

BIEN - BASIC INCOME EUROPEAN NETWORK

BIEN was founded in 1986 and aims to serve as a link between individuals and groups committed to or interested in basic income, and to foster informed discussion on this topic throughout Europe.

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BIEN's NewsFlash is mailed electronically every two months to about 1100 subscribers throughout Europe and beyond. It is also made available for consultation or download at BIENOnline

<<http://www.basicincome.org/>> shortly after being dispatched.

Requests for free subscription and items for inclusion or review in future NewsFlashes are to be sent to BIEN's secretary: Philippe Van Parijs, UCL, Chaire Hoover, 3 Place Montesquieu, 1348 Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium, <<mailto:bien@basicincome.org>> .

This NewsFlash has been prepared with the help of David Casassas, Christian Colussi, Sascha Liebermann, Dani Raventos, Eduardo Suplicy and Ingrid van Niekerk

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6. About BIEN

1. EDITORIAL

In the history of an idea, a handful of historical events are of very special significance. In the case of basic income, one of them took place this month. The president of one of the largest and most populated countries in the world signed into law a proposal previously adopted nearly unanimously by the national Congress to the effect that a "basic citizenship income", of equal value for all, will be introduced gradually in the country, starting in 2005. The background and significance of the promulgation by Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of the law proposal introduced by Senator Eduardo Suplicy are explained below.

In the meanwhile, preparation for our tenth congress (Barcelona, 18-21 September 2004) continues apace. Senator Suplicy will certainly participate, and President Lula may come to speak on the final morning. Moreover, Catalonia's new government has mentioned basic income in his programme, and several new books on basic income have been published in England, Switzerland and Germany. Please bear in mind that paper proposals for the congress need to reach the chairman of the Scientific Committee (jose.noguera@uab.es) before 31 March 2004.

The Executive Committee

2. TENTH CONGRESS OF THE BASIC INCOME EUROPEAN NETWORK

"The Right to a Basic Income: Egalitarian Democracy"

Barcelona (Spain), 19-20 September 2004

The Congress is being held within the framework of the Universal Forum of Cultures, as part of the Dialogue on "*Human Rights, Emerging Needs and New Opportunities*" organised by Catalonia's Institute of Human Rights (18-21 September 2004). The BIEN congress itself will occupy Sunday the 19th and Monday the 20th of September. An up-to-date version of the programme can be consulted at www.redrentabasica.org.

2.1. STATE OF PANELS

Twelve panel proposals have been accepted provisionally.

- 1) *Basic Income and the Right to Work* (coord. Philip Harvey, pharvey@camden.rutgers.edu).
- 2) *Towards an European Basic Income Experiment* (coord. Loek Groot, lgroot@mail.siswo.uva.nl).
- 3) *Implementing Basic Income: Administrative Challenges* (Jürgen de Wispelaere, jurgen.dewispelaere@ucd.ie).
- 4) *Basic Income and Democratic Republicanism* (coords. Daniel Raventós & David Casassas, ravento@eco.ub.es, casassas@eco.ub.es).
- 5) *Basic Income as a Trade Union Policy* (coords. Alex Bosso & Sergi Raventós, alexbosso@hotmail.com, sravenpa7@socio.ub.edu).
- 6) *Basic Income as a Policy for Fighting Against Child Labour* (coord. Eduardo Calderón, eduardo.calderon@uab.es).
- 7) *Benefits in Kind vs. Benefits in Monetary Form: Strengths and Weaknesses in Different Worlds* (coord. Manfred Bienefeld, ManfredBienefeld@pigeon.carleton.ca).
- 8) *Innovative and Sustainable Financing for Basic Income* (coord. Paul Metz, Metz@integerconsult.org).
- 9) *Basic Income and Spiritual Values: Strong Ethical Arguments in the Basic Income Debate* (coord. Michael Opielka, michael.opielka@isoe.org).
- 10) *From Aspiration to Policy Implementation: Introducing a Basic Income System Category by Category* (coord. Sean J. Healy, sean.healy@cori.ie).
- 11) *Towards a Universal Basic Pension* (coord. Guy Standing, GuyStanding@compuserve.com).
- 12) *After Workfare* (coord. Yannick Vanderborght, vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be).

