

Edinburgh MSP backs tax justice



Gordon MacDonald MSP got on board with the campaign for tax justice when a double-decker bus on a mission pulled up outside the Scottish Parliament earlier this week.

Christian Aid and Church Action on Poverty's 'Tax Justice Bus' was in Scotland, as part of a 53-day tour of the UK and Ireland, to highlight how global tax dodging is hurting the poor in the UK and beyond.

The Edinburgh Pentlands MSP was welcomed on board to 'tick for tax justice', and is now inviting his constituents to learn how they too can make a difference in the fight against tax dodging.

Tax dodging is an injustice that keeps some people poor while others get richer. It robs countries of the taxes they are owed – money that could be spent on essential services such as health, education and welfare. Both the Prime Minister and Chancellor have condemned aggressive tax avoidance as morally wrong.

Christian Aid and Church Action on Poverty think the system must be changed and that David Cameron should use his global leadership to end financial secrecy, so tax dodgers have nowhere to hide. The charities want people to 'Tick for tax Justice' by signing a petition that calls on the Prime Minister to push for measures that would require:

- Companies to report on the profits they make and taxes

they pay in every country in which they operate.

- Tax havens to automatically share information about the money flowing through them with other countries.

The stop outside the Scottish Parliament coincided with increasing public awareness of tax dodging, and the impact it can have on services both at home and abroad. It is possible that Holyrood could assume greater tax powers in the coming years, via enhanced devolution or independence, and the Scottish Parliament is to debate Tax Justice on 14th November. A parliamentary motion commending the Tax Justice Bus Tour has already garnered the support of some 35 MSPs.

Gordon MacDonald MSP said: *“There is a global tax avoidance industry that incorporates banks, accountancy firms and corporate lawyers whose whole focus is corporate tax avoidance. Recent estimates have identified that substantial sums are being hidden in tax havens. If international companies paid a fair share of their revenue in tax in the countries they operate would we need as much international aid and would there be cuts in the UK welfare benefit system”*

Kathy Galloway, Head of Christian Aid Scotland, said: ‘We estimate that tax dodging by some unscrupulous multinational companies costs developing countries at least \$160 billion a year, that’s one-and-a-half times the total global aid budget. It’s money that could be used to make huge improvements to public services such as healthcare and education, better enabling people to sustain themselves. By making changes to the tax system, people across the world can live healthier, happier and less hungry lives.’

Niall Cooper, Church Action on Poverty, said: ‘At a time when spending cuts are having a devastating impact on the UK’s poorest people and communities, tax dodging is morally

unacceptable. It amounts to robbing the poor. If the Government just collected the £35 billion of tax they know is going uncollected, they could invest properly in tackling UK poverty.'

The Tax Justice Bus is making over 100 stops around the UK, including five days in Scotland meeting with politicians, church leaders, campaigners and members of the public who have been invited to step on board and show their support for an end to tax dodging.

To find out more about the Tax Justice Bus tour follow us on Twitter @taxbus2012 and to take the 'Tick for tax Justice' campaign action visit www.christianaid.org.uk/tax-bus or www.church-poverty.org.uk/taxbus