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Government too late in taking the moral high ground

The chairperson of the People's Movement, Patricia McKenna, has accused government ministers of double standards on what ministers claim is 'outside interference' in the continuing debate on the Lisbon Treaty.

The former Green Party MEP was reacting to criticism by Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin and Minister for Europe Dick Roche that the think-tank Open Europe which commissioned a poll on Irish attitudes to a second referendum the Lisbon Treaty was an outside interference in discussions on Ireland's future in Europe. Minister Martin said: 'Ireland's future in Europe is a matter for decision by Irish people'.

Ms McKenna said: 'Minister Martin showed no concern about outside interference prior to the vote on Lisbon when he and other government ministers invited with open arms every political heavy-weight in the EU to come here and urge us to vote "Yes". There was no concern expressed about "outside interference" when the German chancellor Angela Merkel, EU Commission president José Manuel Barroso, and EU vice-president Margot Wallstrom came here to here to urge us to vote "Yes". It's a bit late for government ministers to be taking the moral high-ground now about outside interference.'

Ms McKenna went on to say: 'Our government has never complained about polls commission by the EU political establishment. But because other interested parties, who have a different agenda, commission opinion polls on our attitude to Lisbon it is just not acceptable.'

'The attitude of the government beggars belief', said McKenna: 'At least the results of these polls have been made available to the public The government on the other hand have decide to use taxpayers' money to mount extensive confidential polls to "clarify the reasons

underlying the referendum result” and intend to withhold the results from the public. A government that intends using our money to try and find out how to manipulate our minds when preparing for the next referendum has no moral authority to criticise the motivation behind any opinion polls. There is no justification for planning to withhold the findings of this research. The voters are paying for it and should have access to the findings.’

Ms McKenna also dismissed as a waste of time government suggestions that the Dáil will be recalled early from its summer recess to establish an all-party committee on the Lisbon Treaty that can help plan a way forward: ‘Unless the government and political establishment recognize and accept the legitimacy of the “No” arguments the outcome of such a process is meaningless. So far we have seen no willingness on the part of the “Yes” side to even acknowledge us’ concluded McKenna.

[ENDS]

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