

This tax debate is not about the politics of envy, it i...

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There's an extraordinary piece in the Mail today by Max Hastings. I'm not saying it's seminal, but it's all evidence for my belief that something of a tipping point is being reached on the issue of tax. Of course I don't agree with all of it, and I'd refer you to the whole thing and not just the highlights I pick up here to get a tone for it all - where it will be apparent there are some things he says I do not agree with. But that said, [there are things said here](#) that represent sea changes in opinion from the right of politics:

My point is not about the wickedness of wealth — almost all of us want success to be rewarded; income tax rates in Britain are too high. Most of us simply want to see the super-rich, and especially companies, pay a decent share.

Democracy works only if there is general consent, or at least acquiescence. This is placed under huge strain if ordinary citizens on modest incomes face frequent quibbles and niggles from Revenue & Customs about a few pounds, while the wealthy get away with murder. This is not the politics of envy, it is the economics of justice.

If companies and very rich individuals pay pathetically little tax, the burden falls upon the poor saps who cannot or choose not to hide their income and profits.

Of the Exchequer's £447billion take last year, income tax raised £153billion, National Insurance £97billion, VAT £84billion and corporation tax about half that.

It is often, and justly, pointed out that the top 1 per cent of earners contribute 27 per cent of the total income tax take — so the better-off do not get off scot-free. But the super-rich do; and the corporate sector gets away with fiscal murder.

Companies are even allowed to keep secret what they do pay around the world, which is indefensible. If George Osborne wants to do a good day's work for a change, he should insist that any company listed on the London Stock Exchange reveals its tax contribution.

The Chancellor is now being forced to back down over his 'charity tax' scheme — his government scarcely needs any more enemies, and he was foolish not to see the

beartrap. But he has the right idea with his drive to get very rich people and very rich companies to contribute more to making Britain work.

At present many big-hitters pay only 10 per cent or 20 per cent on income, if that much. Those of us who passionately believe in capitalism need to be able convince people earning £35,000 or £40,000 a year, and paying 40 per cent tax through PAYE, that our system is fair. Fat chance, as long as so many fat cats get almost a free ride.

He's right.

And whilst I do not agree with him on tax rates and the need to back down on charity taxation he's right about the fact that 'this is not the politics of envy, it is the economics of justice' and equally right in demanding country-by-country reporting - the case for which is now unassailable.

Times, they are a'changing.