

Michael Meacher: a note of appreciation

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Many readers will be aware that Michael Meacher MP died yesterday.

I had the chance to work with Michael during the last parliament and last saw him just four weeks ago. He was 75, but was re-elected to the Commons in May and had no intention of retiring: politics was his life. He had been in the Commons for more than 40 years.

This is not an obituary: I did not know him well enough to offer any such thing. It is instead more a note of appreciation and thanks. I had known Michael for a number of years when in 2012 he won the chance to present a private member's bill in the Commons and asked me if I would like to draft a bill on a tax justice theme. After discussion the [General Anti Tax-Avoidance Principle Bill resulted](#).

The Bill was lost, of course: it was talked out by government back benchers but it served a useful purpose. By presenting a stronger Bill than the government sponsored General Anti-Abuse Rule (which I was also involved in writing) those opposed to any such idea felt duty bound to back the government rather than Michael's tougher measure. One of its key ideas - that penalties apply if the GAAR is abused - has now also been adopted by George Osborne.

A year later Michael won in the ballot to present another Bill, and we were back in action once more, this time with the [United Kingdom Corporate and Individual Tax and Financial Transparency Bill 2013-14](#). This out forward an amalgam transparency measures including on the record country-by-country reporting as well as automatic information exchange from UK based banks to HMRC on corporate activities to tackle tax evasion.

I well remember Jacob Rees-Mogg talking this Bill out saying he did not want any more tax collected in the UK for any reason and Michael's indignation at his doing so. But that was Michael: a man who would try on a point of principle and do it again even if he had lost if he thought it the right thing to do.

I liked Michael. He was an unashamed Christian socialist who was not particularly popular with colleagues as a result who thought doing the right thing more important than that popularity.

I will miss him. My condolences to his family, parliamentary staff and friends.