

Tekst 5

# Trials on TV? Don't hold your breath

Marcel Berlins



**T**here was a brief flurry of media activity last week - not joined by The Guardian - suggesting that the Lord Chancellor, Lord Falconer, has decided to allow the filming of trials in the courts of England and Wales. The impression given by some reports was that viewers would be able to follow substantial parts of high-profile trials on their television screens.

That is not going to happen. The Lord Chancellor has not yet made up his mind, but when he does reveal his decision in a month or two it will considerably restrict the filming that will be permitted.

Of course, even the limited presence of cameras in court is better than none at all, which is the present position. But no one should think that coverage here will in any way come close to resembling what Americans can regularly see on their screens.

Criminal trials are what most people would be most interested to watch; those are precisely the trials which the cameras would be least allowed to film. The Lord Chancellor has often made clear his firm - and justifiable - opposition to the filming of witnesses, defendants or jurors. It

is highly unlikely that he will accept the suggestion that a defendant's or witness's face could be hidden by a moveable blob covering it. I remember watching a televised trial from Florida where the blob was unable to keep up with the witness's movements; every now and again we saw the face that was supposed to be hidden from us. So what will be left to televise, if the actual evidence is



forbidden? Certainly the judge's sentencing of an accused found guilty; perhaps the judge's summing up to the jury and the final speeches of the prosecution and defence lawyers. Libel cases, which usually involve celebrities, whom the public would want to see in the witness box, would be subject to the same restrictions. There will be no sensational bits.

*The Guardian*

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- 1p 7 What conclusion do lines 1-26 lead up to?
- A The broadcasting of British trials on TV will be very different from the American practice.
  - B The commotion about new legislation will only lead to stricter regulations concerning cameras in British courts.
  - C The current media excitement about TV rights may persuade the Lord Chancellor to permit more extensive filming during trials.
- “the blob ... movements” (lines 40-42)
- 1p 8 Why does Marcel Berlins add this example?
- A To emphasise the Lord Chancellor's wisdom if he were to restrict filming to the performances of the judges and the lawyers.
  - B To indicate that in the early days of TV technical capabilities left much to be desired.
  - C To show that American audiences expect to be able to view dramatic court scenes live.
  - D To underline his view that without the exciting bits TV trials are too boring to watch.
- “There will be no sensational bits.” (lines 55-56)
- 1p 9 Which of the following expresses more or less the same?
- A “Don't ... breath” (title)
  - B “viewers ... screens” (lines 9-12)
  - C “the suggestion ... covering it” (lines 36-38)
  - D “So ... forbidden?” (lines 44-46)