

Failing to tackle tax evasion is a choice to support cr...

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I made a speech at a TUC rally a year or so ago when I said the following:

If we spent the money that the government proposes to spend on tackling benefit fraud on beating tax cheats then I can tell you this with absolute confidence we wouldn't get back £1 billion a year. We would get back £20 billion a year.

And by chance that's the annual investment that we need now if we want to turn this economy around to create the jobs we so badly need — and which would create the wealth and generate the tax — all the tax — we need to clear the deficit.

Which is exactly why we don't need cuts.

But the Conservatives won't do this.

And I'll tell you why.

They would rather the tax cheats of this country have this money than the pensioners of this country have this money.

Better that the cheats have their ill-gotten gains, they say, than the children of this country get the education they need.

And the better the accountants, the lawyers and the bankers have this money they say than the sick, the unemployed, the disabled, the public servants and the defenders of this country have it.

That's the Conservatives' choice. It's a choice to support tax cheats.

It's the wrong choice.

You know that.

I know that.

Together we must fight them.

We must fight for fair taxation.

We must fight for the jobs of those who will collect tax.

And we must fight so that the honest people of this country can have the money that the Conservatives will give to the cheats.

That's the fight we have on our hands

And friends that is the fight we must win.

I stand by that analysis.

My logic is a simple one, but one that is rarely said. By choosing to leave money in the shadow economy - which is what the government is doing by choosing to cut staff at HMRC - it is deciding that it is better that criminals - because that is what tax evaders are - have money than do children who need education, pensioners who need to keep warm, those on benefits who simply can't make ends meet, the disabled who need services, armed forces who need kit and so much more besides.

I make it clear, this is an explicit choice by our politicians right now: they are choosing to support criminality.

They are doing so because they think the consumer spending of criminal tax evaders is more important to the economy than meeting the social needs of the young, the poor, the disabled, the vulnerable, those who defend and protect us and those who ensure that these services are delivered.

And let's be clear: in making that choice they're saying they think that money paid to the government is wasted. But they're wrong! tax does not disappear. It is not a black hole. It is spent! It is spent on supporting these groups in society who need to spend to meet their needs and in paying the public servants who support them. So it directly supports consumption too. But consumption by different people. Tax collected supports consumption by those in need and those who work for an honest living. But the government is choosing instead to support consumption by those who steal to pay for it.

The choice the government is making by reducing the resources to tackle tax evasion is therefore a simple one. They're saying they think criminals are more important than honest people in real need. And that criminals are more important than people who work for an honest living.

That's [why they choose to ignore £69.9bn of tax evasion in the UK a year.](#)

That's why they're sacking tax inspectors.

And they're wrong to do that. Because in doing so they're ignoring the biggest single criminal activity in the UK, and the one that's tearing the heart out of our society and our economy.

And that's why tax evasion has to be tackled. Now.