

## Why won't politicians collect tax that's due?

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I have often argued about the absurdity if the UK underinvesting in HM Revenue & Customs at cost to us all in terms of lost public services and in the distortions created in the economy as a result of the unfair competition that is created by the failure to collect taxes from cheating businesses.

It is a sad fact that we are not alone in suffering this politically imposed failure to uphold the rule of law. The US suffers the same affliction as [David Cay Johnston noted in a piece in The Nation yesterday](#) where he reported on the U.S. Budget package, saying:

*Another \$345.6 million will be cut from the budget of the Internal Revenue Service, in a favor to big corporations and the rich that will have little effect on workers, whose taxes are withheld before they are automatically processed via computer. The cuts mean fewer audits of corporations and rich individuals. Top corporate auditors earn at most about \$150,000 a year, but find on average \$19 million of taxes owed. To Congress, that \$126 to \$1 ratio is not worth the political cost, but shifting more of the burden of government to you is cheap and easy.*

What motivates this lack of will on the part of politicians to uphold the laws that they pass?

First of all we should not dismiss corruption. This may not involve brown envelopes of cash; indeed, I very much doubt it does. But it does involve favours for parties and that continual hope for preferment once a parliamentary career is over, whether by choice or not.

Then there is ideology. Far too many MPs, Senators and Congressmen seek membership of a legislature they despise and which they suggest can only do harm. They do, therefore, ideologically seek to undermine its capacity to deliver the wellbeing we know government can create.

And thirdly, there is incompetence. Despite the efforts of a few to point out the absurdities of this sort of behaviour there can be little doubt that we are drowned out

by those lobbying for cuts. It takes tenacity and effort to [find the truth](#). Not all elected politicians are endowed with such capacities.

So we end up with austerity, maladministration, a failure of the rule of law, poor growth and public dissatisfaction. And it would be so easy to do so much better now if only the political will was present.