

Funding the Future

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I have read the reports today on donor and charity back lashes on the cap on giving to charities to be applied to the most wealthy giving more than £200,000 a year.

I am not surprised to hear that UNICEF is amongst the charities complaining. I am sure there will be some other aid agencies in the same camp. And there's good reason for that.

You see, they're in the aid business. It's been going on for over sixty years now. There are a fair number of people who have made whole careers out of it. And one thing they're definitely not inclined to do is ask why they're still in business. There are two reasons. First it would put them out of a job if they succeeded in relieving poverty. There's self interest at work here. Second, ending poverty would require change in the world order that would definitely upset their donors. And that would never do.

There is a way to solve poverty. It is to redistribute wealth to democratically elected governments in poor countries that could be held accountable for its use because tax could not be siphoned off by corrupt officials and major corporations into tax havens run by lawyers, accountants and bankers.

Some of the world's aid agencies have been able to embrace this idea of tax justice - and realise what they look at as a result is a post - aid world. Others remain wedded to the aid view of Geldof and Bono - where dependency prevails. Those who want to keep tax relief for rich donors have to be in that camp. It's a world view that does not ask why some are poor; it's a world view that doffs its hat to the wealthy donor without asking why they're rich and at whose expense. It's a perspective on aid that perpetuates non-emergency aid - and that, by implication, requires the perpetuation of poverty. And what is the benefit in that?