

BASIC INCOME

Newsletter of the Basic Income European Network

N°8 Summer 1990

The third meeting of the BIEN General Assembly will be held on Saturday 22 September from 9.30 to 12 am at the European University Institute (Florence). The agenda includes:

- Future activities
- Financial matters
- Newsletter
- Elections.

If you cannot attend but would like to raise a point or make a statement, please contact a member of the current Executive Committee (addresses on p.2) and, if you wish, prepare a short note to be read at the meeting.

Women more favourable to a basic income than men, but less favourable to it than to a housewife's wage.

A comment on the first (?) opinion poll on BI, reviewed on p.5

1990 BIEN Conference "Economic democracy and citizenship income", Florence, 19-21 September 1990

The programme is now ready to be mailed to all participants. It includes over fifty papers. If you need more details, see p.3 on how to get hold of them.

Basic income endorsed by the British Social and Liberal Democrats, the heirs of Juliet Rhys-Williams', William Beveridge's and John Maynard Keynes' Liberal Party.

Their recent Green Papers is reviewed on p.10

A new book-length report on basic income sponsored by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment:
Reviewed on p.6

To those who see this Newsletter for the first time:
If you want to keep receiving it,
please follow the instructions on the back page.

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BIEN's EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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HOW YOU CAN HELP

How useful this Newsletter turns out to be depends on YOU.

1. Please keep it informed. Send the Newsletter editor (please note the new address above, valid from September 1990 to June 1991), as soon as it is available, any news, announcement, book, pamphlet, working paper, etc. that may interest other people in the network. This information and material *need not be in English*. Given the steady increase in the amount of material received, a *short summary would be greatly appreciated*, preferably but not necessarily, in English. After review, all relevant publications received will be made available in the Collectif Charles Fourier's Archives. **Deadline for the next issue: 15 November 1990**.

2. Please circulate it as much as you can. *BIEN members can ask for free additional copies*, e.g. for seminars or conferences they organize.

THIS ISSUE

of *Basic Income*

has been prepared with the help of
Sue Black, Guy Standing,
Walter Van Trier,
and all those who have spontaneously sent relevant material.
Many thanks!

FUTURE EVENTS

BIEN

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY AND CITIZENSHIP INCOME

The 1990 BIEN Conference, to be held at the European University Institute (Badia Fiesolana, Via dei Roccettini 9, I-500016 San Domenico di Fiesole, tel. (55) 50921, a few km to the North of Florence), will start at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday 19 September and end at 4 p.m. on Friday 21 September. Further practical information on programme, accommodation, etc. direct from:

Edwin MORLEY-FLETCHER or Amos FREGOLI, c/o Lega Nazionale delle Cooperative e Mutue, Via Guattani 9, I-00161 Roma, Italy.
Phone: (39)(6) 844391;
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Fax: (32)(2)2308143;
Telex: 65399.

United Nations:

ROUNDTABLE ON THE CASE FOR A GLOBAL LIVING WAGE AND GUARANTEED INCOME

An initiative of the Association for World Education (a United Nations Committee), with dates as yet unspecified (expectedly before the end of 1990, either in New York or Denmark). The organizers welcome, invite and encourage participation from all interested parties in organizing this roundtable.

(Write to Everett Cox, Association for World Education, Post Office Box 7414, New York, NY 10163-6029, USA, tel. (914) 928-8206.)

Manchester (UK):

SERIES OF MEETINGS ON CITIZENSHIP AND BASIC INCOME

A series of Tuesday meetings will be organized on this theme by the Department of Extra Mural Studies of Manchester University, starting in January 1991.

(Contact: Kevin Donnelly, 20 Nan Nook Road, Manchester M23 9BZ, tel.: (61) 9984791.)

Netherlands:

CONFERENCE ON THE ETHICS OF BASIC INCOME

The Research Commission of the Dutch Basic Income network is planning for the end of 1990 a conference on the meaning of work and conceptions of justice, in

connection with arguments for and against basic income.
(Contact: Dagmar Varkevisser, Werkplaats Basisinkomen, Herman Heijermansweg 20, 1077 WL Amsterdam, tel. (20) 5731803.

