

The butler, the housekeeper and the British Virgin Isla...

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The [Independent has reported](#) testimony in a UK employment tribunal yesterday where a butler and housekeeper are claiming unfair dismissal from their jobs at an Oxfordshire estate where they thought they worked for a man named Kevin Cash. However, there's a twist:

Yesterday, to add confusion to their grievance, an employment tribunal was told that the couple had not been employed by Mr Cash. They were actually working for a trust based in a Caribbean tax haven, and therefore had no valid claim against him, his lawyers claimed.

The mysterious Mr Cash is reputed to be worth £500m, but has never appeared on any rich list. He claims to own no property in the UK apart from a house in London's Regent's Park.

He describes himself as a "consultant" to a family trust based in the Virgin Islands which owns North Aston Hall, the sprawling £16m Oxfordshire estate where the de Sousas were employed. But lawyers representing the couple suggested that this story is a sham, and that Mr Cash is actually a very rich man who funnels his wealth into offshore havens to minimise his tax liabilities.

James Wynne, representing Mr de Sousa, suggested that Mr Cash controlled a variety of companies at "arm's length", and that the company which nominally employed Mr de Sousa was "directed in the same way that he directs all the other companies in his business empire".

He added: "We say it's a sham. Mr Cash did act as if he owned North Aston Hall. He did act as if he was the employer." But David Flood, for Mr Cash, who was not present at the hearing, said: "It appears that the claimant is attempting to use this tribunal as a form of effectively putting [Mr Cash] on trial generally as to his business and financial dealings, and using as justification the claimant's own decision not to accept that he was employed by a company rather than Mr Cash."

As I often note, secrecy jurisdictions are places that intentionally create regulation for the primary benefit and use of those not resident in their geographical domain. That regulation is designed to undermine the legislation or regulation of another jurisdiction. To facilitate its use secrecy jurisdictions also create a deliberate, legally backed veil of secrecy that ensures that those from outside the jurisdiction making use of its regulation cannot be identified to be doing so.

Here we have a secrecy jurisdiction structure used to undermine UK employment rights, or so it seems at this stage in the hearing.

And the secrecy is such that the appellants do not even know who their employer is, or its relationship with the person who instructs them.

Of course this opens enormous lines of inquiry for H M Revenue & Customs, but that's not the point here: that point is that secrecy jurisdictions do exactly what I say they do - with harmful consequences. It's yet another reason why they should not be tolerated.