

BIEN - BASIC INCOME EARTH NETWORK

www.basicincome.org

The Basic Income Earth Network was founded in 1986 as the Basic Income European Network. It expanded its scope from Europe to the Earth in 2004. It serves as a link between individuals and groups committed to or interested in basic income, and fosters informed discussion on this topic throughout the world.

NewsFlash 33, May 2005

BIEN's NewsFlash is mailed electronically every two months to over 1000 subscribers throughout the world.

Requests for free subscription are to be sent to bien@basicincome.org
Items for inclusion or review in future NewsFlashes are to be sent to Yannick Vanderborght, newsletter editor, UCL, Chaire Hoover, 3 Place Montesquieu, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be The present NewsFlash has been prepared with the help of David Casassas, Eri Noguchi, Paul Metz, Ingrid van Niekerk, Paul Nollen, Daniel Raventós, and Philippe Van Parijs.

CONTENTS

1. Editorial

2. Events

*LIEGE (BE), May 1st, 2005: Public discussion on "60 years of social security... and beyond?"

*VALENCIA (ES), 20 - 21 October 2005: Fifth Symposium on Basic Income.

3. Glimpses of national debates

*NAMIBIA: LAUNCH OF A BASIC INCOME GRANT COALITION

*SPAIN: COMMISSION OF REPRESENTATIVES TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF BASIC INCOME *THE NETHERLANDS: NEW UNION LEADER SUPPORTS BASIC INCOME FOR ALL

*UNITED STATES: ALASKA DIVIDEND TO BE DISTRIBUTED IN QUARTERLY PAYMENTS?

*UNITED STATES: TENTATIVE STEPS TOWARD INTRODUCING A BASIC INCOME BILL IN THE CONGRESS

4. Publications

5. About the Basic Income Earth Network

1. EDITORIAL

Thanks to the work of volunteers and sympathizers around the globe, BIEN has been a lively network for almost twenty years now. But a lively network also needs financial resources, be it at a modest level. Two examples: 1. In the following months, BIEN is planning to launch a renovated website, a crucial tool in the process of fostering the discussion on basic income throughout the world. This website will no longer be hosted for free by the University of Louvain (BE), where it

has been located for many years, but - at low cost - by a commercial provider. 2. Now that it has turned global, BIEN has also decided to facilitate the participation of promising basic income advocates coming from developing countries or from disadvantaged groups in its Congresses. Undoubtedly, this objective requires some funds...

Hence, the Executive Committee would like to remind regular readers of the NewsFlashes that they can join the 152 BIEN Life-Members, by sending their name and address (postal and electronic) to Secretary David Casassas (casassas@eco.ub.es), and transfer EUR 100 to BIEN's account (see all practical details at the end of the present NewsFlash).

Current Life-members can become true B(I)ENEFACTORS by giving another 100 Euros or more to the Network, thereby joining Joel Handler and Philippe Van Parijs, our first B(I)ENEFACTORS.

BIEN's Executive Committee

2. EVENTS

LIEGE (BE), May 1st, 2005: Public discussion on "60 years of social security... and beyond?"

In the framework of the celebrations of Belgium's Social Security Act 60th anniversary, the Socialist trade-union FGTB (Fédération Générale du Travail de Belgique) organized a debate on the future of the welfare state, which was held on Labour Day. Basic income was a prominent topic of discussion, since Yannick Vanderborght (University of Louvain) had been asked to present arguments in favour of the proposal to union militants. Whereas Vanderborght concluded his presentation by stating that Belgian unions should support such a reform, Mateo Alaluf, a well-known Professor of Sociology at the University of Brussels, argued that workers' organizations should in no way endorse basic income. Since a basic income would facilitate part-time work and the creation of low paid-jobs, he said, it would foster the dismantling of the Welfare State. At the end of a long debate with the audience, some were enthusiastic about basic income, while most militants remained unconvinced. For further information, please contact the organizer Olivier Starquit (OSTARQUIT@cgspacod.be).