**EEC:
EUROPEAN ANTI-POVERTY
NETWORK**

With the encouragement of the EEC Commission, a European Anti-Poverty network is being set in order to inform local and national groups about what is happening in Europe; to help anti-poverty groups lobby EEC authorities; and to share experience and ideas.

(Further details from: Micheline Gerondal, European Anti-Poverty Network, ESCAP, rue de la Prévoyance 56, B-1000 Brussels.)

PAST EVENTS

**BIEN's SECOND INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE
(ANTWERP, SEPTEMBER 1988)**

Personal reasons have prevented Anne Miller from completing the editing of the papers presented in Antwerp. BIEN's secretary will attempt to finish the work by the time of the Florence conference.

**BASIC INCOME:
THE FIRST STEPS
LONDON, 16 JUNE 1990**

Chaired by James Robertson (author of *Future Wealth*, reviewed in this issue), the Basic Income Research Group's 1990 annual

conference was addressed by Greetje Lubbi, chairperson of the Dutch food workers' Union (FNV) and one of the most outspoken advocates of basic income in the Netherlands. It also included talks by BIRG Chairman Tony Walter and Exeter University sociologist Bill Jordan, and a lively panel discussion between left-wing economist Meghnad Desai (London School of Economics), liberal politician Baroness Seear (chairperson of the SLD working party that prepared the Green Paper *Common Benefit*, reviewed in this issue), Evelyn McEwen (of the elderly people's association Age Concern) and political economist Hermione Parker (editor of the *BIRG Bulletin*). "Is there an interest group powerful enough to carry the idea of BI?", the chairman asked in his concluding statement. "And is the idea of a partial BI exciting enough to generate public clamour for its

introduction? And would funding BI from a land tax rather than from people's earnings remove the fears about undermining the work ethic that the conference identified as so troubling to BI's opponents?"

(Organizers: BIRG, 102 Pepys Road, London SE14 5SG, UK)

PUBLICATIONS

DUTCH

T'WERKT NIET MEER N°4, Werkplaats Basisinkomen (Herman Heijermansweg 20, 1077 WL Amsterdam), June 1990, 28p.

This fourth issue of the Newsletter of the Dutch BI network includes a survey of the work undertaken by the network's various working groups a (negative) reaction to the idea of a partial BI by a claimants' association; a further intervention (by Amsterdam sociologist Saar Boerlage) in the debate on whether BI would be against the interest of those living alone (full individualization of benefits, whether of the BI type or not, encourages all sorts of collective housing arrangements, and this is OK: it saves scarce energy and scarce land); a selective account (by Trudy Doornheim) of the 1989 Louvain-la-Neuve conference on the ethics of BI; and a discussion of the results of a survey conducted by the Dutch women's magazine Opzij (January 1990) among a representative sample of Dutch men, a representative sample of Dutch women, and a sample of its (comparatively young and educated) readers. Asked whether they are in favour of a housewife's wage, the proportions of positive answers are 18%/31%/41%, respectively, in these three groups, while the corresponding proportions of negative answers are 44%/25%14%. Asked whether they are in favour of a (partial) BI of about £130 a month, the proportions of positive answers are 16%/19%/45%, while the proportions of negative answers are 52%/42%/15%. It is not clear from the survey, the commentator (economist Paul de Beer) notes, how many negative answers were due to the level of the BI being too low. But the main source of hope, he believes, lies in the difference between the magazine's readers and the overall population: those women who have taken the time to ponder over the issue and are aware, in particular, of the debate about the drawbacks of a housewif's wage, are strikingly more favourable to a BI than the rest of the (female and male) population.

(If you want to receive the Werkplaats Newsletter, write to the above address.)

DE VLIEGHERE Wilfried, *De Aarde Bewaren*, Berchem: EPO (Lange Pastoorstraat 25-27, B - 2600 Berchem, Belgium), 1990, ISBN 90-6445-895-2, 143 p.

