

**29/3/2008**

## **IRISH GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTING TO HOODWINK IRISH PUBLIC**

Campaigners against the Lisbon Treaty have accused the Irish Government of conspiring to keep controversial EU Health Proposals off the agenda until after the referendum.

Taking part in today's National Rally for 'A Decent Public Health Service' the secretary of the People's Movement, Frank Keoghan said: 'The Irish Government in co-operation with the British Government succeeded in getting the implementation of a controversial EU Health Services Directive put on hold until after both countries have ratified the Lisbon Treaty'.

Mr Keoghan said: 'As thousands of people all over the country march to protest against the appalling state of our public health services it is important to draw the public's attention to the Health Services Directive and the threat it will pose to our already over-stretched and deteriorating health services'.

He continued: 'Many member states believe that the proposed EU Health Services Directive will lead to "health service shopping" and that member states will lose control over health service budgets by not being able to predict budgetary requirements'.

According to Mr. Keoghan, this could happen in two ways:

- a. People could spend money on treatments abroad and then be subsequently reimbursed,
- b. The system would operate on a top-up basis through which patients could get a certain proportion of the cost of a treatment paid by the HSE, but make up the difference themselves.

Mr. Keoghan pointed out that ‘while on the face of it this proposal may sound positive to some people, it will have extremely negative consequences and will lead to a situation where those who can afford to do so can go abroad and can avail of treatment while Irish citizens who do not possess the necessary resources will be left waiting in line’.

A number of member states with well-developed health provision – Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands – have expressed serious concerns about these proposals but so far their concerns have been pushed aside by the Commission, whose stance has been reinforced by decisions of the European Court of Justice in the Watts case.

An important consequence if the Treaty of Lisbon is ratified would be to enshrine neo-liberalist economic policies which would only accelerate the process of privatisation of public medicine, particularly under the ‘process to prevent distortion of competition’ included in its provisions, concluded Mr Keoghan.

[ENDS]

For further Information

Patricia McKenna – 087 2427049

Frank Keoghan – 087 2308330