

Funding the Future

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A decade ago an article like this would not have happened.

It does now.

Don't say changing moods is not possible.

This is [Simon Jenkins in the Guardian today](#) (edited, of course):

Osborne is the scourge of public sector unions and condemns tax avoidance, yet he refuses to end the scandal of crown tax havens, from Jersey to the Caymans, that enjoy the benefits of British citizenship while enabling individuals and corporations to evade British tax. Last week the European Union lectured Britain on financial regulation, while harbouring on its borders such fiscal black holes as Monaco, Liechtenstein and Switzerland. The thesis, accepted by governments of all parties, that the rich should be allowed to escape tax for their "wealth-creating potential" has surely been exploded by the credit crunch. It is not the kind of wealth Britain can afford. If Goldman Sachs dislikes paying British taxes it should go to Dubai, not just the first-class lounge at Heathrow.

The control of public expenditure is never perfectly equitable. It is war by other means. But when large sections of the public are being asked to bear the burden of cuts in their standard of living — largely through the action and inaction of government — they are entitled to see at least a semblance of fair play.

Just because lobbyists say bonuses and tax havens are "essential to Britain's recovery" does not mean they are. The government's tolerance of both is more than stupid. It induces cynicism in the public realm and recruits fair-minded people to the cause of St Paul's protesters and public sector strikers. Nothing is more crucial to national wellbeing at a time like this than a sense of equality of misery. The British government derides Greece and Italy as countries where taxpaying is "voluntary". It appears to be voluntary in Britain too.

He's right.

Creating this awareness has taken a lot of effort. Now we need action to address the

issues. When will people get serious about the Tax Gap? It's entirely possible to do so. But only the Greens take it seriously as yet. That's to their credit, and none to anyone else.