In this short book, Flemish green member of Parliament and economist Wilfried De Vlieghere outlines his strategy for avoiding an ecological apocalypse. The crisis, he argues, has both economic and ethical roots, and the strategy, therefore, must pay due attention to both economic and ethical elements. What sort of redistribution policy will be needed in a fully sustainable, "green" economy ? It is hard to know. But for the long transition period that separates us from the latter, the answer is clear. We need an unconditional basic income, both as a non-stigmatizing form of support for those excluded from industrial production, and as a basis for pioneering attempts to set up fragments of a new economy. Health care, family allowances and basic pensions must be totally disconnected from the employment relation, while employment-centred social security will continue to play a role in dampening fluctuations in income from work.

(Author's address: Jan Longinstraat 12, B-1730 Zellik.)

JANSSEN, Raf, *Armoede of Soberheid. De verarming van mens en milieu als nieuwe sociale kwestie*, Utrecht (NL): Commissie Oriënteringsdagen (Biltstraat 101c, NL-3572, AL Utrecht), 249p., ISBN 90-71003-124, DFI.30.

Pursuing economic growth will not get rid of poverty. It will get rid of nature and, eventually, of man. But there is an alternative strategy. Its keyword is frugality, a deliberate restraint on our consumption that is urgently required if everyone's needs are to be durably satisfied. What form does this strategy take? "On the background of the physical necessity of frugality if the

future is to be safeguarded, one must work out a poverty policy that explores roads leading to a positive withdrawal from a society based on waged labour." Here is a chance to give everyone the possibility of enjoying more free time, while remaining able to have a share in the labour that remains necessary. Seizing this chance, in the author's opinion, requires the introduction of an unconditional basic income, along with a significant reduction in working time. This is the central conclusion of sociologist Raf Jansen's elaborate green plea for a basic income, drawing mainly on his experience as a claimants movement activist and on the (very rich) Dutch and German discussions, and submitted as a doctoral dissertation at Leiden University in June 1990. The Dutch text is followed by an English summary.

(Author's address: c/o Commissie Oriënteringsdagen, as above)

RENOOY Piet, Bedrijven spil

Klusseenconomie, De Volkskrant, 23 June 1990.

Renooy is a social geographer at the University of Amsterdam. He has just submitted his doctoral dissertation on The Informal Economy. Contrary to popular belief, but consistently with findings elsewhere (see Pahl's article, reviewed below), he found that people in formal employment account proportionally for a far higher share of the informal economy than the unemployed, who often lack the contacts, the tools and the skills, and are exposed with a higher probability to heavier sanctions. In this interview with journalist Pieter Broertjes, Renooy argues for a radical therapy. "An individual basic income is the most appropriate means for opening the labour market for everyone. Those who want to earn more than this basic income (at subsistence level) can do so. Those who do not want to do not have to. The outcome is that paid work gets spread over a larger number of people, the minimum wage vanishes, and the demand for paid work increases. That's how you solve the unemployment problem."

ROEBROEK, Joop & HOGENBOOM, Erik,
Basisinkomen: Alternatieve uitkering of nieuw paradigma?, The Hague: Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (VUGA Uitgeverij, Postbus 16400, NL 2500 BK s'Gravenhage), Report n°24, May 1990, 252p., DFI. 38.

A comprehensive, up to date and balanced account of the discussion on basic income so far, commissioned by an independent body financed by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs. After a chapter that briefly presents what is at stake in the BI discussion and another that outlines the major variants of BI, the bulk of the book consists of a systematic presentation of arguments for and against, followed by a comprehensive survey of both the international (esp. North-American, British, German and Belgian) and the Dutch debate. The fundamental fact that makes for the relevance of basic income proposals, in the authors' opinion, is the increasingly manifest failure of social insurance systems to provide adequate income support, as a result of three major trends: a dramatic increase in the number of long-term unemployed (no longer covered by such systems), a dramatic increase in the number of young unemployed (who have never had the opportunity to enter the social insurance system) and a dramatic reduction in the stability of households (which accounts for a growing number of households with noone earning or socially insured). The intensity of this crisis of social-insurance based systems of welfare has varied from one European country to another, and so has the degree to which it has been ascribed to a comparatively short-term slowdown of the growth process or to major and permanent technological changes. It has also prompted a large number of basic income proposals, ranging from typically right-wing, market oriented, selectivist "alternative benefit systems" (à la Milton Friedman) to typically left-wing, collectivist, universalist "new paradigms" (à la Robert Theobald). "The times of transition are not over yet", the authors conclude. "New challenges of a technological, social, political and cultural nature keep coming up. Although it will take far more time than in any other area, the social security system too will take the direction of Europe 1992."

