

## My interview on the Today programme this morning

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I was on Radio 4's Today programme this morning - making an early morning 80 mile round trip to a studio to do it.

Their [blurb for the piece was](#):

*Downing Street has rejected calls for an inquiry into the handling of 3,000 suspected tax evaders with accounts at HSBC's Swiss private bank, which has so far led to a single prosecution. The prime minister's spokesman said officials had done what they could to make sure people paid up and argued it was "right that HMRC prioritised collecting revenues" before bringing cases where they could work with prosecuting authorities. But is this a case of one rule for the rich and another rule for small business owners who come under the scrutiny of HMRC? Our reporter Sima Kotecha has spoken to Geoff Jones - a businessman who spent 5 years battling with HMRC over tax payments he was ordered to make and Richard Murphy is a chartered accountant, tax researcher and runs the pressure group Tax Research UK.*

The actual [interview can be heard here, at 1:34](#).

I hope the points I made were clear, but in case of doubt there were three issues I wished to highlight.

The first was that there has been a loss of confidence in HMRC and not just amongst the SME community, which the report that preceded the interview addressed.

The second point was that this loss of confidence is not solely because of a relatively aggressive stance taken by HMRC towards small business, although that undoubtedly exists, including cases where simple, honest, mistakes have been made. The loss of confidence is much more pervasive than that, and comes from a lack of credibility amongst HMRC's management and its resulting inability to both explain and manage its affairs. The fact that this was the eighth day in a row on which HMRC had failed to put somebody up for interview on the Today programme is some indication of that.

And third, I wished to draw attention to Labour's plan to review the structure and

workings of HMRC after the election, and tried to broaden that out to invite a similar commitment from all political parties, because I think that important.