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Labour leader guilty of misleading voters on Lisbon – McKenna

Opponents of the Lisbon Treaty have accused Labour Party leader, Eamon Gilmore, of misinforming the public on the legal facts regarding the Lisbon Treaty. In an interview today on RTE's 'Morning Ireland' Mr Gilmore said that the situation had changed since last years 'No' vote and that now Ireland will retain the "right to appoint a Commissioner".

The chairperson of the Peoples Movement, former MEP Patricia McKenna, said: "Mr Gilmore's claim that Ireland will keep its right to 'appoint' a Commissioner is not true; either Mr. Gilmore has not read the treaty in detail or he is deliberately misrepresenting what the document actually says. If the Lisbon is adopted then Ireland will no longer have the right to 'propose' (existing wording) and can only make 'suggestions' (new wording proposed in Lisbon) on our choice of Commissioner. This new wording, whereby member states can only make suggestions, means that Ireland no longer has the final say. There is no doubt that this new wording was included for a reason and is clearly much weaker as Ireland can no longer have the final say on who our Commissioner will be."

McKenna said: "Even the former Fine Gael leader Garret FitzGerald, a supporter of the treaty, has conceded that the changed wording would allow the Commission President to 'turn down the member states' choice of Commissioner".

McKenna went on to say: "The issue surrounding the Commission has not been fully explained to the public and the government is deliberately glossing over the fact that even the decision to allow all member states to have a place on the Commission is not cast in stone and can be revisited. The current President of the EU, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt has said in relation to the size of the Commission 'we might in the future get back to this discussion'. The agreement for every member state to have a place on the Commission is not copper-fastened in a legally binding protocol and can and will be revisited."

"The Department of Foreign Affairs website claims that 'if Lisbon is ratified, we will retain an Irish Commissioner indefinitely but, if it is rejected, the Nice Treaty provisions will apply and the number of Commissioners will have to be reduced'. This is not quite the full picture and the department fails to point out that under Nice the reduction of the Commission requires unanimity – in other words Ireland would have to support such a decision before it could happen. And there is clearly a way around this as the Swedish Prime Minister Reinfeldt has pointed out – that under Nice the most obvious solution would be that 26 States retain their Commissioner and the 27th State would hold the

post of High Representative of Foreign Affairs instead.”

“The Department’s statement that ‘we will retain a Commissioner ‘indefinitely’ means it’s not definite” she concluded.

[ENDS]

For further information:

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