(Authors' address: Katholieke Universiteit Brabant, Departement Sociale Zekerheidswetenschappen, 5000 LE Tilburg, Netherlands))

ROEBROEK, Joop & HOGENBOOM, Erik,
Basisinkomen: Alternatieve uitkering of nieuw paradigma? Samenvatting: De stand van de discussie, The Hague:

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Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (VUGA Uitgeverij, Postbus 16400, NL 2500 BK s'Gravenhage), Report n°25, May 1990, 45p., ISBN 90 5250 207 2, Dfl. 10.30.

A useful summary of the previous publication. An even shorter and no less useful summary appears in the July 1990 BIRG Bulletin (see below). And the 15 June 1990 issue of the Dutch weekly *Intermediair* contains, under the title "Social citizenship", a statement by Joop Roobroek as to why the Dutch debate on basic income has to be fully reopened.

(Authors' address: see above.)

ENGLISH

BIRG Bulletin 10, July 1990, London:
Basic Income Research Group (102 Pepys Road, London SE14 5SG), 32p., £3.00.
Yet another interesting and varied issue of the Basic Income Research Group's journal. It includes a brief presentation of interview-based research on the poverty trap directed by Bill Jordan; a summary of Roebroek and Hogenboom's major new Dutch book on basic income (see above); English versions of Vobruba's argument for basic income in *Kommune* (see BI 7: 9) and of Van Parijs's survey article on ethical foundations in *Futuribles* (see below); two reactions to basic income proposals by Sally Greengross, of Age Concern (elderly people), and Sue Slipman, of the National Council for one-parent families, the former rather sympathetic ("I believe that some form of Basic Income is a fundamental thing we owe to older people"), the latter not so keen (increased help with child care costs and tougher enforcement of paternal responsibilities are higher priorities); a brief and clear presentation by Philip Vince of the proposals contained in the British Liberal Democrat's recent Green Paper (see below), including that of a citizenship pension, an increased universal child benefit and an initially low citizenship income ("It recognizes the need for Basic Incomes as a major element in the new structure and goes as far as practicable in that direction."); a fascinating opening article by Professor Charles Handy on the relevance of basic income for the "Third Age", i.e. the expanding category of people - roughly between 55 and 75 - who are still fit but have retired from both full-time paid work and parenting ("For the Third Age an unconditional Basic Income scheme is imperative": if it is to be a time of fulfilment for more than a few, a form of non-withdrawable state support is essential; "Instead of starting with a very partial Basic Income for all we might want to start with a full Basic Income for a proportion and see how it works"); and finally the striking "View point" of a former managing director, who simultaneously (and consistently) holds the view that even more than a full BI is ethically legitimate (it is plainly unfair that the tremendous contribution of unpatented knowledge to current production is diverted

to those who own the marketed resources) and warns that even a very partial basic income will lead to disaster if it is not matched by a reduction in the power of organised labour ("I believe an unconditional BI, as full as possible, is desirable - provided the system of forced collective bargaining can be eliminated as part of the deal, thus restoring a free market in employment. [...] To me the crucial question is: how high would the BI have to go for it to be politically possible to get acceptance of the abolition of collective bargaining.").

ARGYLE, Keith. "**If only we had a basic income!**", paper presented at the North West Basic Income Research Group Workshop (c/o Kevin Donnelly, 20 Nan Nook Road, Manchester M23 9BZ), April 1990, 9p.