All panel coordinators should send the complete list of speakers and abstracts to the Scientific Committee (jose.noguera@uab.es) before **31 March 2004**, and, if approved, send the complete papers

before **31 July 2004**.

2.2. CALL FOR PAPERS

If you would like to present a paper that could fit into one of the above panels, do get in touch directly with the coordinator. If your paper proposal is not related to any of the themes of the panels or if for some other reason it cannot be fitted into a panel, you are most welcome to submit it directly to Jose Antonio Noguera <jose.noguera@uab.es>, following the guidelines below. A minimum of 16 slots will be allocated to papers proposed in this way. The earlier you get in touch, the better.

ABSTRACTS

- * In English.
- * No more than 100 words plus title.
- * Should include: complete name of the author, profession and/or institution, postal address, telephone, fax, and e-mail address.
- * Should reach the coordinator of the Scientific Committee (José A. Noguera, jose.noguera@uab.es) before **31 March 2004**.
- * Authors will be informed before 31 May 2004 about whether their paper is accepted or not.

PAPERS

- * Should contribute new insights relevant to the basic income discussion, whether through empirical research, theoretical analysis, or a discussion of conceptual or practical issues.
- * Will be presented orally (maximum 15 minutes) in the workshops, by one of the authors registered as a Congress participant.
- * Are to be submitted to the coordinator of the Scientific Committee (José A. Noguera, jose.noguera@uab.es) before **31 July 2004**.
- * Will be included in a CD to be distributed to all the Congress participants.

3. OTHER EVENTS

SOWETO (ZA), 2-4 December 2004: Reducing Inequality and Poverty : A BIG Solution

Conference held in Soweto, at the Ipelegeng Community Centre, with the participation of several hundred people, including representatives of many non-government organisations, a senior policy specialist from President Mbeki's Office, ILO Director Guy Standing and Brazilian senator Eduardo Suplicy. A few days earlier,

a conference organised in Johannesburg by the women's group Black Sash and the BIG Coalition, focused on the options for financing a basic income in the country.

For further information: Karen Kallman
<kkallman@blacksash.org.za>

BARCELONA (ES), 10 December 2003: 3rd SYMPOSIUM OF THE RED RENTA BASICA

The third conference of Spain's national network on basic income took place at Barcelona's Pompeu Fabra University. A detailed account of it (in Spanish) by Alex Boso and Irkus Larrinaga was published in the most recent issue of the network's newsletter, RRBFash Número 11, Año II, diciembre 2003, which can be obtained from rrbflash@redrentabasica.org. It is also possible to unload the recording of all presentations and many photographs from <http://www.redrentabasica.org> .

For further information:

<mailto:secretaria@redrentabasica.org>secretaria@redrentabasica.org.

WASHINGTON (US), 20-22 February 2004: 3rd CONGRESS OF USBIG

The third congress of the US Basic Income Guarantee Network will again be held in conjunction with the Eastern Economics Association, this time in Washington, DC at the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill.

One of the keynote speakers will be Jay Hammond, the former Alaska Governor who set up in the early 1980s the only universal basic income scheme existing so far.

For further information, <http://www.usbig.net/> and <mailto:Karl@Widerquist.com>.

4. GLIMPSES OF NATIONAL DEBATES

BRAZIL: CITIZEN'S INCOME SIGNED INTO LAW BY PRESIDENT LULA

This was a truly extraordinary event. Overlooking the world-famous Praça dos Tres Poderes designed by Oscar Niemeyer, the ceremonial room of the President's Palacio do Planalto was gradually filling with journalists, photographers, TV crews, ministers and other political dignitaries. Facing the swelling audience, four empty chairs. And behind them, a large wall covered by colourful smiling faces of all ages and races, alternating with an inscription in large letters: "RENDA BÁSICA. Cidadania para todos" (Basic income. Citizenship

for all").

