

Lloyds is making excuses already: the corruption cam fr...

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I note that [AFP is reporting](#):

British tax authorities are investigating allegations that staff at Lloyds Banking Group encouraged rich clients to channel money through China to avoid taxes at home.

The allegations were made in a probe by the BBC's "Panorama" programme which showed what it said was hidden camera footage of a bank employee in the Channel Island of Jersey advising an undercover reporter who said he had four million pounds (4.4 million euros, 6.5 million dollars) to invest.

The bank said the employee involved has been suspended pending an investigation, adding it "strongly and categorically refute(s) any allegation of involvement in systematic or deliberate tax evasion".

The civil servant in charge of tax at Britain's revenue and customs department, Dave Harnett, told the BBC the advice was "incredibly irresponsible" and a spokesman for the department said the BBC's evidence would be looked at.

I feel just a little sorry for the guy filmed by the BBC. Only a little bit — he was after all proud of what he was doing, and I consider it corrupt. But if Lloyds try to make him the scapegoat that is scandalous.

A minor salesman in Jersey did not think up the abuse of the European Union Savings Tax Directive that he was selling. He could not have done. The Hong Kong subsidiary that is used by Lloyds as its paying agent for its Jersey funds was created two weeks before the European Union Savings Tax Directive came into effect. This was a planned abuse. It required high level international coordination and planning. It would not surprise me if that went to main Board level for approval.

That's the level where the suspensions are now needed. This is a bank that cannot excuse its systemic culture of tax abuse by suspending a salesman. This is an abuse that calls for the resignation of the chairman and CEO, a wholesale clear out of its tax department and its nationalisation to end the culture of abuse of the state that saved it

but for which it has contempt.

And Lloyds needs to be given a choice: bank onshore or offshore, not both. All other banks in the UK need to be offered the same choice. Then we'll see change.

I'm looking forward to some falling on swords tomorrow. But those who believe they can abuse the state in the way Lloyds has done don't believe in responsibility either. They just believe in excessive pay for perpetrating such actions. So maybe time behind bars is what is needed. That's a very sobering option.

And let's be clear why I say this: Lloyds has unambiguously and knowingly set up a structure whose sole purpose is to get round the European Union Savings Tax Directive: the sales man in Jersey was right to say that. But there is only one reason to get round the European Union Savings Tax Directive, and that is to evade tax. So it follows as night does day that Lloyds knew what they were doing.

And that is why its directors must be held accountable.

At Her Majesty's pleasure if appropriate.