The author is a Christian minister whose work involves visiting suburban churches to present the needs and claims of the inner city. "Everywhere, middle-class Christians express deep guilt. They are disturbed that their lifestyle is trapped by economics into contributing to the glaring inequality and making it worse. [...] A huge rethink is required to provide viable alternatives to the prevailing structures and philosophy. The Basic Income proposal would be one such." For full employment for all at a living wage is no longer a possibility. "There will be no going back on the technological revolution. The Basic Income idea is not designed to bring equality, but it would remove poverty while still encouraging individual initiative. It would relieve people in our poor areas from their permanent anxiety and daily preoccupation with how to survive."
(Author's address: 425 Lower Broughton Road, Salford M7 9EX, UK.)

BESLEY, Timothy, "**Means testing versus universal provision in poverty alleviation programmes**", in *Economica* 57 (1990) 119-29.

Suppose that, with a given budget, one aims to reduce poverty, measured by the number of people whose incomes fall below the poverty line, multiplied by the average difference between their income and this line. Is it then always better - as seems obvious - to restrict transfers to the needy,

by paying means-tested benefits to plug the gap between the incomes of the poor and the poverty line? Or is it sometimes better to use the same budget to pay universal benefits to all, rich and poor ? This sophisticated and useful technical paper shows that the latter assertion is the correct one to make. For the take up of means-tested benefits involves a (mainly non pecuniary) cost for the beneficiaries, in terms of time spent queuing, shame etc. Once this cost represents a high proportion of the benefit, a number of poor people stop claiming and those who do claim are not brought up to the poverty line, due to this cost, which is of course not reimbursed. Universal benefits are then superior. The author shows that this admittedly rather high threshold (in terms of cost to the beneficiary) as from which the alleviation of poverty is better served by universal benefits, becomes lower as one further takes into account (1) the administrative cost of means testing, (2) the fact that those claiming means-tested benefits have strong incentives not to earn any income and (3) the non-take up of benefits, especially among the very poorest, due to ignorance or inertia. Moreover, it must be emphasized that the analysis explicitly leaves out any concern with the intra-family distribution of income (unlike universal provisions, means-tested benefits do nothing to alleviate the poverty of housewives in households above the poverty line) and - even more important - the "political economy of poverty eradication" (in particular, the key assumption of a given budget makes no sense: the total amount a country is or would be willing to spend on universal child benefits, for example, is obviously far greater than what it would be willing to spend on means-tested child benefits). Despite these deliberate limitations, the paper provides useful insights into the debate - and (in the reviewer's opinion) all that is needed for constructing a sophisticated and interesting - though carefully qualified - "even if" argument in favour of basic income.

(Author's address: Princeton University, Department of Economics).

BLOCK, Fred, *Postindustrial Possibilities. A critique of economic discourse*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/Oxford: University of California Press, 1990, 218 p.

In this new book, economic sociologist Fred Block attempts "to map out the emerging patterns and characteristic conflicts of postindustrial society". Building upon a systematic critical analysis of the market, labour, capital and output - four concepts that structure our construction of the industrial society -, he sketches, under the heading of "qualitative growth", what he views as desirable alternatives. "The central question becomes not capitalism or socialism, he says, but how a society can create economic institutions that give maximum scope to democratic participation". Among the key reforms that would "contribute both to economic efficiency and to greater democracy, equality, and freedom" are the development of workplace democracy, the decommodification of ideas and the introduction of a basic income". "The basic-income grant would contribute to dynamic flexibility both by underwriting a more cooperative workplace and by giving individuals maximal opportunity for their own personal development, [...] could also reverse the tendency in this society to underproduce voluntary leisure time [and] could facilitate the growth of different types of nonmarket work"

(Author's address as from Summer 1990: University of California, Department of Sociology, Davis, Cal. 95616, USA).

