

# Until we have political and corporate leadership that s...

Published: January 13, 2026, 4:18 am

---

The Guardian says this of the Post Office sub-postmaster accounting scandal this morning:

*At its heart, this extraordinary saga is about a group of workers who lost their jobs and their reputations – and in some cases served prison time – because their employer wrongly accused them of theft or fraud. You can read Mark Sweney's useful primer on the story here. But it is also about accountability for an apparent cover-up even after the Post Office realised it was in the wrong, and how the story is yet to be resolved for so many victims.*

This is wrong, as is much of the commentary on this issue.

Of course, there are questions about the abuse of sub-postmasters.

And yes, there are issues concerning accountability.

But much more of this story is about a society that has gone very wrong.

On Sunday I said that we have a choice in politics: we can emphasise the individual or society. What I did not, perhaps, make as clear as I might is that those who choose to emphasise the politics of the individual are those with power. They are those who have disproportionate rights as individuals because of income, wealth, connections, and power.

The real story of the Post Office is all about the abuse of power. Those in charge put their interests above those of all others - because they believed that they were the most important people in the organisation.

Their status, income, and the right to demand loyalty and to impose control all confirmed that in their own minds.

It was not possible in that case that they might have made a mistake, in their opinion. A mistake, if there was one, must have been by those they commanded, and not by

them. Nothing else was possible.

And if there was a problem with a supplier, then that was helpful, because that, too, let them deny responsibility - an attitude still being seen in yesterday's ministerial statement on this issue.

The reality was that those in power in the Post Office abused that power to blame others, to cover up that abuse of power and to persecute long after it was known, even by them, that this was unjustifiable. And they did that because they thought they were worth it - because they were important individuals.

This is not then just a story of a failure of justice, or of governance. It is also a story of the abuse of power that neoliberalism and the cult of the powerful individual encouraged and made possible.

Until we have political and corporate leadership that serves the community and not powerful individuals, nothing will prevent another Post Office scandal because every day those with power create ever more complex structures that tell them that they are the most important individuals and that society must both serve and reward them for being so.

This is the rottenness that the Post Office story has revealed.