

No wonder we have a democratic crisis when journalists ...

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As many will know, The Good Law Project won one of its many judicial review hearings against the government yesterday, showing in the process that Michael Gove acted illegally in placing a contract with a company called Public First.

As [they say](#):

Michael Gove broke the law by giving a contract to a communications agency run by long time associates of him and Dominic Cummings, the High Court has [decided](#).

The Court found that the decision to award the £560,000 contract to Public First was tainted by “apparent bias” and was unlawful. The Court found that Gove’s:

“failure to consider any other research agency... would lead a fair minded and informed observer to conclude that there was a real possibility, or a real danger, that the decision maker was biased” (paragraph 168).

I was asked to comment on this case on LBC Radio last night and having read the decision, and knowing something about procurement, felt able to do so.

What surprised me was the opening stance, which was to be I presented with the claim that Dominic Cummings said there was nothing wrong here so what was all the fuss about? Jo Maughan of the Good Law Project faced the same line of questioning on Radio 4.

What is odd about this is that a court has decided Cummings and Gove were wrong here. Public law was broken. Surely the line of questioning should have been in that case that given that the Court had decided the facts what should happen now? For example, should Gove be allowed to continue in office? But instead the desire was to rerun the trial.

Why is it that journalists are so reluctant to hold ministers to account? And why is it that those who want to hold ministers accountable - which is part of their job spec - have to justify doing so?

No wonder we have a democratic crisis when journalists seem more interested in defending the wrong doer than they are in questioning what should happen to them.

Addition at 3.15pm 10 June 2021.

Iain Dale, who interviewed me on LBC has made it clear he does not agree with the above comment, saying on Twitter:

<https://twitter.com/IainDale/status/1402925742942478346?s=20>

Iain obviously has his view. I disagree. I was surprised at the opening of this interview and that Cummings was even mentioned. I guessed we would open with 'What happens to Gove now?' and we never got there, so I do have a somewhat different view of this from Iain. I was not looking for justice for Cummings. I wanted to discuss that a judge had decided the case and what the consequences were. In that context I think my comment quite fair. But I think it reasonable to note that Iain disagrees.