BOWLES, Samuel, "Is income security possible in a capitalist economy: a micro-economic analysis of the basic income grant", paper presented at the conference "Basic income guarantees: a new Welfare strategy?", University of Wisconsin (Madison), April 1990, 34 p. A feasible reform is one that does not depress the level of investment. In a capitalist economy, the level of investment is crucially dependent on the rate of profit. But the latter, in turn, is heavily influenced by the level of effort capitalists can extract from the workers they employ, which is itself largely determined by how much the workers would lose as a result of being sacked. Obviously, a basic income would reduce this cost of job loss, and therefore force capitalists to pay higher wages in order to extract the same level of effort. Does it follow that the introduction of a basic income is not feasible under capitalist conditions ? In this paper, radical economist Sam Bowles shows that it does not. For replacement incomes already exist

in the form of unemployment benefits. And redistributing these (as a basic income) equally to all, including the *non-employed*, would increase the cost of job loss, and boost profits. This makes room for an increase in taxation and basic income level without loss of profitability. However the highest feasible basic income suggested by this highly simplified analysis would still be pretty low in an economy such as the US. It would involve a major redistribution in favour of the non-employed (mainly women) at the expense of both the employed and the non-employed. By modifying the workers' incentive structure, however, an economy composed of democratically managed worker-owned firms may well make a higher basic income compatible with no fall in investment. These are the main propositions established on the basis of a simple analytical model in this insightful, pathbreaking and rigorous paper.
(Author's address: University of Massachusetts, Department of Economics, Amherst, Mass. 01003).

LISTER, Ruth, *The Exclusive society. Citizenship and the Poor*, London: Child Poverty Action Group (1-5 Bath Street, London EC1V 9PY, UK), 82p., ISBN 0-946744-26-2, £ 4.95.

In the 25 years since its foundation, the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has been one of the most active organizations trying to promote the interests of the poor. Its basic philosophy is restated and updated in this little book by Ruth Lister, its former Director, now Professor of Applied Social Studies at the University of Bradford. In the tradition of Richard Titmuss and T.H. Marshall, the CPAG has always argued against means-tested, selective systems in favour of a universalistic approach. As Titmuss (quoted by Lister) put it: "All historical experience in Britain and other countries over the past fifty years has demonstrated, again and again, that separate, selective services for poor people (the less eligible citizens) are poor services." Hence the CPAG's receptiveness, well evidenced in Lister's book, to Bill Jordan's, Hermione Parker's and Ralf Dahrendorf's arguments in favour of a citizenship-based unconditional income. Although it does not explicitly mention basic income, the conclusion is clear enough: "The social security system should be regarded as an expression of

citizenship. To this end, reliance on means tests and contribution tests to determine eligibility should, as far as possible, be phased out. [...] A society which excludes many of its members from citizenship puts itself at risk. Extending full citizenship rights to all is, therefore, the main task of social policy."

(Author's Address: Applied Social Studies, University of Bradford, Bradford West Yorkshire BD7 1DP, UK)

PAHL, Raymond, "Does jobless mean workless? Unemployment and informal work", in *Annals of the American Academy (AAPSS)* 493, September 1987, 36-47.

This somewhat older article by informal sector expert Raymond Pahl is well worth bringing into the BI discussion. On the basis of a detailed survey about the distribution of informal work and of the (monetary or non-monetary) income associated with it, the author concludes: "Those in employment are best placed to find more work, both formal and informal. Those who are unemployed find opportunities taken away from them, and they are often afraid to risk taking unemployment benefits while doing extra work. [...] Those who wish to encourage all forms of work, particularly for the long term unemployed, need to recognize that most informal or irregular work is dependent on having the money to supply tools, transport, materials, and social contacts. *Without a basic income support the polarization between work-rich and work-poor households is likely to continue to increase.*" [See also under Renooy among the Dutch publications reviewed above.]
(Author's Address: University of Kent, Department of Sociology, Canterbury CT2 7NY, UK.)

PECHMAN, Joseph A., *Tax Reform, the rich and the poor*, Washington (DC): Brookings Institution, (1775 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington DC 20036), 1989, 2nd ed. 211p.

This collection of essays by the recently deceased liberal American economist Joseph Pechman includes the famous article "Is a negative income tax practical?" which he published in 1967 jointly with James Tobin and Peter Mieszkowski. The authors strongly support a generous negative income tax programme and investigate some of the technical difficulties its implementation would raise. It is worth

pointing out, on this occasion, that their article discusses two modes of payment: (1) automatic payments of the full basic allowance to all families (with the option of waiving the payment for those who do not expect to be net beneficiaries), and (2) declaration by benefit claimants who expect to be net beneficiaries (with an adjustment after the end of the tax year). Both methods are workable, they argue, but the former - a genuine basic income paid *ex ante* is preferable: "The declaration method imposes the burden of initiative on those who need payments; the automatic payment method places the burden on those who do not want them. It may be argued that the latter are more likely to have the needed financial literacy and paperwork sophistication".