An off voice announced the arrival of the President, and the crowd went quiet, as Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his wife Marisa sat down. By their side, the Ministro da Casa Civil (Brazil's de facto Prime Minister) José Dirceu, and Federal Senator Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, Lula's only opponent in the Worker's Party's presidential primaries and author of the law proposal which the President was there to sign.

Summoned by the off voice, I rose to the pulpit to indicate briefly what I saw as the world-wide significance of the event. Next was Senator Suplicy's turn, visibly moved, who briefly retraced his long fight for the introduction of a guaranteed minimum income in Brazil, eloquently recited a poem, restated the key advantages of a universal citizen's income over means-tested schemes, thanked the various Workers' Party heavyweights who had helped the proposal through the critical stages, and ended in a way that did not exactly go unnoticed in the Brazilian press, by warmly hugging the president. After ceremonially signing the law, Lula paid homage to the determination of his old comrade, whom he described as the inexhaustible Don Quixote of minimum income, while warning that there was no magical solution to Brazil's problems and that the new law would only be introduced gradually.

Notwithstanding this presidential caution, this was definitely a "day of glory" for the very popular 62-year old Sao Paulo Senator, surrounded for the occasion by his 95-year old mother, his ex-wife and mayor of Sao Paulo Marta Suplicy, several other members of his family and many friends. A first culmination in his fight had been the unanimous adoption of his 1991 minimum income proposal by the federal Senate, never endorsed by the Chamber of Deputies. His more ambitious 2001 citizen's income proposal, instead, was approved with some amendments by the Senate in December 2002 and by the relevant commissions of the Chamber of Deputies in September and November 2003. The President had until January 2004 to either veto or sanction it. He chose the latter.

What will now happen? As initially formulated, the 2001 Suplicy proposal stipulates that, subject to it being endorsed by a national referendum in 2004, "an unconditional basic income, or citizenship income" will be introduced in 2005 for every Brazilian citizen or foreign resident for five years or more, that it will be of equal value for all, payable in monthly amounts and sufficient to cover "minimal expenses in food, housing, education and health care", "bearing in mind the country's level of development and budgetary possibilities". Two main amendments were made before unanimous approval by the senate: the idea of a referendum was dropped, on

the ground that everyone would be in favour anyway, and a new article was added, stipulating that the basic citizenship income "will be realized in steps, at the discretion of the Executive, giving priority to the neediest layers of the population". It is with these two amendments that Suplicy's proposal was signed by Lula.

From the second amendment it follows, no doubt, that Brazil is bound to remain stuck for quite a while with a means-tested system. But this does not make the law meaningless. Firstly, the existence of the law makes progress easier towards a stronger integration of existing assistance schemes with one another, and towards a stronger integration of the social assistance system with both the social insurance system and the income tax system, as Brazil's federal government is henceforth legally entitled to take any number of further steps, in a financially responsible way, towards a full universal basic income.

Secondly, the long-term perspective firmly asserted in the new law should help face the powerful objections that will no doubt arise soon, as the federally funded means-tested system keeps getting more comprehensive and less stingy, and as individual and collective beneficiaries strategically adjust to its getting established. When over 50% of the active population works entirely in the informal sector, the income test needs to rely essentially on declarations of income earned by the beneficiaries. As the officials in charge of the existing income-tested Bolsa Familia system are well aware, there is no realistic way of seriously checking whether the declarations are correct. This generates a dilemma. Either one needs to be ready for major problems of arbitrariness in and resentment about local decisions of inclusion and exclusion, in particular of a clientelistic kind. Or one needs to devise more observable alternative proxies of income poverty, such as the number of light bulbs, the quality of the material used for the house or how well fed the children look, at the expense of discouraging systematically a diligent use of the modest resources poor households have.

