

Hold us to account for dodgy deals? No thanks says big ...

Published: January 17, 2026, 6:55 am

As the [Guardian notes this morning](#):

The bosses of some of Britain's biggest arms and oil companies have refused to attend a parliamentary inquiry into the use of hundreds of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money to help dictators build arsenals and facilitate environmental and human rights abuses.

The businessmen, including Ian King, chief executive of [BAE Systems](#), had been invited to an all-party investigation into the Export Credits Guarantee Department (ECGD)'s underwriting of loans, including £35m to Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe [to buy five Hawk fighter jets](#).

Good heavens! How impertinent of the committee. Fancy wanting to hold business to account for the funding it uses and the dodgy deals it does with it. Now that would never do, would it?

Odd how the boys (bound to be boys) closed ranks. Remember what Adam Smith said:

People of the same trade seldom meet together, even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.

Do you think there might have been such a meeting to result in this blanket refusal? Maybe? No, of course not: silly me, that could not be true.