POWELL, Robin, "Towards ecological security", Social Alternatives (c/o Department of Government, University of Queensland, St Lucia QLD 4067 Australia) Vol. 9 (1), 1990, 15-16.

Along with Raf Janssen (see above), James Robertson (see below) and many others, Robin Powell (whose *Social Wage* was reviewed in *BI* 6: 8) believes there to be a close connection between green concerns and the demand for a basic income. "The particularly nasty agricultural and industrial practices now disappearing in the West have been taken up with vigour by the developing countries and few will escape the consequences. In the struggle for existence, the pursuit of individual security for all will provide the conditions for the rapid introduction of environmentally benign technologies throughout the world." For this and other reasons, we can all benefit from the introduction of a universal basic income. And yet, even in an affluent country such as Australia, it faces fierce resistance, basically rooted in prejudices against "dole bludgers". "Nevertheless interest in universal social security is growing, especially in Europe, where BIEN was formed in 1986."

(Author's address: 35 Blackman Crescent, Macquarie ACT 2614, Australia.)

ROBERTSON, James, *Future Wealth. A new economics for the 21st Century*, London & New York: Cassell (Artillery House, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RT, UK), "Countdown 2000" series, 1989, 174p. A new statement (after *The Sane Alternative* and *Future Work*) of James

Robertson's vision of a desirable economy. In the area of incomes and capital (the topic of chapter 11), the essential background is provided by the process by which modern economic development has deprived people of the non-financial income (say, a swim in an unpolluted river) and capital (say, the stock of caribou in the mountains) they previously enjoyed, through privatization and destruction of the commons. Only now do we start realizing the full implications of this process. Hence: "A high priority for the early 1990s is to get it widely understood that new approaches to the distribution of both incomes and capital will be important features of the twenty-first century." In particular, "a basic income should be paid to every citizen unconditionally, as of right". Urgent further study is needed on how to finance a Basic Income Scheme. Special attention must be given to the feasibility of shifting the tax burden off financial income, capital and value added, and on the occupation of land [as in a long tradition of proposals for financing a basic income, from Thomas Paine to Hillel Steiner and Raymond Crotty] and the use of energy and resources [as in more recent proposals, such as the Dutch WRR's and Farrel Bradbury's].

(Author's address: The Old Bakehouse, Cholsey, Oxon OX10 9NU, UK)

SOCIAL AND LIBERAL DEMOCRATS, *Common Benefit. Liberal Democrat policies for reform of the tax and benefits systems*, Federal Green Paper n°11, December 1989, ISBN 1-85187-112-8, 36p.

Foreshadowed by (or reflected in) their leader's book (see *BI* 7: 6), here is the liberal democrats' alternative to the current welfare system: "The core of our proposals is built around the concept of the Basic, or Citizen's, Income. We aim to give every adult citizen a regular non-withdrawable payment irrespective of sex, marital status, income or employment status. This would guarantee each individual a tax-free sum as of right, replacing the personal tax allowance for those earning enough to pay income tax. How large a sum would depend on the economic situation at the time of implementation, but for most people under pension age it could never be adequate for subsistence; to make it so would require all other income to be taxed at an unacceptably high rate, approaching 70%. Nevertheless, the introduction of the

Citizen's Income system, even at a level less than adequate for subsistence, carries with it substantial advantages. All social security benefits, tax reliefs and allowances would be brought together into one system, replacing benefits such as income support or unemployment benefit; though a Low Income Benefit would still be needed to supplement the Citizen's Income where this was insufficient." The Green Paper provides arguments, costings and transitional measures. That such a proposal should have been possible on the part of one of the three traditional British parties, owes no doubt a lot to all the thinking that has been conducted and stimulated by BIRG. A succinct presentation of the proposal by one of those who prepared it (Philip Vince) can be found in the latest issue of the BIRG Bulletin (see above).

