

The Pandora Papers are old news: the question is whethe...

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I have not given the so-called [Pandora Papers that are exciting some of the media and the tax justice movement much attention](#). There are a number of reasons for that.

First, these papers do not seem to tell us anything very new. The wealthy, and some who are corrupt, used offshore to undertake nefarious activity. That is something we already knew.

Second, this leak is of relatively old data. We do not know much from it how things have changed in recent years as a result of measures now taken, and as a result I am not convinced that this information is in a real sense very useful.

Third, some of the revelations are pretty weak. For example, whilst I am not known to have any great love of Tony Blair's financial arrangements (I once won a prize for explaining them) to say that he did anything extraordinary by buying a UK business property wrapped in an offshore company is to simply point out that this is the way in which almost all UK commercial property is now traded. I suspect that every single major pension fund in the UK does this every day, but that fact is not being highlighted. The story here is not so much about Blair but about the failure of the government to tackle this, which is the real scandal.

Fourth, the funding of political parties from offshore is significant, but didn't we know that was happening?

Fifth, no one that I have seen so far is saying the UK is no better regulator of companies than most of tax haven locations, and that it also provides far too much corporate secrecy, which may well be much more damaging to our economy by permitting more domestic tax evasion than happens offshore. That is a serious omission by those making comment.

Sixth, there are much bigger issues tax justice should be looking at. Start with the national insurance increase; link them to universal credit cuts; build in the failure to effectively tackle wealth inequality by taxation; add in the need to tackle an austerity narrative and then tax justice would be hitting new targets, instead of raking old muck.

I very much doubt that tax justice can use this old material again. It is out of date. The real question now is not what did happen, but whether it has changed? The current reports are not addressing that question well enough.

And the second current issue is that it really is time for tax justice to move on and talk about what might well be more important in tax now. Tax haven reform is important. So is UK corporate reform. But I am not sure that these revelations are going to make much difference to either of those agendas now, and that's why I am hoping for better campaigning in the future.