

How to Get Filthy Rich: a review

Published: July 10, 2026, 6:26 am

I watched Gary Stevenson's Channel 4 documentary, *How to Get Filthy Rich With Gary Stevenson*, last night. I have a recommendation for you. It is that you do not waste your time.

This programme is deeply embarrassing. Gary shows himself quite unable to make the argument he sets out to deliver and, in the process, undermines the case for any form of increase in tax on wealth by failing to win any of the arguments with any of the people that he interviews, whilst emoting extensively, blubbing occasionally, proving himself to be all heart and no head, and someone lacking the expertise needed to make his case.

That said, I admit that I did not expect to be a fan of this programme. Gary Stevenson and I disagree on whether we need a wealth tax. My argument is that a wealth tax is the best way to tax wealth, except for all the other, much better alternatives set out in my [Taxing Wealth Report](#), which suggests that there are opportunities for additional revenue, if that is the goal, much in excess of anything that Gary predicts to be possible. I was almost bound to disagree with this programme as a result.

What did, however, astonish me is that Gary appeared to do no more preparation for this programme than he did for his YouTube videos. In those, he has admitted that he is not a tax expert and does not know how a wealth tax could be designed or work, and that fact remained very apparent in this programme. In fact, what he revealed was that:

- * *He believes in the household analogy. In other words, he thinks that the government must raise tax before it can spend, and this is not true.*
- * *He thinks that, as far as the government is concerned, money is scarce, when it is not because it creates the stuff.*
- * *He believes tax is the only way to tackle inequality, when it is very clearly only one way, with better regulation, better fiscal policy, better Social Security, better education, better control of interest rates, and a straightforwardly better understanding of*

economics all playing at least as much a part as taxation can. That does not mean that tax is unimportant, but it is just one of many tools, and the wealth tax is a poor tool within that tax option.

*In addition, Gary was let down by the programme makers, from the moment they chose to call it the series *How to Get Filthy Rich*, which was not what it was about, to the fact that they had obviously not done their homework.*

They also failed to prepare Gary for the confrontational interviews they asked him to undertake, which, without exception, he handled badly, failing to have almost any counterarguments to his opponents' claims, making him look ill-prepared, lacking in expertise and without a case to make.

His problem was clear: when, as he acknowledged, he set out to make himself a millionaire within a neoliberal framing of wealth, which he obviously believes in, his chance of successfully arguing with those who endorsed that same mindset was very low, and he never came close to successfully doing so.

The result was a programme that was just dull. As entertainment, this failed just as badly as it failed as reasoned argument.

I thought I was being incredibly negative in thinking this, so I then checked for reviews in the media and found them in the Daily Telegraph, the Financial Times and The Guardian. It is unsurprising that the first two were not enthusiastic, but I think the [Guardian review](#) wanted to be, yet it too ended up feeling that this was a massive lost opportunity and a failure. Its final section was:

Tax lawyer and adviser Dan Neidle deals the final blow towards the end of the programme by summing up the underlying problem of everything that has gone before. "You are unable," he tells Stevenson coolly but firmly, "to separate your emotional reaction to inequality from a rational assessment of the best tools for it."

This, really, is where a truly amazing documentary could have begun. Instead of Stevenson being left floundering, without convincing comebacks to any of them (was he not briefed? Was he paralysed in front of the camera? Has he simply spent too much time preaching to the choir and forgotten what it's like to be challenged? Or is Neidle right in his frustrated pronouncement that "There's no evidence you've ever thought about it!"), we could have had an hour of him being led through wider issues by a genuine expert and letting us all learn something along the way. This way was just a faintly embarrassing waste of time.

My conclusion? It is the same as that which I supplied to Channel 4 when they asked me whether I thought they should make this programme before it was commissioned. I told them that if they wanted to make a programme on the subject, they should commission it from somebody who knew about economics, tax, and the way government finance

worked.

I never heard back from them thereafter, and that does not worry me. What does worry me is that this programme might actually have put back the case for taxing the income and gains from wealth more. Precisely because doing that matters, this programme was a failure, and I suspect that even Gary's most ardent fans would have to agree.