

**21 July 2008**

**‘Someone must speak on behalf of Irish voters and tell President Sarkozy there will be no second referendum’ says McKenna**

The former Green Party MEP and chairperson of the People’s Movement, Patricia McKenna, said she appreciates the invitation from the French Embassy to meet with President Sarkozy but stressed that her organization has grave misgivings about the meeting and the purpose of it. The former Green Party MEP said at her meeting with the French President today: “I accepted the invitation out of respect for the people of France – who also voted No to virtually the same proposals – but that the purpose of the meeting was still unclear and that it must not be seen as some form of consultation by proxy with the people of Ireland.”

Ms McKenna said: “Our message to President Sarkozy, as President of the European Council, is clear: there will be no second referendum. Irish people voted in unprecedented numbers after thinking long and hard about the issue. One of the core underlying reasons for voting No was the fact that people sense a lack of democratic accountability and control of power slipping away. They feel there is a serious lack of political leadership within our political establishment. The current fiasco surrounding the Lisbon Treaty and the government’s failure to represent the views of the voters confirms these fears.

Mr Cowen has failed to convey the strength of the No voters’ views to his EU colleagues – it seems he must be downplaying it and has not explained the impossibility of a second referendum – so someone has to tell Sarkozy that people thought long and hard about this and made a decision and that decision is final.

After an unprecedented high turn out and a clear and decisive rejection of the Lisbon Treaty there was a democratic onus on our Taoiseach to go to Brussels and unashamedly represent the views of his electorate by saying that despite the best efforts of the Government and the political establishment the people of Ireland rejected the Lisbon Treaty and that the treaty

under the current EU rules is now dead. That was his democratic mandate and he reneged on it and failed to give this message. Because of Mr Cowen's failure it is now left to Irish people like me to go to a foreign embassy in Dublin and say what our Taoiseach should have said from the outset.

The reaction of Mr Cowen and other EU leaders – forge ahead with their plans regardless – has confirmed the genuine fears of those who voted No.

Unfortunately, President Sarkozy is perfectly entitled to speak of the desirability of a second Irish referendum because the Taoiseach Brian Cowen, despite ample time and opportunity, has refused to rule out a second referendum. Unless and until the Taoiseach rules out that possibility EU leaders are entitled to believe it is possible.”

Ms McKenna said: “There are many issues of concern surrounding this meeting, most notably the venue itself – the French embassy rather than the EU Commission offices or the offices of our own government – implies that this is somehow an issue for the French state. I could not envisage a similar situation at the Irish embassy in Paris after the French No vote.

There is also justified concern about the fact that a significant section of the No side have been excluded, most notably the trade unions who campaigned for a No – only the trade unions for the Yes side have been invited. The Peace And Neutrality Alliance, who campaigned on the issue of neutrality and militarization have also been excluded.

President Sarkozy has said he wishes to listen to and understand why people rejected the Lisbon Treaty. So why is the Yes side being invited to this meeting? It is unlikely that President Sarkozy will tell them they voted Yes for the wrong reasons. This format of Yes and No implies a re-run of the referendum campaign and the issues involved.

The People's Movement refuse to be dragged into a rehashing of the referendum campaign. The vote is over. The result is clear. The people of Ireland have rejected the Lisbon Treaty. That is the simple fact.

The purpose of inviting the No campaigners to meet Sarkozy is to enable him to say that he met with all sides of Irish opinion.”

Ms McKenna said: “The only way forward is for all EU leaders, including our own Taoiseach, to accept the result of the referendum and to go back and consult with the

citizens of the member states about the type of Europe they want. Proposals based on the wishes of the peoples of Europe can then be put to the citizens of the member states by referenda and their decision will be final. Europe cannot forge ahead without the consent of ordinary people. The political elite of the EU, and President Sarkozy is a good example of that elite, must take direction from the people who elect them.”

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