

14/02/2008

**MINISTER ROCHE ACCUSED OF ARROGANT CONTEMPT FOR  
VOTERS' RIGHTS**

Minister for European Affairs, Dick Roche T.D. has been accused by opponents of the Lisbon Treaty of displaying an arrogant contempt for the intelligence of Irish voters.

Speaking today at the International Institute for European Affairs launch of the Consolidated Version of the EU Treaties, Minister Roche said the Government did not intend to make the text of the Lisbon Treaty freely available to the public as he considered 'the cost would be prohibitive and it would do little for public understanding of the Treaty'. The Minister went on to say, 'We cannot expect the busy voter to read through this very lengthy and complex legal text to gain a sense of what they should be weighing up when they go to vote'.

**Patricia McKenna**, former Green Party MEP speaking on behalf of the **People's Movement**, said 'These kind of comments are condescending in the extreme and a blatant assault on Irish people's right to basic information on what they are being asked to vote on. It also assumes that people are not interested and will just rely on government advice on how to vote'. This is an assault on the principles of equality for both sides in a referendum campaign.

Ms McKenna said, 'It is interesting and indeed telling that the Government will provide voters with free copies of the Government's own "slanted" Guide to the treaty but refuse to supply them with the actual text of what they are being asked to vote on. In other words, the public must "trust" the Government and allow the Government and their spin-doctors to interpret the implications of the treaty'.

Ms McKenna said that it was essential that Irish citizens have free and easy access to the Lisbon Treaty text so they can check for themselves what is in it. 'The Government does not need to provide every household in the country with a copy as some people may not want it. But for those who do want it, the text it should be made available to them free of charge. This could be done through post offices, libraries and other community facilities.'

Ms McKenna also criticised the claim by Minister Roche that by voting 'No' Irish people would 'thumb our noses at Europe and resolve to go it alone'. The minister's comments are not only false and misleading but also indicative of the low level of debate the Government plans to engage in during this campaign'.

Minister Roche says, 'Do we want to remain at the heart of the EU, exerting influence and helping shape the Union in a direction favourable to us?' 'Ironically that is exactly what the No side are trying to achieve, while the minister and Government are busy trying to convince Irish voter to accept a treaty that will in fact deny us that opportunity to influence the future direction of the EU' concluded McKenna.

[ENDS]

**For further Information**

**Patricia McKenna – 087 2427049**

**Frank Keoghan – 087 2308330**