

# One tax law for us and another for the 1% puts democrac...

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Nick Cohen [had a great article in the Observer](#) this morning saying:

*If you want to understand any society, look at its tax system. If one man or a clique can tax at will, you can conclude the society is a dictatorship or oligarchy. If you have reasonably progressive and universal taxes, you can assume it is a modern democracy.*

He's right. But as he also notes:

*Britain has elements of democratic taxation. The same rules on occasion apply to everyone. But other parts of the system resemble the ancien régime of pre-revolutionary France. Only in our case the privileged estates the government exempts from taxation are the corporations rather than the aristocracy and the church.*

And there is good reason for this:

*For a generation, politicians have extended exemptions by selling Britain as a country where big businesses would be lightly taxed.*

*British politicians and a series of negligent and doltish managers ordered the Revenue to back away from big business.*

As he concluded:

*I have written before that the willingness of New Labour, the Tories and the Revenue's senior managers to pursue the working and middle classes while exempting powerful corporations would turn the British into Italians. We would start to believe that tax evasion was respectable. We would view a state that hit the ordinary man and woman while sparing big business as immoral and illegitimate. That moment is drawing closer. The old complaint that there is one law for the rich and another for the rest does not do justice to the debasement of public authority in Britain. When it comes to tax, too often there is no law for the rich whatsoever.*

And that is the stark reality that too much of the accounting profession is all too willing

to deny. But in doing so they deny the essence of democracy itself, and that's what is at stake here.