

In support of HMRC staff striking tomorrow

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Up [to 20,000 HMRC staff are expected to strike](#) at some time tomorrow. The reason why they're doing so is simple: HMRC, in the face of damning criticism of its management, has decided to bring in private contractors at two sites to handle calls from the public about their tax affairs.

Wholly reasonably PCS staff are defending the taxpayer against this privatisation move which means that access to data on peoples' personal tax affairs will be handed over to private companies without any adequate protection in place.

And quite rightly PCS staff are also defending their jobs. They're hardly well paid now, but call centre operators are bound to create a profit margin in one of two ways. The first is a lower standard of training, meaning calls will be badly managed, and secondly by cutting pay. The combination is a disaster for the effective management of the UK tax system at a time when we know it has been badly managed and when we know the tax gap might be £120 billion a year.

The result is that I support the PCS workers striking tomorrow. It is they who are upholding the standards of public service in this country and the duty of the state to manage its tax system properly without risking the passing of data into the private sector. It's the management of HMRC who know little of tax and who think they're running a corporate entity who are failing the British public yet again. And I suspect any sensible person can see that.