VALENCIA (ES), 20 - 21 October 2005: Fifth Symposium on Basic Income. The Spanish Basic Income Network (Red Renta Básica) is organising the Fifth Symposium on Basic Income in Valencia on 20 - 21 October. The First Symposium was organised by the network in June 2001, and the event has been held annually since then. All specifications and rules for applying to the 12,000-euro grant offered by Red Renta Básica are available at www.redrentabasica.org and www.uv.es/rentabasica.

3. GLIMPSES OF NATIONAL DEBATES

NAMIBIA: LAUNCH OF A BASIC INCOME GRANT COALITION The World Bank uses average per capita income to describe social reality in Namibia with a population of about 1.7million people. The results they get on this basis shows a positive picture of this country in Sub-Saharan Africa, a

region regarded as one of the poorest in the world. According to their per-capita calculation, Namibia is a middle-income-country, an exceptional case for the region. But according to the latest survey by the National Planning Commission, 75.9% of Namibia's population live below the poverty line. Furthermore, Namibia has the most unequal distribution of income in the whole world. The reduction of inequality - one of the greatest legacies of Colonialism and Apartheid - is not only an issue of justice, but also has been identified as a prerequisite for economic growth and investment in developing countries.

A public event held in Windhoek on April 27th 2005 revealed the true face of poverty in Namibia. The launch of the BIG coalition opened the way to address many of the poverty related social and economic issues in Namibia. The event must be regarded as a big step towards an effective reduction of poverty in Namibia. Leading representatives of Civil Society gathered at the headquarters of the Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) in Katutura in order to launch a coalition which aims at installing a Basic Income Grant (BIG) for all Namibians. This grant would be N\$100, paid out by the government on a monthly basis to all citizens of Namibia. Citizens with an income that makes such a support unnecessary would be proportionally taxed to recoup the grant. The BIG for Namibia aims to free the poorest sections of society from severe suffering, from a life without dignity. For financing this venture a progressive tax reform is necessary which would be a first step towards the more equal distribution of wealth in Namibia.

The BIG Coalition of Namibia consists of four key umbrella organisation representing broad parts of the Namibian society: The Council of Churches in Namibia (CCN) with its 15 member churches, the National Union of Namibian Workers (NUNW), the Namibian Forum of Non Governmental Organisations (NANGOF) and the Namibian Network of AIDS Service Organisations (NANASO). Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) and The Labour Resource and Research Institute (LARRI) have also joined the coalition.

The origin of the Namibian Basic Income Grant finds its roots in the Namibian Tax Consortium (NAMTAX) proposal for a Basic Income Grant for Namibia in the year 2002. The consortium was asked to review the current tax system in Namibia. The proposal for a Basic Income Grant formed part of their recommendations to redistribute income in Namibia. The proposal recommended paying a cash grant to every Namibian. For more information see the website of Claudia & Dirk Haarmann, who have been working tirelessly - and successfully - to bring the coalition to fruition in Namibia: <http://www.cdhaarmann.com>

SPAIN: COMMISSION OF REPRESENTATIVES TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF BASIC INCOME On Tuesday 17 May, as a result of an important session at the Congreso de los Diputados (the lower chamber of Spanish Parliament), a resolution on "dependence" including interesting items in connection with Basic Income was approved. In the last few months, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya and Izquierda Unida/Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds (two parties which are giving parliamentary support to the Spanish Socialist Party Government) had presented at the Parliament two bills advocating for the introduction of a Basic Income in Spain. After some contacts with several individuals and organizations, these two parties, together with the Socialist Party (PSOE), have decided to create a Parliament Commission to study and evaluate the political legitimation and the feasibility of Basic Income in Spain. This Commission will be up and running until the end of the current term of

office (in 2008). Here is a part of the text of the "Resolution on Dependence":

"The number of people that are living in conditions of dependence in Spain; the care and attention that are received; the way in which this services are rendered - almost exclusively by their families, specially by women -; and the inequalities in terms of access to the resources, justify the need of a Law for the Promotion of Personal Autonomy and attention to the situation of dependence of people, to reinforce social protection of citizens through the assistance and the provision of basic services with the aim to promote social cohesion.

[...] The 'Congreso de los Diputados' finds it necessary [and urges the Government] to create a Subcommittee, in the heart of the Commission of Work and Social Affairs, for the preparation of a study on the economic viability of a universal Basic Income. The Government will have to collaborate with this Subcommittee by contributing all the documents and information that will be necessary for the running of its work".

