, in the same way as others who aspire to citizenship, that

they understand their obligations as well as their rights.

We are also consulting on changes to the process for applying for a marriage visa from overseas to crack down on forced marriages and sham marriages - including more in-depth interviews for couples, raising the minimum age of a spouse and their sponsor from 18 to 21, and additional scrutiny of multiple applications submitted over a short period.

We will introduce a new English language requirement for those applying for a marriage visa and planning to settle in the UK - both as part of our determination that everyone who comes here to live should be able to speak English and to make sure that they cannot be exploited.

And we are considering a new system for visit visas where British citizens can sponsor relatives to come for short stays in return for payment of a bond to guarantee departure.

All these proposals amount to far more than a different mechanism for handling managed migration. They amount to a fundamental statement about what we expect of those who aspire to British citizenship and how we intend to strengthen the idea of what it means to be British. They are aimed at ensuring our economy continues to attract and retain the highly skilled workers we need whilst reinforcing the rights and responsibilities of newcomers at each stage. And they are proposals the public must help us shape.

That is why we have set out the options in the green paper published today; and Jacqui Smith, Liam Byrne and I plan to discuss with people all across Britain over the course of the next few months:

- the values we expect newcomers to sign up to;
- how we expect newcomers to demonstrate that subscription;
- how we can best support newcomers in understanding the British way of life.

And we will take account of the findings from Lord Goldsmith's report on citizenship, which we expect to publish in the next few weeks.

But - because we know that for these reforms to succeed they must be underpinned by strong measures to tackle illegal immigration - we are also stepping up our reforms to safeguard our borders.

At our first line of defence - overseas, at other countries' ports and airports - we already require a visa for anyone who wants to come to the UK for longer than six months to work, study or live. And increasingly we require visas from most countries even just for a holiday - thus preventing those who have abused our system in the past from coming to the UK again.

All visas are now biometric - not just a piece of paper with a stamp on it, but something that contains fingerprints, allowing us to detect those who try to violate the rules.

And we also now have more UK immigration staff and equipment based abroad, helping to stop suspect or dangerous travellers leaving for the UK. In the past five years 180,000 individuals intending to come here have been denied boarding at airports as a result of checks by airline liaison officers.

Our second line of defence is at our own border

We have already more than doubled the number of immigration officers - from 2,400 in 1997 to 5,400 today. Last year we stopped almost 18,000 people crossing the channel illegally.

We are now creating a new unified border force, with immigration and customs powers given to all those who work at the border.

And through our E-borders programme, we will - from next year - be counting people in and out of the UK electronically ---- allowing us check identities quickly and securely against passports or visas, and then to match that against the identity register and the warning indexes for crime, terrorism and immigration. Early testing has already led to 18,000 alerts and 1,500 arrests.

Our third line of defence is security within our own borders.

We are stepping up our action against employers who hire illegal workers - and who sometimes abuse them shamefully - by raising the penalties to up to £10,000 or 2 years in prison for each offence. And we are working much more closely across government to make sure employers are playing by all the rules - whether on the minimum wage or on tax or on illegal workers - because we know that companies who break the law in other areas are also likely to flout our immigration laws as well.

We will continue to increase the number of deportations, showing that we are serious about removing people who have no right to be in Britain. Anyone who comes here - whether to work, to study, or to live - should obey our laws and they will pay the price if they don't.

From this summer anyone from outside the EU who comes here and commits a non-trivial crime - including violent crimes and drug offences - will face automatic deportation. We already remove around 60,000 people from the UK each year, up from only around 30,000 in 1997. Last year we deported over 4,200 foreign national prisoners, up from only 1,500 three years ago. And we are agreeing action plans with key countries - including Jamaica and Nigeria - to make sure we can make even faster progress this year and beyond.

We will be equally rigorous in deporting people who come from within the EU and commit crimes here. If their crimes relate to drugs or firearms or result in a sentence exceeding two years, we will seek to deport them. And because the right to family life is not a defence that newcomers can credibly invoke, any newcomer to our country who commits a drugs or gun crime will be sent home and will not be welcome here again. As a measure of our determination we deported last year more than 500 European nationals.

And of course, the final vital element in security inside our borders is the national ID cards system.

While the first biometric ID cards will be issued to UK citizens during 2009, from the end of this year we will start to issue the first compulsory biometric IDs to non-EU foreign nationals coming to the UK. Such an identity scheme will help make it clear what status a person has - whether they are allowed to work, access benefits and how long they can stay.

This is crucial in tackling illegal immigration. But it is also critical to moving towards, and enforcing, a system of earned citizenship.

Those who are not entitled to benefits will not be able to claim them. And that will also include people from the EU who have come here to work but have not yet paid sufficient national insurance contributions.

And probationary citizens will all have ID cards which will make it easier to ensure that they are exercising their responsibilities, and to decide on their progress to full citizenship.

All this reflects the value we place on British citizenship and the urgent need to be clear about our collective national identity and common purpose.

We will insist on the principle that citizenship comes with real rights not available to those who do not possess it; and real and continuing responsibilities for those who do.

In recognition of this, the process by which newcomers to Britain gain citizenship will in future be more exacting in terms of eligibility and obligation.

And by being more explicit about what it means to be a British citizen we can not only manage immigration in a way that is good for Britain - for our citizens, our way of life, our society, and our economy - but at the same time move forward as a more confident Britain ----- a Britain living up to shared values, a Britain equipped to lead economically, a Britain able to succeed as a 21st century society, enriched by change but anchored in enduring ideals.