A genuine citizen's income would get rid of these problems in one swoop, while extending support to low-paid formal sector workers. Of course, progress towards a full-fledged basic income must be gradual - for example through turning the existing means-tested Bolsa familia and the existing income tax exemption for dependent children into a universal child benefit system that would also benefit the working families that are neither poor enough to be entitled to welfare payments (about EUR 50 per capita per month) nor rich enough to pay tax (about EUR 400 per month). Nonetheless, the objective unambiguously stated in the law offers the promise of tackling effectively the criticisms the existing means-tested schemes

are bound to trigger without feeling compelled to roll them back. To investigate the way in which the new law could influence the further development of existing programmes, Eduardo Suplicy and I had, on 7-9 January, in quick succession a long evening discussion with Jacques Wagner, Minister of Labour, and his staff; two long meetings with Antonio Palocci, Finance Minister, accompanied by two of his top cabinet advisors, and with Cristóvam Buarque, Education Minister and former Governor of the Federal District of Brasilia, where the Bolsa Escola programme was first introduced; a working lunch with Ana Fonseca, the President's Executive Secretary in charge of the new Bolsa Familia programme (which started integrating existing assistance programmes), accompanied by her staff and by Marta Suplicy, mayor of the city (Sao Paulo) in which the largest municipal assistance programme is operating; and a working breakfast with José Graziano, Minister in charge of the Zero Hunger programme.

The general picture was that there was strong sympathy for the objective, but no clear vision about how to get there and, for the time being, many other priorities. How much difference the new law will make to Brazil's protection system in the coming years is quite uncertain. Of the four ministers we saw, three (Buarque, Graziano and Wagner) were moved to other functions a couple of weeks later in Lula's government reshuffle of 23 January. Nonetheless, the signing of Senator Suplicy's law proposal was an important, indeed incredible, moment in the history of basic income. It will and should give hope and strength to many across the world who view basic income as a central component of a desirable and sustainable future for our societies.

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The pictures of the event shown on the same evening on national TV can be accessed at

http://pop.gmc.globo.com/webmedia/pop_legado.html?player=wmv&usuario=tvjournalismoaberto&tipo=ondemand&programa=817&path=/video/jg/20040108/CRG_mat03_high.wmv&banda=bl

Some coverage in Brazilian national papers can be downloaded from <http://www.estadao.com.br/agestado/noticias/2004/jan/08/141.htm>
<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/dimenstein/noticias/gd080104h.htm>

<http://noticias.bol.com.br/politica/2004/01/08/ult96u56994.jhtm> and more can no doubt easily be found through search engines (try "Lula", "Suplicy", "renda básica de cidadania", "projeto de lei", "8 de janeiro", etc.).

In Spanish, some coverage can be found in the Mexican "El

Economista"

<http://www.economista.com.mx/online4.nsf/0/59439A4A9D8769FA86256E150070F8D8?OpenDocument>

An expanded version of Philippe Van Parijs's address at the ceremony was published in the Brazil's financial newspaper *Valor Econômico* and, in English, in South Africa's *Business Day*. Both versions are available

from <http://www.etes.ucl.ac.be/PVP/PVPInterventions.html>.

For further information: <EDUARDO.SUPLICY@SENADOR.GOV.BR>

GERMANY: UNDERGROUND POSTER CAMPAIGN PAYS OFF

Posters arguing for an unconditional universal basic income under the title "Freedom instead of full employment") were spread on the walls of Frankfurt's underground stations in November 2003 and some of them survived there for several weeks. According to the account of the initiators, the campaign triggered many reactions, not least in the form of graffiti and counter-graffiti on the posters themselves. The local newspaper *Journal Frankfurt* published an article on the campaign, and the organisers have been invited to take part in a TV programme (3SAT). An interview is also being planned in the national green-leaning daily newspaper TAZ. For more details (including some of the most interesting graffiti), see