For further information, please contact Daniel Raventós (danielraventos@ub.edu) or David Casassas (dcasassas@ub.edu)

THE NETHERLANDS: NEW UNION LEADER SUPPORTS BASIC INCOME FOR ALL The new leader of the Dutch Trade Union Federation (FNV) Agnes Jongerius, who was elected at the Union's Congress on May 24-25, 2005, fully supports the idea of a basic income for all. She thinks that Dutch citizens should receive a monthly check of 350 or 400 EUR.

"With such a plan, we could get rid of a lot of administrative difficulties", she declared in an interview. Jongerius still believes that people should make their best endeavour to find a paid job, but controls should remain soft and incentive-based. She argues that a well-designed basic income proposal would allow the Union movement to stop being on the defensive about welfare state issues. For more information, see FNV's website at <http://www.fnv.nl/>

UNITED STATES: ALASKA DIVIDEND TO BE DISTRIBUTED IN QUARTERLY PAYMENTS?

In discussing basic income, one often assume without further examination that its payment should be made on a regular basis. But what does "regular" mean? Recent developments in Alaska (US), where the only existing basic income scheme has been introduced in the early eighties, show that the answer to this question is not self-evident. According to the Anchorage Daily News (March 30, 2005), Republican Representative Jay Ramras has introduced a bill in the Alaskan House of Representatives (House Bill 186) to allow Alaskans who receive the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) to choose a quarterly payout instead of one lump-sum yearly payment. When basic income checks are sent out every year, the journalist writes, "Alaskans are barraged with ads selling things such as cars, hot tubs and Hawaiian vacations. (...) the sales and the lure of alcohol and other vices can be too tempting to resist for some with a pocket full of cash".

In his Press Release, Representative Jay Ramras argues that "Alaskans can choose how they spend their Permanent Fund Dividend, and they should have some choice as to how they receive it (...). The quarterly payout mechanism would allow some families and individuals to use their Permanent Fund as a household budgeting tool." If the Bill 186 is passed, the quarterly distribution of the PFD would begin in January 2006, with quarterly payments being distributed in October, January, April and July in equal installments. Due to potential costs associated with distributing a paper check, the quarterly distribution will be

only available to those that choose the direct deposit option when filing their application to the PFD.

For further information, see Ramras' website at <http://www.akrepublicans.org/ramras/>

UNITED STATES: TENTATIVE STEPS TOWARD INTRODUCING A BASIC INCOME BILL
IN THE CONGRESS USBIG reports that an ad hoc group of people led by Al Sheahen, author, have been discussing his proposal for basic income (see USBIG Discussion Paper No. 93) with members of the U.S. Congress, whom have expressed some interest in introducing a basic income bill. Sheahen's proposal takes the form of a refundable tax credit for all American citizens. Depending on the Congressional support, they will choose whether to focus on a bill for a full basic income, large enough to eliminate poverty, or for a small, introductory version of the idea, comparable in size to the Alaska Permanent Fund. Of course, the submission of a bill is a very small and comparatively simple step, compared to drumming up the kind of support needed to change the law. For further information contact Al Sheahen at alsheahen@prodigy.net.

4. PUBLICATIONS

*CATALAN

ARCARONS, Jordi, BOSO, Àlex, NOGUERA, José Antonio & RAVENTÓS, Daniel (2005). La Renda Bàsica de Ciutadania (una proposta viable per a Catalunya). Barcelona: Mediterrània, 2005.

Already announced in BIEN NewsFlash 31 (January 2005), this book has been published in March 2005. It is the result of a research that started in 2003 and finished in 2004, and was funded by the prestigious Catalan Jaume Bofill Foundation. The co-authors are Jordi Arcarons, professor of Econometrics at the University of Barcelona, Àlex Boso, researcher at the Pompeu Fabra University, José A. Noguera, lecturer at the Autonomus University of Barcelona, and Daniel Raventós, lecturer at the University of Barcelona. All are active members of the Red Renta Bàsica, one of the 11 official sections of the BIEN. This essay is expected to stimulate the debate on Basic Income in Catalonia and, more broadly, in Spain. For further information about its contents, see BIEN NewsFlash 31 or contact Daniel Raventós (ravento@eco.ub.es).

