

# The Tories talk out the UK Transparency Bill - whose pr...

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The [United Kingdom Corporate and Individual Tax and Financial Transparency Bill](#) had its second reading in parliament yesterday, [as I noted at the time](#). Michael Meacher presented the Bill with an able speech, but it was clear from the start of business on the day that the Tories were intent on talking the Bill out so that a vote could not be reached.

An uncontested Bill - the Deep Sea Mining Bill - was filibustered so that its unopposed second reading took almost four hours of parliamentary time. The MPs responsible were Tory Minister Alistair Burt and Tory MPs Barry Gardiner, David Nuttall (especially), Philip Davies and Jacob Rees-Mogg. [Of the latter the Speaker had to say at one point:](#)

*Order. I am all agog at the racy and intoxicating oration that the hon. Gentleman is delivering to the House, but I have two concerns. First, if the hon. Gentleman leads a lengthy sojourn, either accompanied or unaccompanied, in the terms that he describes, he may be sorely missed in North East Somerset. Secondly, I feel sure that, ere long, notwithstanding the quite legendary eloquence that the hon. Gentleman has thus far deployed, he will turn his attention to the contents of the Deep Sea Mining Bill itself.*

The result was that only just over an hour was available to the House to debate the Bill I had drafted for Michael.

Michael's argument can perhaps be summarised in the following quote:

*It is no exaggeration to say that the effect of these measures on the UK system's capability would be nothing less than transformational. We have repeatedly been shocked by multinational corporations and their armies of City lawyers and accountants regularly running rings around the UK tax authorities-sometimes, one might think, with the apparent complicity of Government-but that is not inevitable or irreversible. My Bill will redress a massive injustice in tax burdens, put a stop to enormous tax abuse by large companies which has persisted for far too long and make a huge contribution to reducing the budget deficit. I commend it to the House.*

The aim of the Bill is simple: it is to beat tax avoidance and tax evasion by transparency. It asks no one to pay a penny of tax they do not owe; what it does demand is that companies pay what they owe, and no more.

But not only had the Tories tried to talk the Bill out before debate even started, they did so again once the debate got under way. [Jacob Rees-Mogg was on his feet again straight away, saying:](#)

*It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Mr Meacher), partly because I disagree with almost everything he has said, but also because it is rather refreshing that Opposition Members are willing to say it. Most of them hide their true socialist credentials, but the right hon. Gentleman is a socialist red in tooth and claw. That is admirable, because it gives us on the Conservative Benches something to get our teeth into and oppose.*

And so we got a political response that ignored what the Bill says. Instead we had this from Rees-Mogg (again):

*[This Bill] would undermine the right of property—again a fundamental right that we ought to enjoy. Going back to the Magna Carta, the Crown cannot take property away from people unless there is a judgment—a judgment in a court—against them; it cannot be done on the basis of some failure to meet some bureaucratic standard. This seems to me to illustrate where the Conservative, a believer in the rights of property and a believer in the individual, stands up against the socialist, a believer in the collective and the rights of the collective to override the rights of property. I stand four-square in favour of the rights of property and four-square, too, in favour of the rights of the Crown dependencies, by and large, to regulate their own affairs.*

This is utter nonsense. The right to enjoy an income stream is entirely dependent upon having paid the tax due on it. And this Bill would make it clearer who had and had not done that - so creating a level playing field on which all honest businesses could operate.

But Rees-Mogg and those Tories who followed him opposed the creation of that foundation for honest business in this country. Which says a great deal about their supposed commitment to free enterprise, which is in fact a commitment to the anarchy of a free for all in which those who abuse most, and even break the law, win most.

If opposing that is being a socialist, so be it: I'm proud to be accused of being so in that case.