

BIEN - Basic Income Earth Network

NEWSFLASH 51 May 2008

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.

The present NewsFlash has been prepared with the help of Paul Nollen, David Casassas, Rachel Collins, Thérèse Davio, Jurgen De Wispelaere, Manuel Franzmann, Claudia & Dirk Haarmann, Seán Healy, Dirk Jacobi, Nanna Kildal, Philippe Van Parijs, and Karl Widerquist.

This NewsFlash can be downloaded as a PDF document on our website www.basicincome.org

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1. Editorial: BIEN launches new website!

This month BIEN launches its new website. The new site includes all the information from the old website in a more accessible and easier to navigate format. The site was designed by Rachel Collins under direction of the BIEN Executive Committee with special input from Karl Widerquist, BIEN's web manager, and Yannick Vanderborght, BIEN's newsletter editor.

The website contains all the current and past BIEN NewsFlashes, and conference papers from this year's BIEN Conference in Dublin as well as papers from past BIEN conferences going back to the late 1990s. Historical and current information on BI and BIEN are available on the site, and it has links to the websites of all BIEN's affiliates, other BI organizations around the world, and another websites that have information that can be useful to people who are interested in Basic Income.

We hope that everyone will find the new BIEN website useful.

BIEN Executive Committee

2. 12th BIEN CONGRESS, June 2008, Dublin (Ireland)

All up-to-date information about the 12th BIEN Congress (20-21 June 2008) can be found at www.basicincomeireland.com

The theme of this World Congress is: **Inequality and Development in a Globalised Economy - The Basic Income Option**. This two-day event will be preceded by a one-day event (June 19, 2008) which will focus on Basic Income in Ireland and link it to development choices Ireland is currently facing.

Among the parallel sessions there will be panels (three papers per panel for the most part) on Basic Income and topics ranging from global justice to gender and care, from migrants to the environment. Routes to introducing a Basic Income system will be identified and discussed. The experiences of many countries (from the global north and south) will be presented. Issues of social justice and the meaning of life, freedom and reciprocity and the institutional implications of Basic Income will be analysed. Global and regional issues will be discussed as will the economic implications of introducing a Basic Income. There will be detailed analysis of an example of Basic Income in practice and there will be detailed presentations on a variety of ways of funding a Basic Income system.

The venue for Congress 2008 will be the Quinn Business School in University College Dublin (UCD). The terminus of one of the city bus routes is outside the door of the Quinn Business School so it will be easy to travel to and from the venue.

3. EVENTS

* **OSLO (NO)**, 28 April 2008: Liberal Party Seminar on basic income

To date, the Liberal Party is the only political party in Norway that has included Basic Income (or "borgerlønn" in Norwegian), into its platform. It has proposed the introduction of a

guaranteed basic income as a pilot project in several municipalities across the country. On April 28, 2008, the Parliamentary Group of the Liberal Party organized an open half day seminar with the title: "Basic Income in the fight against Poverty?" ("Borgerlønn som fattigdomsbekjempelse?"), where two Liberal party members of the Parliament were talking, in addition to two researchers, Nanna Kildal and Axel West Pedersen.

For further information, see for instance: <http://www.venstre.no/artikkel/12477>

* **FRANKFURT (DE)**, 28 April 2008: Lecture by Ulrich Oevermann

German Sociologist Ulrich Oevermann is currently teaching at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt, Germany. He is also a prominent member of the scientific advisory board of the German Basic income network. On April 28, 2008, he held a farewell lecture in which he analyzed the basic income proposal, before giving a theoretical summary of some insights of his own sociological research. The paper and an audio and video recording of this lecture are available at www.agoh.de

* **BERLIN (DE)**, 24 – 26 October 2008: Third German Basic Income Congress

“On the Way to Basic Income – Unconditional and Viable” («Auf dem Weg zum Grundeinkommen - bedingungslos und existenzsichernd»). Under this title, the Berlin Congress will discuss a wide range of approaches to basic income, from philosophical concepts to practical policy proposals. Current congress plans are published on the German Basic Income Network's website www.grundeinkommen.de. Presently, the schedule offers more than ten main events such as lectures and panel discussions as well as 36 workshops to be held in two blocks of two hours each.