(Address of the Social and Liberal Democrats: 4 Cowley Street, London SW1P 3NB, UK)

VOBRUBA, Georg, "Redistribution of work and income in crisis: actors' problems of working time reduction and

a guaranteed basic income", in
Contemporary Crises 14 (2), 1990, 57-67.
Can a basic income and working time reduction be combined in order to achieve a significant redistribution of work and income? This paper concentrates on political feasibility issues and notes that "the demand for working time reduction applies to a narrower range of interests, but integrates them more strongly, whereas the demand for a basic income affects a wider range of interests, but integrates them less strongly." The introduction of a basic income will only mean an immediate improvement for small and weak segments of society, even though it opens up new opportunities for all, which many may use at some point. How can such a diffuse and potential constituency be organized into a significant political force, especially as long as a basic income remains an abstract idea? Might not the implementation of a basic income be the (viciously circular) precondition of the constitution of a social movement that would fight for its implementation?

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FRENCH

VAN PARIJS Philippe, "Impasses et promesses de l'économie politique", in *La Revue Nouvelle* (26 rue Potagère, B-1030 Bruxelles) 92 (2), février 1990, 79-93.
If political ecology does not reduce to environmentalism, what can else can it be? Not Ivan Illich's "radical ecology", nor Arne Naess' "deep ecology", both radically unable to find a *justification* in a liberal society. A third interpretation stresses the expansion of the realm of "autonomous" activities, as distinct from both the market and the State sphere. The introduction of a basic income and the raising of its level provides a way of systematically fostering such expansion - and can be shown to be just, up to a point, in a liberal society.
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VAN PARIJS Philippe, "Comment justifier une allocation universelle? Une relecture de quelques théories de la justice économique", in *Futuribles* (55 rue de Varennes, F-75341 Paris Cedex 07) 144, juin 1990, 29-42. (Also, shortened, in *Coopérance* (Nivelles, Belgium), May 1990, and in English in *BIRG Bulletin* n°11, July 1990.)

A selective review of the September 1989 Louvain-la-Neuve conference on the ethical foundations of basic income, and at the same time a compact survey of some of the main arguments to the effect that giving everyone an unconditional right to an income is just. Libertarian (Steiner), egalitarian (Baker), Marxian (van der Veen) and liberal (Rawls, Dworkin) approaches are presented and compared.

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GERMAN

**OFFE, Claus & HEINZE, Rolf G.,
Organisierte Eigenarbeit. Das Modell
Kooperationsring**, Frankfurt & New York:
Campus (Heerstraße 149, D-6000 Frankfurt
90), 1990, 361p., ISBN 3-593-34121-2, DM
38.

The questioning of the privilege given to economic growth and waged labour has generated considerable interest in a realm of productive activities that take place both outside the market and outside the household, as standardly understood. But very little is known about it. This book, co-authored by BIEN's first chairman (and professor of social policy at Bremen University) is the outcome of a project commissioned by the government of Rheinland-Wesphalen in order to fill this gap and make positive proposals. The authors' empirical work draws mainly on West German, Dutch and North-American experience. Their main proposal is the organization of "cooperation circles"

through which people could exchange services on a local level without using money as the medium of exchange. Such a proposal ties in, according to the authors, with that of a citizenship income, made imperative by the breakdown of standard career and family patterns. For one thing, it would concretely foster ways of performing useful activities, achieving social integration and improving one's standard of living outside the standard employment relation - a possibility which is only abstractly opened up by the introduction of a basic income. Moreover, it might provide a way of circumventing resistance to the latter, and hence a crucial ingredient in a transition scenario, as non-market activities are gradually recognized as a sufficient basis for state-guaranteed benefits.

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WHAT IS BIEN?

**The Basic Income European Network was founded in September 1986
to serve as a link between individuals and groups
committed to, or interested in, basic income,
i.e. an income unconditionally granted to all on an individual basis,
without means test or work requirement,
and to foster informed discussion on this topic throughout Europe.**

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