

Funding the Future

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A little over a year ago UK Uncut began its protests, and the world looked on, bemused. Unsurprisingly, I wasn't: I knew they'd hit the zeitgeist, although they and Occupy have done so in ways I could never have imagined. It's been my pleasure to support both movements in the last year.

Tomorrow is a mass day of action by UK Uncut. Vodafone remains a rightful target. And the pressure is working. [As the Mail reports:](#)

Deals struck with the tax authorities to wipe billions of pounds off company bills are to be investigated by a former high court judge.

Sir Andrew Park will scrutinise the tax settlements of ten companies — including Vodafone and Goldman Sachs — following allegations that agreements were made between the firms and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to write off unpaid tax bills.

That's the good news.

And it's the right news we need to hear.

But we need do more than that. I've been interviewed a number of times this week on this them and my message is always the same. HMRC has been corrupted from the top down.

It's been corrupted by neoliberal corporate thinking. It's been corrupted into thinking taxpayers are customers. They're not.

It's been corrupted as a result into thinking that tax law is just a contract for services. It's not.

It's been corrupted into thinking that a contract can be varied by consent of the parties, so the operation of tax law is optional at its whim. It's not.

It's been corrupted by people who do not know about tax but do come, especially in the case of some non-execs, from environments where tax abuse is normal, and even rewarded.

It's been corrupted by a cult of personality around Hartnett, that he came to believe.

It's been corrupted by cowardly politicians who do not believe in the state and its right to tax.

And it has to be reclaimed, from the top down for the people of this country so it does its job properly.

So that it collects as much as possible of the missing £95 billions that could pay for the services we need.

So that it creates a level playing field so that all businesses can compete in this country knowing their competition can be expected to pay tax and not undercut them by tax abusing, unlike now where a deliberate competitive advantage is given to the tax cheats.

So that it is seen to offer fair play, and have enough staff to ensure that this is seen to be done in the communities it serves and supports.

So that never again is it captured by big business in its interests.

So that never again does it try to avoid its duty to parliament.

So that never again does it serve the interests of its board.

This can be done.

The question is - will it be done?

The answer is key to our economic, social and cultural future in this country. It's a choice between prosperity, ethics and fairness and living in a criminogenic state.

I know which one I want.