

Google, Amazon and Starbucks: what their defenders dont...

Published: January 15, 2026, 12:49 am

The defenders of Google, Amazon and most especially Starbucks have been queuing up to defend the companies on various articles on this blog.

The argument, at least in the case of Starbucks, is that the total tax lost may well be less than £10 million - and that I conceded could be true.

But what these defenders of abuse seem not to notice this is a systemic attack on the UK tax system. Or do they notice and not care? Many seem to think the answer is a levelling down of tax rates - and that's a sure sign of those who want to undermine the role of government whilst shifting the burden of tax from rich to poor and from big companies to small.

No wonder this issue has become so important: this is the frontline of political debate as a result. Who pays, and what do we want from government is at the heart of this issue. It's clear the corporations want to free-ride the system; happy to see anyone but them pay whilst demanding all the benefits of the state. That is rational if utterly amoral. And it also reveals an indifference to the states that host activity since no one, Starbucks included, denies they're paying tax in Europe. The suggestion made by the likes of me is that for their own convenience they are paying it to the wrong ones. This is significant since it also suggests that those who analysis this issue by totals of tax paid by the companies are wrong: they replicate that indifference to states as well as to the state which those on the PAC and in the public do not share.

But it's not just the companies who are to blame; it is a culture and a politics of abuse that is to blame. It's the same culture and politics that is indifferent to democracy and treats it with contempt, seeking for example to reduce the number of MPs and their role whilst offering faux democracy for police commissioners.

Their defenders either don't get this, or support that attack on democracy: there's no line in between.