

Funding the Future

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I admit I was pretty annoyed yesterday to find that I had been accused of breaking the Chatham House rule when speaking at and blogging on a meeting at the Social Market Foundation. I consider myself to be a pretty principled person. I would never consciously break an undertaking given.

As I mentioned last evening, no one at the meeting in question referred to the Chatham House rule. One speaker did ask not to be quoted by me on one issue and of course I agreed. And even then the Chair did not refer to Chatham House. And nor, and this I have checked, did the speaker's notes, issued in advance. In other words, I did not breach the rule, and I would not have done.

This matters to me. Whilst I believe in transparency, and very, very, rarely speak off the record, I respect the fact that I am often told things I cannot quote. I go to countless meetings that never get referred to on this blog because it would break relationships of trust to do so. I talk almost every day to journalists on stories that I could as a result break, but of course I don't. I give them my word that I will not do so, and I keep it. A training as a chartered accountant makes the ability to stay silent second nature. It's what I will do if asked to be so (unless criminality is involved, but then I wouldn't be blogging it). I think it important to reiterate this point for the sake of those I speak to.

But what I won't have is either a think tank or HMRC seek to retrospectively impose the Chatham House rule because Judith Knott (I can name her, and will, since the rule did not apply) said things on public record she'd rather were not reported. I'm not here to do that. Nor should anyway else be so either.