

Tory MPs promoting the virtues of theft and tax cheatin...

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I was reading '[Britannia Unchained](#)' - the right wing Tory 'shadow manifesto' but five of the 2010 Tory MP intake over the weekend. I hated parting with payment, but you have to know what these people are thinking.

It's an extraordinary book, not least because it is so badly researched and so many of its claims are so obviously unfounded (for example, that 40-45 of adult lives are now spent in retirement a claim that would require people, on average, to retire before their 54th birthday). But it's not what it gets wrong that worries me (much). It's the philosophy inherent in it that is most troubling. Of this there are almost countless examples, but let me take one which has not, as far as I know, been highlighted elsewhere.

On pages 88 and 89 there is a section called 'Black Market Buccaneers'. In essence the argument is that innovation can't happen when there is regulation and so we should be grateful for the existence of the black market - including Chinese counterfeiting - as this is where true innovation now occurs. It's an amazing claim that those who cheat and steal others ideas are to be applauded. But they go further. This is the concluding paragraph of the section:

Clearly, law and order, intellectual property rights and consumer laws exist for a reason, and are on the whole beneficial. But as a sheer experiment in what the poorest entrepreneur's can achieve when nearly all of society's strictures are relaxed the informal economy is pretty hard to beat. The tradeoff between risk and reward is more visible here than anywhere else. As Steve Jobs once famously said, 'It's more fun to be a pirate than to join the navy.'

That is an extraordinary claim.

They happily acknowledge that this free-riding sector may be worth \$10 trillion a year - a least one seventh of the world economy. [I believe it a little more - at \\$11 trillion.](#) [Either way, about \\$3 trillion of tax is lost as a result.](#)

That tax, if paid, would end the need for aid.

That tax, if paid, would have saved Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal.

That tax, if paid, would end child poverty.

That tax, if paid, would educate the poor.

But the Tories ignore that: they only see the individual goal of being a pirate - making a virtue of theft in the process. They ignore the collective and all the value it creates.

And they also implicitly endorse tax cheating. It's a sickening philosophy. And it's alive and well in the Tory party, which [explains why they really aren't trying to close the tax gap.](#)