

**8 July 2009**

**Government's claim that pressure was put on EU to accommodate Ireland is utter nonsense, says McKenna**

The claim by government, during today's Dáil debate, that 'pressure was put on the other EU members to accommodate Irish voters' concerns' on the Lisbon Treaty, is a total distortion of reality according to former MEP Patricia McKenna. McKenna, who is chairperson of the People's Movement, one of the leading groups campaigning for rejection of the treaty, said: 'The government from the outset refused to seek any changes to the Lisbon Treaty after Irish voters rejected it last year. Instead it conspired with other EU leaders to get the treaty ratified without any changes and that is exactly what is happening. All the government sought and got are "political assurances" – dressed up in the deceptive terminology of "legal guarantees".'

She said 'the so-called legally binding guarantees which the government claim they fought hard to secure do not change one single aspect of the Lisbon Treaty all they do is reiterate the same assurances given by EU leaders during the first referendum. These assurances given by the Yes side were not enough to convince people to vote in favour of the treaty first time around and will I hope be dismissed by the voters with the same mistrust in October.'

McKenna went on to say: 'Not one single word of the Lisbon Treaty will be altered by these guarantees, which is why they do not need to be ratified by the national parliaments of the 27 member states. They are nothing more than an interpretation by EU heads of government as to what they think the Lisbon Treaty means. However, if the Lisbon Treaty comes into force, it will be the EU Court of Justice in Luxembourg, which will interpret Lisbon. The EU court is the only body authorized under the European treaties to interpret the treaties themselves and decide how they should be applied. The political decision and agreement of a particular group of EU prime ministers and presidents, which is what we are being presented with, cannot and will not decide what Lisbon means.'

The "decision" of the European Council that certain provisions of the Lisbon Treaty mean specific things is just an agreement between 27 heads of government as to what they believe to be the case. This "decision" is not an international treaty between states because it does not require and will not go through the ratification process of all 27 member states, through approval in their national parliaments. This is the normal process for ratifying international treaties and it is clear that without such a legally binding ratification process the "legal guarantees" do not have this legal status.

What is clear from today's debate is that the government is giving a totally misleading significance to the promise that these "guarantees" will be incorporated as a protocol to

the EU treaties at some future date. This promise of a “protocol” at a future date is irrelevant because once the new EU established under Lisbon comes into force then no protocol can pull back from what Lisbon has established and it will be the EU Court of Justice that will decide what the Treaty means once it comes into force.’

‘Apart from the right of each Member State to hold on to their commissioner, agreed without altering the Lisbon Treaty, nothing has changed within the text of the Lisbon Treaty itself since the last vote. The government should be honest with the voters and tell them the truth instead of using propaganda and scare tactics about being at the heart of Europe. This is not about EU membership and whether we voted yes or no last time the economic crisis in Ireland would be the same’ concluded McKenna.

[ENDS]

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