*ENGLISH

ALPEROVITZ, Gar. America Beyond Capitalism. Reclaiming our Wealth, our Liberty and our Democracy. Hoboken (NJ): John Wiley & Sons, 2005, 312p. Now a professor at the University of Maryland after having directed the Washington-based Center for Economic Alternatives, Gar Alperovitz presents in this book a battery of proposal for progressive politics in today's America. Basic income is proposed in the chapter on liberty: "a publicly guaranteed floor-level amount of income (beyond mere subsistence) is essential if liberty is to have meaning in the modern area." A rationale for it is also offered in the conclusion: "The current technological contributions that produce such huge rewards for the fortunate few, in short, are a mere pebble placed atop a Gibraltar of received science and technology that makes the modern additions possible - and that was often paid for by the public, and that can be traced back through many generations, indeed centuries."

In the same vein, Alperovitz quotes from a letter by Nobel laureate Herbert Simon published in a 1998 BIEN newsletter: "at least two thirds [of US per capita income] is due to the happy accident that the income recipient was born in the US", and the corresponding patrimony is therefore up for distribution among all.

5. ABOUT THE BASIC INCOME EARTH NETWORK

5.1. BIEN's executive committee

Co-chair:

Eduardo SUPPLICY esuplicy@senado.gov.br, Federal Senator, Sao Paulo, Brazil
Guy STANDING guystanding@compuserve.com, director of the Social and Economic Security Programme, International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland
Regional co-ordinators:

Eri NOGUCHI en16@columbia.edu, Columbia University, New York, USA
Ingrid VAN NIEKERK ivanniekerk@epri.org.za, Economic Policy Research Institute, Cape Town, South Africa

Secretary:

David CASASSAS casassas@eco.ub.es, Universidad de Barcelona, Spain

Newsletter editor:

Yannick VANDERBORGHT vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be, Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium
Website manager:

Jurgen DE WISPELAERE jurgen.dewispelaere@ucd.ie, University College Dublin, Ireland
Women's Officer and Fund Raiser:

Louise HAAGH, lh11@york.ac.uk, Department of Politics, University of York, United Kingdom

Treasurer:

Karl WIDERQUIST Karl@Widerquist.com, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, United Kingdom

5.2. BIEN's international board

Chair: Philippe Van Parijs

Former members of BIEN's Executive Committee:

Alexander de Roo

Edwin Morley-Fletcher

José Noguera

Claus Offe

Ilona Ostner

Steven Quilley

Robert J. van der Veen

Walter Van Trier

Lieselotte Wohlgenannt

Representatives of national networks:

Ruben Lo Vuolo for the Red Argentina de Ingreso Ciudadano (AR)
Margit Appel for the Netzwerk Grundeinkommen und sozialer Zusammenhalt (AT)
N for the Rede Brasileira de Renda Básica de Cidadania (BR)
Jørg Gaugler for the Borgerlønbevægelsen (DK)
Michael Opielka for the Netzwerk Grundeinkommen (DE)
John Baker for BIEN Ireland (IE)
Loek Groot for the Vereniging Basisinkomen (NL)
Daniel Raventos for the Red Renta Básica (ES)
Bridget Dommen for BIEN Switzerland (CH)
Malcolm Torry for the Citizen's Income Trust (UK)
Michael Lewis for USBIG (US)

5.3. Recognised national networks

ARGENTINA: Red Argentina de Ingreso Ciudadano Founded in March 2004

www.ingresociudadano.org

President: Ruben Lo Vuolo
redaic@ingresociudadano.or

AUSTRIA: Netzwerk Grundeinkommen und sozialer Zusammenhalt Founded in October 2002 www.grundeinkommen.at

Coordinator: Margit Appel redaktion@ksoe.at

BRAZIL: Rede Brasileira de Renda Básica de Cidadania Founded in September 2004 Provisional co-ordinator: Eduardo Suplicy

eduardo.suplicy@senador.gov.br

DENMARK: Borgerlønsbevægelsen

Founded in January 2000

www.borgerloen.dk

President: Jørg Gaugler
per@borgerloen.dk

GERMANY: Netzwerk Grundeinkommen

Founded in July 2004

www.grundeinkommen.de

Spokespersons: Ronald Blaschke, Katja Kipping, Katrin Mohr, Guenther Soelken, Robert Ulmer, Birgit Zenker, kontakt@grundeinkommen.de Contact persons: Katrin Mohr (kmohr@gwdg.de), Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn (strengmann@wiwi.uni-frankfurt.de), and Wolfram Otto (wolframotto@web.de).

