Parliamentary Reception: We can’t do this alone, says minister

Briefings

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Exchequer Secretary Dan Tomlinson emphasised the importance of partnership with the tax profession in his remarks at the CIOT’s Parliamentary Reception, held on the House of Lords Terrace in July.

Addressing CIOT President Paul Aplin, the minister Dan Tomlinson said that the government’s objective was to create a system that is ‘easier to comply with, harder to abuse and more trusted by taxpayers’. However, he continued, HMRC couldn’t do it alone. ‘If we want a tax system that works in practice, we have to build it with the people who help taxpayers get it right. Your organisation and its members are an essential part of that. You have long been one of HMRC’s most important critical friends: advising taxpayers, interpreting complexities and telling HMRC where policy, guidance and services are working, and where they are not. This challenge is vital. We won’t always agree – that is natural and healthy – but the value of partnership is really very clear.’

Speaking earlier, Paul had stressed that better tax administration should be a common endeavour: ‘We should share the problem, not a partly worked up solution, and we should do so at the earliest possible stage. We should co-create… If we’d done this from day one on MTD, I believe the project would have been delivered earlier, better, at a lower cost and with less controversy.’

The event’s parliamentary sponsor, Lord Mackinlay of Richborough, a chartered tax adviser, told attendees that he had tabled more than 20 questions about MTD, trying to find out what the project is for. The ‘tax gap’ was one of the government’s answers, he said, but he would believe it was serious about this when he saw ‘errant traders’ on the high street being dealt with. ‘I’m all in favour of bearing down on the tax gap,’ he said, ‘but let’s not forget that most taxpayers are honest’.

The fourth speaker at the reception was the Shadow Exchequer Secretary James Wild, who thanked CIOT for ‘all of the support, advice and help that you provide to Opposition Members. When you are looking at a Finance Bill of more than 530 pages… it is very important to have expert advice that you can draw upon, and which is provided very rapidly.’ He also suggested that MPs on the Finance Bill committee should hold public evidence sessions with expert witnesses.

Image



Lord Mackinlay of Richborough on the Terrace with other attendees

Image



Lord Mackinlay, Paul Aplin and Shadow Exchequer Secretary James Wild

Image



HMRC Chief Executive JP Marks, Paul Aplin and tax journalist Santhie Goundar