

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 153/2006
29 November 2006

The Opposition consider that the use by the GSD of a party political broadcast last night is a further example of the continuing imbalance in the Referendum campaign in favour of the Government's preferred option on the ballot paper.

This breaks the balance which GBC decided was necessary to give equal time to all the participants in the Referendum campaign.

GBC had allocated two Referendum broadcasts to the "yes", two to the "no" and two to those not giving a recommendation. This created a balance between the different views.

On this account GBC asked that party political broadcasts should not include references to the Referendum campaign. The public should note that a party political broadcast is different to a Referendum broadcast, and is only available to parties in the House of Assembly throughout the year.

In deference to the views of GBC, the GSLP decided to cancel a party political broadcast which had been booked for this week so that it was not construed as an attempt to exert influence in the campaign through a mechanism which was not available to others.

The GSD, however, said it would continue with the two broadcasts it had booked. They made a recommendation as to how people should vote in the first one, and devoted the whole of the second one to the same subject.

We also understand that advertising in the Referendum campaign will be permitted on polling day because there are no rules as to how the Referendum will be conducted because there is no statutory base.

These examples indicate that there are grounds for concern about the whole way in which this Government Referendum has been handled at the same time as being involved in promoting one side of the argument.

It is deeply regrettable that because it is not being done under internal controls or clear-cut rules there are no international

observers here to express an opinion on matters that give cause for concern.

ENDS