IRELAND: BIEN Ireland

Founded in March 1995

Coordinator: John Baker

John.Baker@ucd.ie

Equality Studies Centre

University College Dublin

Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland

Tel.: +353-1-716 7104, Fax: +353-1-716 1171

NETHERLANDS: Vereniging Basinkomen

Founded in October 1987 (initially as "Werkplaats Basisinkomen")

www.basisinkomen.nl / E-mail: info@basisinkomen.nl

Coordinator: Guido den Broeder

Igor Stravinskisingel 50

3069MA Rotterdam, The Netherlands

Tel.: +31 10-4559538 or +31 70-3859268

SPAIN: Red Renta Basica

Founded in February 2001

www.redrentabasica.org

President: Daniel Raventos

presidencia@redrentabasica.org or danielraventos@ub.edu Universitat de Barcelona, Facultat d'Economiques Departament de Teoria Sociologica i Metodologia de les Ciències Socials Avda.

Diagonal 690, 08034 Barcelona, Spain

Tel.: +34.93.402.90.51, Fax: +34.93.322.65.54

SWITZERLAND: BIEN Switzerland
Founded in September 2002
President: Pierre Hrold c/o Jean-Daniel Jimenez jean-
da.jimenez@bluewin.ch 39, rue Louis-Favre 1201 Geneva
Tel.: +41 22 733 41 09 or +41 78 847 47 56

UNITED KINGDOM: Citizen's Income Trust
Founded in 1984 (initially as "Basic Income Research Group")
www.citizensincome.org
Director: Malcolm Torry info@citizensincome.org Citizens Income Trust,
P.O. Box 26586, London SE3 7WY, United Kingdom.
Tel.: 44-20-8305 1222 Fax: 44-20-8305 1802

UNITED STATES: U.S. Basic Income Guarantee Network (USBIG) Founded in
December 1999 www.usbig.net
Coordinator: Karl Widerquist Karl@Widerquist.com

5.4. BIEN's life members and B(I)ENEFACTORS

All life members of the Basic Income European Network, many of whom
were non-Europeans, have automatically become life members of the Basic
Income Earth Network.

To join them, just send your name and address (postal and electronic)
to David Casassas casassas@eco.ub.es, secretary of BIEN, and transfer
EUR 100 to BIEN's account 001 2204356 10 at FORTIS BANK
(IBAN: BE41 0012 2043 5610), 10 Rond-Point Schuman, B-1040 Brussels,
Belgium. An acknowledgement will be sent upon receipt.

BIEN Life-members can become "B(I)ENEFACTORS" by giving another 100
Euros or more to the Network. The funds collected will facilitate the
participation of promising BI advocates coming from developing
countries or from disadvantaged groups.

B(I)ENEFACTORS:
Joel Handler (US), Philippe Van Parijs (BE)

BIEN's Life Members:

