[GB] Hutton Inquiry Judge Rules against Televising Witnesses Giving Evidence

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The "Hutton Inquiry" is a judicial hearing into "the circumstances surrounding the death of Dr. Kelly" (UK civil servant and weapons inspector).

On 24 July 2003, a Press Notice was issued, stating that "the public hearings of the Inquiry will, of course, be open to the media. The press and other sections of the media will be able to report the entirety of the public hearings save that it is Lord Hutton's present intention that the evidence of witnesses to the Inquiry and applications in the course of the Inquiry will not be filmed or broadcast. However, TV filming and radio broadcasting of opening and closing statements may take place."

An application was made by ITN, BSkyB, Channel 4, Channel 5 and ITV to televise and broadcast all or part of the Inquiry, including the evidence of witnesses, in news programmes and news documentaries.

Lord Hutton, the inquiry judge, decided against the application. He offered two reasons. Firstly, "the additional strain which would be placed on a witness giving evidence to the Inquiry if his or her evidence were televised". Secondly, the judge said that he was satisfied that "the absence of television filming of the witnesses giving evidence would not mean that the Inquiry would not be a public one as required by the fundamental concept of open justice."

Department for Constitutional Affairs, Press Notice of 24 July 2003

http://www.gnn.gov.uk/gnn/national.nsf/CF/3B562EA57F67274080256D6D00413516?opendocument

In the matter of applications by ITN, BSkyB, Channel 4, Channel 5, ITV and IRN Radio, Ruling by Lord Hutton, 5 August 2003

http://www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk/content/rulings/ruling01.htm

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