[DE] Election scrutiny board rejects Bundestag election protest after “Lindenstraße” forecast

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At its meeting on 3 April 2014, the Wahlprüfungsausschuss (Election Scrutiny Board) of the German Bundestag (lower house of parliament) decided to recommend that the Bundestag reject as unfounded a protest against the validity of the 18th German Bundestag election of 22 September 2013.

On 22 November 2013, a citizen of the Bavarian town of Fürstenfeldbruck had faxed a protest against the validity of the Bundestag election of 22 September 2013. He had protested on the grounds that, in the 1,448th episode of the TV series “Lindenstraße”, entitled “Leistungsträger”, which was broadcast on the evening of the election, he had seen evidence of electoral fraud in so far as the election results shown in the episode had matched the initial election forecast that only just been published when the programme was shown. In the episode, the characters, one of whom was a candidate for a fictitious party, watched election forecasts for a fictitious Bundestag election on television. In the protester’s opinion, it would have been technically impossible to insert and then broadcast an image of the forecast between 18.00, when the initial election forecast was broadcast, and 18.40, when the episode was shown.

The Election Scrutiny Board thought the protest was admissible but unfounded due to a lack of substantiated evidence. The protest contained nothing more than unproven conjecture and the mere suggestion of electoral irregularities, without offering any concrete factual evidence of an infringement of electoral law.

The election results broadcast in the programme were approximate figures based on election forecasts at the time when the episode had been produced. The ARD had previously announced on the series website that the initial forecast would be recorded and inserted in the episode so that the results filmed in advance could be adapted according to the situation on the evening of the election. Depending on the election result, any one of four different pre-produced episodes could be used. In this way, around two minutes of the episode were updated shortly before it was broadcast.

However, as the Election Scrutiny Board expressly pointed out in its recommendation, none of this meant that the election result had been fixed in advance. Contrary to the protester’s opinion, therefore, since the election had not been manipulated, there was no reason to rerun the 18th German Bundestag

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election.

Beschlussempfehlung des Wahlprüfungsausschusses des 18. Deutschen Bundestages vom 03. April 2014 (Drucksache 18/1160, S. 149, Anlage 64, Az.: WP 200/13)

http://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/011/1801160.pdf

Recommendation of the Election Scrutiny Board for the 18th German Bundestag election of 3 April 2014 (doc. 18/1160, p. 149, annex 64, case no.: WP 200/13)

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