

The UK's tax profession shows its true colours - and ge...

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I [noted a while ago](#) the the Chief Executive of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales had commented on recent UK tax scandals. [I thought his comments quite inadequate](#), but others clearly do not agree. Now the [Tax Journal has given some coverage](#) to the stories in the ICAEW web site, noting of comments on Izza's article that:

'Michael Quinlan' claimed that Izza did not have 'the intellect to distinguish between acceptable tax avoidance and the unacceptable'. Izza was 'out of line', he said, adding that major firms of accountants 'have all been deeply involved with aggressive tax avoidance since time immemorial, much more so today'. Izza should 'withdraw or resign', he wrote. But this was not Michael Quinlan, partner and competency leader for stamp taxes at Deloitte, who told Tax Journal that he had not commented and did not wish to do so.

I'll take his word for it, but the comment certainly reflects widespread opinion. For example the Tax Journal noted that long standing tax avoider, Robert Maas said:

he did not think the film schemes 'abhorred' by The Times were particularly aggressive: 'It also seems to me to be wrong for chartered accountants to react to what the press deems to be "public opinion", without a full consideration of the facts. Isn't accountancy built on interpreting facts? I don't promote tax schemes but if a client wants one I'll find it for him. I think that part of my professional duty.'

He added: 'Fortunately, I'm getting old and though I would like to have seen out my 50 years as a chartered accountant if my professional body no longer wants me, so be it. My conscience is clear; so is my moral compass. Personally I would much prefer my institute to explain to Joe Public that we have an unfair tax system in many respects and that tax avoiders often simply want to redress the balance and achieve what they perceive to be fairer.'

Which is so typical of the accountancy profession: hang democracy and the rule of law is the message; we'll go out to defeat it. That, of course, is the culture of the tax haven pinstripe mafia writ large.

But what's really interesting is that this debate is breaking out now. The profession can finally no longer duck this issue - and if it means some leave, that's a massive benefit to society.

And by the way, they don't escape regulation by leaving. They are just regulated by HMRC instead. Now there's an interesting idea into which many more resources should be injected with the aim of extending that regulation to the profession as a whole in the interests of putting to an end the farce of self regulation once and for all.