James Meade (+), Gunnar Adler-Karlsson (SE), Maria Ozanira da Silva
(BR), Ronald Dore (UK), Alexander de Roo (NL), Edouard Dommen (CH),
Philippe Van Parijs (BE), P.J. Verberne (NL), Tony Walter (UK),
Philippe Grosjean (BE), Malcolm Torry (UK), Wouter van Ginneken (CH),
Andrew Williams (UK), Roland Duchâtelet (BE), Manfred Fuellsack (AT),
Anne-Marie Prieels (BE), Philippe Desguin (BE), Joel Handler (US),
Sally Lerner (CA), David Macarov (IL), Paul Metz (NL), Claus Offe (DE),
Guy Standing (CH), Hillel Steiner (UK), Werner Govaerts (BE), Robley
George (US), Yoland Bresson (FR), Richard Hauser (DE), Eduardo
Matarazzo Suplicy (BR), Jan-Otto Andersson (FI), Ingrid Robeyns (UK),
John Baker (IE), Rolf Kuettel (CH), Michael Murray (US), Carlos Farinha
Rodrigues (PT), Yann Moulier Boutang (FR), Joachim Mitschke (DE), Rik
van Berkel (NL), François Blais (CA), Katrin Töns (DE), Almaz Zelleke
(US), Gerard Degrez (BE), Michael Opielka (DE), Lena Lavinias (BR),
Julien Dubouchet (CH), Jeanne Hrdina (CH), Joseph Huber (DE), Markku
Ikkala (FI), Luis Moreno (ES), Rafael Pinilla (ES), Graham Taylor
(UK), W. Robert Needham (CA), Tom Borsen Hansen (DK), Ian Murray (US),
Peter Molgaard Nielsen (DK), Fernanda Rodrigues (PT), Helmut Pelzer
(DE), Rod Dobell (CA), Walter Van Trier (BE), Loek Groot (NL), Andrea
Fumagalli (IT), Bernard Berteloot (FR), Jean- Pierre Mon (FR), Angelika
Krebs (DE), Ahmet Insel (FR), Alberto Barbeito (AR), Rubén Lo Vuolo

(AR), Manos Matsaganis (GR), Jose Iglesias Fernandez (ES), Daniel Eichler (DE), Cristovam Buarque (BR), Michael Lewis (US), Clive Lord (UK), Jean Morier-Genoud (FR), Eri Noguchi (US), Michael Samson (ZA), Ingrid van Niekerk (ZA), Karl Widerquist (US), Al Sheahan (US), Christopher Balfour (AND), Jurgen De Wispelaere (UK), Wolf-Dieter Just (DE), Zsuzsa Ferge (HU), Paul Friesen (CA), Nicolas Bourgeon (FR), Marja A. Pijl (NL), Matthias Spielkamp (DE), Frédéric Jourdin (FR), Daniel Raventós (ES), Andrés Hernández (CO), Guido Erreygers (BE), Alain Tonnet (BE), Stephen C. Clark (US), Wolfgang Mundstein (AT), Evert Voogd (NL), Frank Thompson (US), Lieselotte Wohlgenannt (AT), Jose Luis Rey Pérez (ES), Jose Antonio Noguera (ES), Esther Brunner (CH), Irv Garfinkel (US), Claude Macquet (BE), Bernard Guibert (FR), Margit Appel (AT), Simo Aho (FI), Francisco Ramos Martin (ES), Brigid Reynolds (IE), Sean Healy (IE), Maire Mullarney (IE), Patrick Lovesse (CH), Jean-Paul Zoyem (FR), GianCarlo Moiso (IT), Martino Rossi (CH), Pierre Herold (CH), Steven Shafarman (US), Leonardo Fernando Cruz Basso (BR), Wolfgang Strenmann-Kuhn (DE), Anne Glenda Miller (UK), Lowell Manning (NZ), Dimitris Ballas (GR), Gilberte Ferrière (BE), Louise Haagh (DK), Michael Howard (US), Simon Wigley (TR), Erik Christensen (DK), David Casassas (ES), Paul Nollen (BE), Vriend(inn)en Basisinkomen (NL), Christophe Guené (BE), Alain Massot (CA), Marcel Bertrand Paradis (CA), NN (Geneve, CH), Marc Vandenberghe (BE), Gianluca Busilacchi (IT), Robert F. Clark (US), Theresa Funicello (US), Al Boag & Sue Williams (AU), Josef Meyer (BE), Alain Boyer (CH), Jos Janssen (NL), Collectif Charles Fourier (+), Bruce Ackerman (US), Victor Lau (CA), Konstantinos Geormas (GR), Pierre Feray (FR), Christian Brütsch (CH), Phil Harvey (US), Toru Yamamori (JP), René Keersemaeker (NL), Manuel Franzmann (DE), Ovidio Carlos de Brito (BR), Bernard De Crum (NL), Katja Kipping (DE), Jan Beaufort (DE), Christopher Mueller (DE) [152].