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Fianna Fáil must use their own funds says McKenna

The former Green Party MEP, Patricia McKenna, who in 1995, successfully challenged the government's use of public money in referendum campaigns, today warned the Government not to use public money to get a Yes vote in the forthcoming Lisbon Treaty. McKenna, who is Chairperson of People's Movement campaigning for a No vote, said "If the Government wants to spend money to ensure a Yes vote, then it must use the resources of the two political parties in Government which support the treaty. Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats should use their own money to push for a yes vote and the Green Party, as the only party in government not on the Yes side, should ensure that public money is not abused to the detriment of those on the No side".

The Referendum Commission, which has the statutory function of explaining what the referendum is about, plans to distribute a leaflet over the coming months which will explain the Lisbon Treaty referendum. It would be unacceptable that the Government, as a Government, should pre-empt the work of that body to further party political agendas. The fact that the Government is considering circulating, at the taxpayer's expense, its own 22-page so-called explanatory pamphlet to every house in the country is most disturbing and must be investigated.

Ms McKenna, who is a member of the Green Party, appealed today to her party leader, John Gormley, "not to allow Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats to abuse either their position or the public purse to pursue their own party political aims. Supporting the Lisbon Treaty was not part of the Programme for Government and our party must not be bullied into conspiring against the people through the use of exchequer funds". McKenna quoted the former leader of the Progressive Democrats, Michael McDowell, who during the Supreme Court hearing in the Coughlan case said: "this would be akin to a scheme that would allow them (the political parties) to loot the Exchequer for their own benefit".

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