



Ireland and its Diaspora
Irish Abroad ólóg from Gerry Molloy
Incorporating Triskeilion Theatre Company
—est.1994— PROMOTING IRISH ARTS IN BRITAIN



August 8th 2017

An Toaiseach,

Firstly can I congratulate you on your recent appointment by Uachtarán na hÉireann.

I am sure you are aware of the ongoing campaign on votes for the Irish Abroad especially since the inception of the Constitutional Convention back 2012 to the announcement by your predecessor Enda Kenny TD in March (Philadelphia) this year, when he said “It is an opportunity for us to make our country stronger by allowing all of our citizens resident outside the State, including our emigrants, to vote in future presidential elections,” When in London as part of the Worldwide Gathering in 2013 on voting rights you said “This would recognise, respect and validate the ongoing ties between the diaspora and the country. This is not tokenism. The president is the embodiment of the spirit of the Irish nation”.

Following the Global Irish Civic Forum (May 2017), the reason I am writing to you is to offer the assistance of the Irish Diaspora in the final wording of the referendum question. Minister Coveney (now Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade) spoke with honesty about the history of referendums in Ireland and that “Irish people are cautious” and he rightly highlighted the issue of what he called “proof of connectivity” which he felt the electorate will expect in helping them decide.

The Options Paper’ with the 7 options was published prior to the forum and members of the Government present seemed to me, prior to discussion, to prefer option 2.

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All citizens on the island of Ireland, and all citizens outside the island of Ireland for a period of time who have lived in the State;

I spoke from the floor in favour of Option 1) *all citizens outside the State;*

“Although a passport is clear evidence of citizenship it challenges my equality benchmark as people could establish their citizenship simply by an Irish Birth Certificate or certificate of a Foreign Birth Registration. Option 2 is limited as my son has never lived in Ireland ‘for a period’ of time but has an Irish passport and a firm and ongoing connection with Ireland its people and culture,”

My preferred wording still would be “Do you agree that Irish Citizens resident outside the State should have the right to vote in Presidential Elections”?

The more inclusive Option 1 was taken up by my colleague Mary Hickman (Votes for Irish Citizens Abroad) when she said in Dublin “most campaigners want all citizens to be allowed to vote for the president, with no restriction on the time they have been abroad or whether they have lived here”.

Therefore I would offer the collaboration of Ireland and its Diaspora blog, contacts and fellow campaigners here in the UK to host engagement events/circulations/surveys etc. and help the Irish Abroad Unit in any way in the collation of the preferred wording for the pending referendum.

Is Mise,

Gerry Molumby

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