

Hartnett's farewell is about as honest as a tax evader'...

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No one seems to have paid much attention to Dave Hartnett's long awaited retirement from HMRC. He left on 31 July, but not before posting this final message on the HMRC intranet:

*Today is my last day before I retire after more than 36 years in the Inland Revenue and HMRC, with over 12 years leading tax and two spells leading the whole Department. It feels rather strange to be writing my last-ever message to you all given the hundreds I have penned in my different guises over the years! I am immensely proud to have been a leader in HMRC and the Inland Revenue, and to have worked alongside so many talented people. Many colleagues have been asking me what I will remember most, and the answer is you — all the people I have been lucky enough to work with over the years — and our customers. I think it would be fair to say that both have caused me the odd difficulty along the way, but have also supplied the greatest moments of pride and humour. Thank you all. I am really very proud of what we have achieved together, particularly by making the world a smaller place for those looking to hide money in offshore tax havens, targeting avoidance, reforming the tax system in the UK, providing tax leadership internationally and improving our own skills and professionalism, most recently through HMRC's Tax Academy. I am delighted to have been HMRC's race champion and having worked with so many talented BAME colleagues. There have been times of difficulty for all of us in HMRC, and I'm sure there will be more challenges in the future, but what it comes down to is this — HMRC has great people doing great work for the good of the UK. That is starting to be recognised externally, and you can all take credit for that. We have the skills and the capability to be a world-leader in tax, and I look forward to seeing HMRC go from strength to strength, building on the solid foundations already in place. Finally, I hope you all enjoy your careers with the Department as much as I have. Best wishes, Dave Hartnett **Permanent Secretary for Tax***

His gall is staggering. As an example, he says he's made it harder to hide money in tax havens. In the Finance Act 2012 the UK Switzerland tax deal was approved. Under this deal - a Hartnett negotiated deal - tax evaders and avoiders in Switzerland don't now have to declare their income arising in that country on their UK tax return. We will

instead trust Swiss banks to tax them properly, to do so completely anonymously and without any ability to check that they are doing it correctly, and in return we will pay the Swiss a significant part of the tax collected and offer the tax payer a lower rate of tax for opting out of UK tax regulation. And all of that is, I stress, deliberately designed to make sure that those who have evaded tax can keep in Switzerland can keep the vast majority of the proceeds of their crime. And Hartnett says he's made life harder for offshore tax evaders? Oh, come on, please let's have some honesty at the end. How long before he pops up as a consultant at one of the Big 4, I wonder?