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SPAIN: BASIC INCOME IN THE PROGRAMME OF CATALONIA'S NEW GOVERNMENT

After the November 2003 regional election in Catalonia, a left coalition government was formed, the first one since Catalonia was granted autonomy after the end of Franco's regime. It consists of three components: the social-democratic party (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya*), the left independentist party *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, and a left party consisting of greens, communists and other leftists (*Iniciativa Catalunya Verds-Esquerra Unida i Alternativa*). Point 5.5 on the new government's programme reads: "To redefine the Minimum Insertion Income [the existing means-tested minimum income scheme on the pattern of the French RMI) so that it becomes a citizen's Basic Income, studying different proposals for its gradual implementation." Some MPs and prominent members of the parties that form the new government are members of the *Red Renta Básica*, Spain's basic income network. In May 2002, Carme Porta (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*) and José Luis López Bulla (*Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds*) already presented a

draft law for implementing Basic Income in Catalonia.
For further information: Daniel Raventós <ravento@eco.ub.es>

5. RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

Lord, Clive. *A Citizen's Income. A Foundation for a Sustainable World*, Jon Carpenter (Alder House, Market Street, Charlbury, Oxfordshire OX7 3PH, UK), 2003, 153p, £8.99 , ISBN 1-897766-87-4. (Author's address: <clive.lord@lineone.net>)

Clive Lord has been advocating a universal basic income for over three decades. He was instrumental in getting the British Ecology Party to become Europe's first political party to include it in its programme, shortly after its foundation in 1973. In this very accessible book, he argues for basic income from a committed Green perspective. After a broad diagnosis of the predicament of "Space capsule Earth" and before an analysis of the political prospects for a Green party in the UK, Lord present basic income as a central tenet in a "strategy of ensuring security in basics, and encouraging initiative (or competition) for anything else", thereby "giving both sides of the old political spectrum most of what they want".

Standing, Guy ed. *Minimum Income Schemes in Europe*, Geneva: International Labour Office, 2003, 291p, ISBN 92 2 114839 4 (printed), 92 2 114840 8 (pdf).

(<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/ses/index.htm>)

A substantial collection of scholarly essays presenting a critical analysis of the working of existing means-tested minimum income schemes in individual countries (Serge Paugam and Nicolas Farvaque & Robert Salais on France, Alfredo Bruto da Costa on Portugal, David Benassi & Eneo Mingione on Italy, Simo Aho & Ilkka Virjo on Finland, Ive Marx and Anna Cristina D'Addio & al. on Belgium, Manos Matsaganis on Greece, Sean Healy & Brigid Reynolds on Ireland), presceded by an introduction by Guy Standing and a cross country comparison by Bea Cantillon & al. Most of the contributions point to the limits intrinsic to means-tested strategies for tackling poverty, and one of them (by Healy and Reynolds) shows explicitly how debate on these limits led to an active public discussion on basic income.

Standing, Guy & Samson, Michael. *A Basic Income Grant for South Africa*, University of Cape Town Press (Juta Academic Publishers, P.

O. Box 24309, LANSDOWNE 7779, Cape Town 8000, Fax: 021 762 7854, <mailto:Sngobeni@juta.co.za>Sngobeni@juta.co.za, <<http://www.juta.co.za>>www.juta.co.za) and International Labour Office (<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/ses/index.htm>), 2003, 152p, ISBN:1-9197-1386-7 .

edited by Guy Standing (ILO and co-chairman of BIEN) and Michael Samson (Director of Research for Cape Town's Economic Policy Research Institute), this is the most comprehensive book so far on the basic income proposal for South Africa, with contributions by both proponents and critics. It includes introductory comments by Zwelinzima Vavi, General Secretary of COSATU (South Africa's Trade Union Confederation), Sheena Duncan, Patron of the Black Sash (an influential women's group) and Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane (Church of the Province of Southern Africa) and a final chapter by Neil Coleman, co-ordinator of the COSATU Parliamentary office. In addition to acknowledging COSATU's key role in raising awareness and fostering research into the possibility of a universal social grant ever since 1998, the book .

FRENCH

November, Andràs and Standing, Guy. *Un revenu de base pour chacun(e)*, Genève: BIT and BIEN-CH, 2003, 160p., ISBN 92 2215126 7.

