

Who said tax was easy? Alan Rusbridger, the Guardian, a...

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The Guardian has mean a major critic of tax abuse in the UK.

And it's own tax affairs have been criticised, sometimes by me, but again, not always.

Alan Rusbridger, the editor of the Guardian, [explains how he views them in a timely piece, here.](#)

Like all those who accept that life is complex he has to accept that this involves compromises, choices and issues where compromise between objectives arises. He's right to do so.

This is a complex world. Only economists and those of simplistic libertarian mind sets seem to think otherwise - and they only achieve the goal by assuming anything but greed is irrational, and therefore wrong. That's not true - as all people of sound mind know. So compromise happens. Which is why intent is so important in tax. And why the spirit of the law is also important.

Anyone of sound mind can identify intent. And the spirit of most law is usually readily discernible (but there are exceptions, I know). It is precisely why I made the point - that Alan referred to - that when the Guardian was not required to pay tax on a capital gain it not only did not do so because it was not due, it did not do so because it also did what the law intended - it reinvested the proceeds in new activities. Pedants will say (and have said) that my comment is technically wrong - the reinvestment was not needed. And they're right. But that misses the point, entirely. It is intention, and active compliance with the spirit and purpose of the law that lets right behaviour be identified, even if in this case I think it was poor law (and yes, it wads Gordon Brown's fault we got it).

Or to put it another way - there is a morality in tax that is readily discernible and is the criteria for acceptability. Which is why this, which Alan Rusbridger has written, is true:

If the argument is that no one should write critically about tax avoidance unless they can show total purity in all their dealings and investments, both personal and

corporately, then the probable blunt truth is that not a single journalist would be able to write on the subject.

But that's a false criteria for comment, and only those who do not comply with it, claiming their own preference for abuse as justification, promote it as a criteria, with the precise intention of suppressing opposition.

So I agree, flawed as it is, the Guardian has the right to comment. As have all the rest of us, flawed as we are.

NB: The comments policy of this blog will be strictly applied when moderating comments on this post. I haven't got time to do otherwise