

# Tax justice

a Quaker concern



"In... conditions of gross inequality of wealth and power, it will be impossible to create the equality of esteem which we believe is central to any faith which sees all human beings as equally children of God. We are, therefore, clear that taxation is a fit instrument for a fairer sharing of the community's resources and the provision of good services for all."

*Quaker corporate social testimony, 1997*

# We need to talk about tax

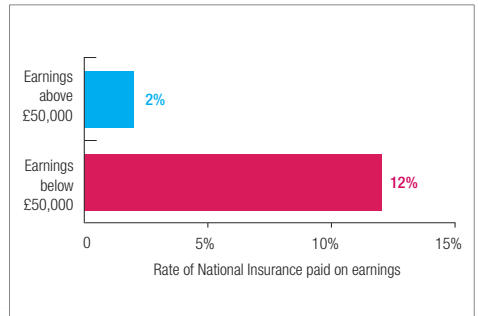
Quakers are campaigning for a tax system that fosters peace, sustainability, equality and integrity. A fair tax system is a key tool for building a fair society and is necessary to:

- **support public goods**, such as healthcare, education and innovation
- **prevent the concentration of wealth** in too few hands
- **encourage democratic participation** in society
- **preserve a safe climate** by rapidly phasing out oil, coal and gas.

*Quaker faith & practice* 20.54 states that “we shall not attempt to evade our proper obligations to the community by way of taxation”. Quakers in Britain joined the campaign for a Tax Dodging Bill in 2014.

## A fair tax system

There is, however, more to tax justice than simply paying what you owe. A fair tax system can lead to greater equality. Income tax in the UK is progressive: the higher your income, the higher the proportion you pay. But for other taxes, including National Insurance, the opposite is true. When all taxes are included, the poorest people pay the highest proportion of their income in tax.



Meanwhile, the UK has almost no taxation on wealth – and wealth inequality is rising.



## Positively taxing

All too often, tax is talked about in negative terms. To encourage a deeper, more positive understanding of taxation, Quakers are working with like-minded organisations to:

- **start conversations** in homes, town halls, offices, and places of worship about tax and what it is for
- **promote the Quaker vision** of a fair tax system that redistributes from richer to poorer, supports healthcare and education, and discourages harmful activities such as arms production and fossil fuel use
- **call for tax transparency** and stricter measures to stop tax dodging
- **explore how to tax the wealth** held in UK land and property more effectively
- **explore how 'green' taxes could help** phase out fossil fuels and fund the zero-carbon transition, while avoiding a negative impact on low-income households.

A group of Quakers in Scotland are campaigning for a Land Value Tax to claim back the wealth held in land for the benefit of all. They are asking Friends to help build public awareness by talking directly to politicians, organising hustings or calling radio phone-ins.

**“These kinds of interventions might help others to engage with the ideas. In this way, in time, we can change the political discourse.”**

Jocelyn Gaskell, *Towards equality: a Quaker campaign for a Land Value Tax*

- **How do you feel about our tax system?**
- **Where could you start a conversation about it?**



## Tax and the Quaker values

In his book *The joy of tax*, Quaker and tax campaigner Richard Murphy proposes that a good tax system should be underpinned by principles of peace, equality, truth and simplicity – the Quaker values.

He argues that through removing opportunities for economic conflict, tax has the potential to foster peace.

This means: “reducing inequality in society, using resources more equitably, making sure all basic needs are met and at the same time providing people with access to the means to make their own livings in the way that they want”.

Richard Murphy, *The joy of tax*, Penguin 2016

- Do you agree that tax can be a tool for building peace?
- Is our tax system founded on truth?
- How can we use tax to build a more equal society?

To explore these issues in more detail and read about the Quaker vision for a new economy, visit [www.quaker.org.uk/taxjustice](http://www.quaker.org.uk/taxjustice). You can also download workshop session plans for use with your Quaker worshipping community.

To find out more about Quaker work on tax justice and to get involved, contact our Economics and Sustainability team on 020 7663 1055 or at [economicjustice@quaker.org.uk](mailto:economicjustice@quaker.org.uk).

**[www.quaker.org.uk/taxjustice](http://www.quaker.org.uk/taxjustice)**