(<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/ses/index.htm>)

This is the first book on basic income in the Swiss context. The bulk of it consists in written versions of the contributions to the first meeting of the Swiss basic income network (BIEN-CH), held as a prelude to BIEN's IXth congress (Geneva, September 2002). Andràs November, chairman of that network, explains how a general (but means-tested) guaranteed minimum income proposal was approved by Geneva's Assembly before being turned down by referendum. Julien Dubouchet traces the slow development, in Switzerland, from social assistance as help to be subsequently refunded to the unconditional right to an income. Trade Unionist Jean-Pierre Thorel explores the reasons for resistance to the proposal of a basic income. And Bertrand Oberson analyses the likely impact of a basic income of the activity of social workers. These essays are preceded by a substantial introduction by Guy Standing, co-chairman of BIEN, who synthesizes some of the main new insights emerging from BIEN's IXth congress, and by an expanded version of Edward Dommen's entertaining plenary address at BIEN's congress on whether Calvin could be used to justify a basic income. (It can:

Divine grace too is given to man gratuitously!)

Vanderborght, Yannick. *La faisabilité politique d'un revenu inconditionnel. Analyse comparative des débats politique sur l'allocation universelle, l'impôt négatif et le revenu de participation dans cinq pays de l'OCDE (1970-2003)*. Université catholique de Louvain: Département des sciences politiques et sociales, thèse de doctorat en sciences politiques défendue le 27 janvier 2004 (dir.: Michel Molitor and Philippe Van Parijs), 354p. (Author's address: vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be)

An in-depth comparative analysis of the discussions around basic income and related ideas (negative income tax, participation income, refundable tax credits) in Belgium, Canada, France, Ireland and the Netherlands, in order to address the question of the political feasibility of a universal basic income in these five countries. The analysis is based on a large number of interviews with political actors, public officials and social policy experts in the five countries concerned, combined with a careful comparison of the background institutions (a more or less "Bismarckian" social security system, an organisation of the Trade Unions more or less favourable to the development of a separate movement of the unemployed, etc.) and a cautious use of statistical methods recently developed for samples consisting of a small number of cases (QCA). The analysis leads to a systematic reflection of the very notion of "political feasibility" and to a number of final informed guesses: among the five countries considered, the political feasibility of a universal basic income is deemed to be highest in Ireland, lowest in Belgium, Canada and France, while that of a negative income tax is deemed highest in Canada and the Netherlands and lowest in Belgium, and that of a participation income (a universal basic income with a participation constraint) highest in Ireland and the Netherlands and lowest in Canada.

GERMAN

Jahn, Jens-Eberhard. *Mühe und Muße. Grundsicherung, Grundeinkommen, sozialökologischer Umbau der Gesellschaft*. Leipzig: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung-Sachsen, 2003. 143 p., EUR 7.50. ISBN 3-89819-167-2

Under the title "Toil and Leisure. Basic Security, Basic Income, Social-Ecological Transformation of Society", this is a vigorous and detailed plea for a universal and unconditional basic income by an active member of the PDS (heir to the communist party of the German Democratic Republic) in the Land of Saxony. Building on

central tenets of left-wing thinking, the author argues for the emancipation of everyone from the obligation to perform waged labour, and explains why a universal and unconditional basic income is, in his eyes, the best instrument for this purpose. This is a well-documented scholarly contribution to the discussion set in motion in PDS circles by their acting chair Katja Kipping's statement in favour of an unconditional income guarantee of EUR 1000 per month.

SPANISH

Raventós, Daniel & Casassas, David. "La Renta Básica y el poder de negociación de 'los que viven con permiso de otros'", *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, nº 34, Enero-Abril 2003, pp. 187-201, Freedom is impossible without socio-economic independence. Great inequalities generate enormous disparities of power. The great asymmetries of power characteristic of current societies give rise to a lack of real freedom that affects most of the population. By increasing the bargaining power of poor and dominated people, basic Income constitutes a valuable mechanism for making the right to existence a reality for the whole population.

6. ABOUT BIEN

BIEN's Executive Committee

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BIEN'S LIFE MEMBERS

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