

David Kelly – A fresh inquiry into his death?

It is six years since Dr David Kelly died, but the controversy surrounding Lord Hutton's finding of suicide goes on. There is no credible evidence that he killed himself. In Spokesman 107 we published the transcript of a radio interview given by Dr David Halpin, one of six experienced doctors who want a proper inquest into Dr Kelly's death. 'We do not believe you can bleed to death from the matchstick thin ulnar artery being cut across in his left wrist,' said Dr Halpin. Now, the new Justice Minister, Kenneth Clarke, is reconsidering the case, as the BBC reported on 11 June.

'Justice Secretary Ken Clarke is considering releasing medical documents on the death of Dr David Kelly to a group of doctors demanding an inquest, the BBC understands. The doctors have questioned Lord Hutton's 2004 verdict of suicide on the government weapons scientist. They have been calling for material from the post-mortem to be released. Lord Hutton requested a 70-year gagging order on it but has said he does not object to the doctors seeing it. He said in January that the purpose of the secrecy order, made at the conclusion of his inquiry, had been to avoid causing distress to Dr Kelly's family. He wrote to ministers in the previous Labour government to say that the report may be seen by the doctors.

Now Ken Clarke is considering whether to release the material. In a statement, the Ministry of Justice said: "The Secretary of State will consider the full facts surrounding this issue."

Mr Clarke could decide to launch a public inquiry into Dr Kelly's death and it is understood conversations have taken place between ministers in the new coalition government, including Attorney General Dominic Grieve, about such a possibility. When the Conservatives were in opposition, Mr Grieve backed calls for the investigation into Dr Kelly's death to be reopened as the public "have not been reassured" by the official verdict that he killed himself. He also praised the campaigning doctors who questioned Hutton's verdict for making a "cogent" case. As the most senior law officer in England and Wales, he could now ask the High Court to reopen the inquest into the

scientist's death. Mr Grieve is not actively pursuing this course of action at the moment but it is thought he would do so if he was persuaded there was fresh evidence.

Transport Minister Norman Baker, a Lib Dem MP who has carried out his own investigation into Dr Kelly's death, is also reported to have been pushing government colleagues for a fresh inquiry.

Dr Kelly's body was found in woods close to his Oxfordshire home in 2003, shortly after it was revealed that he was the source of a BBC report casting doubt on the government's claim that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction capable of being fired within 45 minutes. An inquest was suspended by then Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer, who ruled that Lord Hutton's inquiry could take its place. Lord Hutton's report in 2004 concluded that Dr Kelly had killed himself by cutting an artery in his wrist. But the campaigning doctors claim there was insufficient evidence to prove beyond reasonable doubt he killed himself.

The experts include trauma surgeon David Halpin, epidemiologist Andrew Rouse, surgeon Martin Birnstingl, former assistant coroner Dr Michael Powers QC, radiologist Stephen Frost, and Chris Burns-Cox who specialises in internal general medicine.'