

News Release

18 April 2011



Quakers urge politicians to save services by taxing rich

Quakers in Scotland are writing to candidates in the forthcoming Scottish elections to urge them to protect services by increasing taxes on the well-off.

The letter, which is going to all constituency candidates of the four main parties, also proposes saving money by replacing ineffective and counterproductive short prison sentences with more effective alternatives, and by not renewing Trident.

Quakers, who have a long-standing commitment to equality, are concerned that cuts will have the severest effect on the poorest in society. While welcoming the recent rise in income tax on higher earners, they are concerned about the disproportionate effect of the VAT increase on those surviving on benefits.

The letter also says that large multinational companies should pay their fair share of tax. Many large companies use tax avoidance schemes, which allow some of them to pay lower rates of tax on their profits than the VAT rate paid by everyone else.

Taxing the richest more will reduce the ratio between the net incomes of the highest and lowest paid. Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett's book *The Spirit Level* shows that in richer societies greater levels of equality correlate with greater life expectancy, greater happiness and lower levels of violence.

David Sterratt of Central Edinburgh Quaker Meeting said: "Even cuts that seem to affect everyone, such as closing a library, affect the poor more. If you're rich you'll still be able to afford books or an e-reader, but if you're poor you won't."

Rosemary Roberts of Central Fife Quaker Meeting said: "Cuts can be false economy. For example, withdrawing support for children in their early years is likely to lead to them having greater problems later in life - which will be a personal tragedy and costlier for society to manage."

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Notes to editor

- For a full copy of the letter, see <http://www.quakerscotland.org/cuts-letter>
- Approximately 25,000 people attend Quaker Meetings for Worship in the UK, and there are 500 Meeting Houses.
- Quakers are known formally as the Religious Society of Friends, and refer to one another informally as Friends.
- For evidence of rates of corporation tax, see the TUC report *The Corporate Tax Gap* <http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/corporatetaxgap.pdf>. For an example of a company, Boots, paying an effective rate of 3% taxation on its profits, see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/dec/11/boots-switzerland-uk>.

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What Quakers Say

- There is something sacred in all people.
- All people are equal before God and each person is a unique and precious child of God.
- True religion leads to respect for the earth and all life upon it. Religion is about the whole of life.
- We meet in silence to discover a deeper sense of God's presence.
- Live adventurously.