

# I think I've upset Cayman. My crime today? Living in a ...

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The Cayman Islands official news service hasn't taken kindly to Cayman being [ranked at number 2](#) in the new Tax Justice Network Financial Secrecy Index. [They said so](#) almost as soon as the report came out but now [they've pretty much lost it](#), so deep is their anger at being given credit for what they do so well, which is to sell secrecy.

Rather weirdly, they've made me the villain of the whole piece. I say weirdly for good reason: as I've made clear, whilst I was heavily engaged in producing the first Index this time I only acted as an adviser, but heaven forbid things like facts should get in Cayman's way when the true nature of what they do has been rumbled. The [whole Cayman report is worth a read](#) for its amusement value, but let me just highlight some of it here:

*The chair of Cayman Finance and the organisation's representative in London have both dismissed the findings of the Financial Secrecy Index published in the UK capital on Tuesday by the Tax Justice Network and Christian Aid. Richard Coles and Jack Irvine both claim that the authors of the report are advocates of global taxation, once referred to by the former Cayman Finance Chair as the 'Tax Taliban' who are not taken seriously. Within some 36 hours of its publication the report and its finding that Cayman was the second most secret financial jurisdiction in the world and played a key part in the global financial crises was posted on websites of more than 70 different international news houses and media organisations.*

That last part is true. But as they say:

*"It beggars belief that the Tax Justice Network still produces these canards about The Cayman Islands," Richard Coles said in the wake of the report's publication. "We have never been more transparent and we have never had so many tax treaties with other jurisdictions. What is deeply worrying is that some sections of the UK media take Messrs Murphy and Christensen seriously. These men are high taxation zealots and like the OECD they see nothing immoral in governments taking half or more of a man's salary," Coles said, adding that they would not be happy until there was a universal global tax rate.*

Which is an intriguing association on Coles' part: much of the criticism in the report is aimed at the OECD. Maybe he hasn't read it?

But the fun then really starts:

*Jack Irvine, the London based advisor to Cayman Finance's who liaises on their behalf with HM Government, the media and Cayman's London office ... described the secrecy index report as the "same tired old song" that he said the Tax Justice Network have been turning out for years. "*

*There are a few facts that your readers should appreciate about this rather grand sounding organization," Irvine told CNS. "In fact it is a tiny little outfit run out of Richard's Murphy's modest house in the English countryside.*

Well, it's true Jack I live in what some would call a modest house in the English countryside - and I'm very happy to do so. It suits me and my family just fine. Modest it may be in Jack's view, but I have no desire to move. But two questions arise. First, why has he got his facts so wrong, and secondly, so what?

For his information, I haven't been an officer of the Tax Justice Network for several years, nor even paid by it for some time. I certainly advise it and work closely with John Christensen, its director, but the international network, spread over many countries now is run by John, not me. So it looks like Jack Irvine has failed to get his due diligence right.

But even if true - the question is, so what? Does it matter that I mainly work from home? Does that make a difference to the result? I mean, surely better I say I work from home where I actually am than claim I'm based in a slot in a filing cabinet in a lawyer's office on Cayman just to avoid or evade tax and to hide what I do from view, wouldn't you say Jack, just to bring things down to earth somewhere new Georgetown?

Well apparently it does matter, for as Irvine continues, this means:

*Nobody in the financial world takes Mr Murphy seriously. He is an advocate of punitive taxation and he would like all countries to have a common tax system. This is not a man who appreciates individuality when it comes to governments."*

That's pretty odd. The financial secrecy index isn't about tax rates. They just don't feature Jack. The clue is in the title. Nor have I advocated punitive tax. And what a common tax system is baffles me: by definition even within the EU such things don't exist. I wonder what he means?

Irvine hasn't finished yet though:

*The TJN is actually an alliance of a number of individuals and non-aligned coalition of*

*researchers and activists with a common interest in what they believe are the harmful impacts of tax avoidance, tax competition and tax havens. Murphy is just one of the individuals who blogs regularly on the subject.*

He's got something right. I blog regularly. I accept that!

By this point even Cayman News Service was getting a little weary of Irvine's rant. Even they noted:

*The secrecy index which was published on Tuesday which ranked Cayman as the world's second most secret jurisdiction was written and researched by seven people including John Christensen who is the director of the Tax Justice Network International Secretariat.*

But Irvine had not finished:

*Irvine said that Murphy has the support of what he described as "politically motivated charities" such as Christian Aid and Oxfam, which others would describe as one of the largest and most respected charitable organizations in the world. But he said it was Murphy that was forever "claiming that tax neutral administrations such as Cayman, BVI or Jersey are responsible for the deaths of children in the developing world, in particular Africa."*

*He said there will always be sections of the British media who would "dance to Mr Murphy's tune" and went on to say that it was "no surprise that the left wing Guardian is always willing to repeat Mr Murphy's tirades without question or attempting any balance."*

My guess is that this is said to support Irvine's case that I'm not taken seriously? It's a compelling case you make Jack based on this evidence. The trouble for him is that Cayman News added:

*However, Irvine didn't comment on the stories run by the Daily Telegraph, known as a more politically right wing daily newspaper, or those in other more neutral news houses such as Reuters and Bloomberg.*

Why not Jack? Being a little selective in your take, maybe? No, not at all, he claimed:

*Irvine said: "The Cayman Islands should be comforted by the fact that the UK government takes no notice whatsoever of either the Tax Justice Network nor The Guardian's regurgitation of their fantasies and indeed the current UK regime and the House of Commons All Party Parliamentary Group have repeatedly signalled their support of Cayman and its robust financial and legal systems."*

Ah, that's all right then. The current 'regime' in the UK is on Cayman's side. So life's all right then.

Why the tirade then Jack? Could it be you've got something to hide? And maybe, just maybe you don't like a few honest people pointing it out?

Either way, thanks for taking it seriously. I appreciate that. Oh, and send a signed picture. I'll put it on the wall of the room where I work. I can't call it an office by the way - I share it with my sons' model railway.

Which I guess proves Jack's right though. I really am a lightweight cheapskate who can't even get a slot in a filing cabinet all of my own.