For further information: <http://www.grundeinkommen.de> (see also NewsFlash 49).

4. GLIMPSES OF NATIONAL DEBATES

* **CANADA: TOWARDS A CANADIAN BASIC INCOME NETWORK?**

In recent years, there has been growing and renewed interest across Canada in basic income (BI) or Guaranteed Income (GI). The National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) over the last year has investigated BI / GI approaches, and has promoted discussion of these models in a national face-to-face gathering last summer, and in several conference calls and on-line forums since then. Local activist groups in cities such as Victoria and Toronto are promoting “guaranteed livable” or “citizen’s” income. A major Canadian political figure, Senator Hugh Segal, has spoken out strongly in favour of a guaranteed income scheme delivered through negative income tax. The Green Party of Canada has committed in its political platform to pursue the idea of guaranteed income. Canada’s largest circulation daily newspaper, the *Toronto Star*, voiced editorial support as early as 29 January 2007, arguing that “the idea of a guaranteed income should be part of the debate on how to fight poverty.”

Work is now underway to form a national network of people in Canada interested in Basic (or Guaranteed or Citizen's) Income / Allocation Universelle (in French), along the lines of other national groups affiliated with the Basic Income Earth Network. This network will include social movement groups such as NAPO, but will also seek to involve researchers, policy analysts, political advocates, and interested citizens with a common interest in the promotion of more universal and unconditional approaches to economic security. It will promote careful

investigation and informed debate on diverse models and practical options for Guaranteed Income in Canada.

A number of people from Canada will be attending BIEN's Congress in Dublin in June 2008. This gathering will provide an opportunity to discuss launching a BI/GI network in Canada, and seeking affiliation at the appropriate time with BIEN. For further informed about the work to develop a BI / GI Canadian Network, please contact:

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*** GERMANY: GREEN ECO-BONUS TO FUND CITIZEN'S INCOME**

At the last small party congress of the German Green party Bettina Herlitzius and Gerhard Schick, both members of the German Bundestag, presented the concept of an eco-bonus. They argued that despite increasing prices of oil and other resources it is necessary to create further incentives to invest in green technologies. Eco-taxes have however also a distributional effect. Households with low incomes have difficulties to pay for higher energy-prices. In order to outbalance this effect and to reward ecological consumer behaviour the Green parliamentarians propose the redistribution of new and higher eco-taxes as a monthly lump-sum payment to each citizen. An additional eco-tax revenue of 20 billion Euro would lead to a monthly payment to each citizen of 20 Euro.

For further information :

http://www.gerhardschick.net/images/stories/Steuerpolitik/%D6kobonus_fassung_31-03-08.pdf

*** GERMANY: DISCUSSIONS ABOUT A 'GUARANTEED PENSION'**

Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn, member of the German Bundestag for the Green party, and Katja Kipping, member of the German Bundestag for the Left party, proposed, independently of each other, the introduction of a Swedish-like guaranteed pension in Germany. Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn argued in the January edition of the scientific Journal of the German Old-Age Insurance that poverty among the elderly is likely to increase. In order to address this growing problem, he insisted on policy learning from Sweden. Katja Kipping's similar proposal was heavily criticized by other members of the Left party, Klaus Ernst and Michael Schlecht. They argued that Katja Kipping questions the core principles of the German welfare state, and that she would be 'neoliberal'. Stephan Lessenich, Professor of Sociology at the University of Jena, reacted to this criticism and was surprised that a proposal which adds a redistributional element to the conservative pension insurance, comes under heavy attack by politicians of the Left party.

The article of Wolfgang Strengmann-Kuhn in the Journal Die Deutsche Rentenversicherung: http://www.deutsche-rentenversicherung.de/nn_12448/SharedDocs/de/Inhalt/04_Formulare_Publikationen/03_publicationen/Publicationen/Fachzeitschrift_DRV/DRV_Hefte_Deutsch/2008/1/8_strengmann_kuhn.html

The article of Katja Kipping:

http://www.axel-troost.de/article/2480.altersarmut_vorprogrammiert.html

The article of Stephan Lessenich:

<http://www.stephan-lessenich.de/pdf-dateien/Beitrag%20Sozialismus.pdf>

*** NAMIBIA: PAYOUT OF BASIC INCOME ON BBC WORLD NEWS**

The Basic Income Grant (BIG) Pilot Project in Namibia is continuing to make national and international headlines (see previous issues of BIEN NewsFlash). On May 23, 2008, the BBC World News website published a piece by Frauke Jensen on the experiment, under the title: "Namibians line up for free cash." "Economic activity," Jensen says, "has picked up in the settlement since the beginning of the year and a grocery store, a hairdresser, a barber and an ice-cream vendor have opened for business. 'The opponents of BIG always have the reasoning that people will become dependent,' says Pastor Wilfred Diergaardt. 'In fact, what we are seeing here is really lifting people up out of dependency into becoming human again.' (...) If the pilot project succeeds within the next two years, BIG could become a national provision for all people under the pension age of 60. It could help balance one of the most unequal societies in the world." The project was also discussed in a BBC radio broadcast on the very same day.

BBC article : <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7415814.stm>

See also :

<http://www.earthtimes.org/articles/show/207482.now-we-can-walk-tall-big-grant-changing-lives-in.html>

For further information :

E-mail : cd.haarmann@gmx.net

Web: <http://www.cdhaarmann.com/> and <http://www.bignam.org/>

5. PUBLICATIONS

***ENGLISH**

CUNLIFFE, John & ERREYGERS, Guido (2008), 'The Archaeology of Stakeholding and Social Justice. The Foundations in Mid-19th-Century Belgium', *European Journal of Political Theory*, 7 (2), 183-201.

In a few years around 1850, three little known Belgian writers put forward strikingly similar proposals on property regimes. Their prescriptions followed from a core belief that just property regimes should respect the natural right entitlement of each person to some share of material resources. Insofar as an unregulated market economy could not meet that criterion, the state should intervene to secure it. These proposals had little impact at the time, either intellectually or politically, and fell into obscurity. Nevertheless, they can be seen as a contribution to a distinctively Belgian school of 'liberal socialism', which sought to develop an intermediate position between the extremes of liberalism and socialism. In this respect, the proposals strikingly anticipated present-day controversies over stakeholding, even if much of that history was unknown to current advocates of the idea until after they had put forward their own proposals.

Authors:

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Guido Erreygers, University of Antwerp, guido.erreygers@ua.ac.be

FREEMAN, Adam (2008) 'Five International Questions for the National Basic Income Debates', *Carnegie Ethics Online*, March 12, 2008

Carnegie Ethics Online is published by the prestigious US-based *Carnegie Council*. It features short, prescriptive contributions from writers examining ethical dilemmas in current policy issues. In his recent contribution, Adam Freeman, Assistant Editor of *Ethics & International Affairs*, examines the idea of "the national basic income." According to Freeman, the basic income discussion "is less notable for its principled disputes than for encouraging a conversation, and an expanding coalition, among a broad range of actors: on the one hand, drawing together academics from a wide range of disciplines; and on the other, connecting their work to an expanding advocacy group centered on the Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN). These conversations take place in the pages of the dedicated journal, *Basic Income Studies*, founded in 2006, as well as through an apparently relentless program of panels and conferences worldwide."

Freeman's "five international questions" (see title) should, he argues, receive more attention within the basic income debate. Among these questions, there is the obvious tension "between generous welfare policies and an egalitarian take on immigration: Can a state with open pockets afford open borders?"

The article is available at http://www.cceia.org/resources/ethics_online/0019.html

Author's address: afreeman@cceia.org

SHEAHEN, Allan (2008), 'Poverty Grows. Does Anyone Care? Resurrecting the proposal for a guaranteed annual income', *Progressive Christian Magazine*, 182 (2), March/April 2008, pages 20-24.

Poverty in the U.S. has grown by five million people since 2000 to 37 million. Does anyone care? John Edwards was the only presidential candidate who even mentioned poverty, and he quickly dropped out of the race. Many Americans may care, but don't know what to do about it. Congressman Bob Filner introduced the first-ever basic income bill in the U.S. Congress which would give every American a minimum income of \$2000 per year -- not enough to end poverty but a big help to truly poor people. The bill didn't pass, but brought back the idea of a BIG to the national agenda.

Author's address: alsheahen@prodigy.net

STEENSLAND, Brian (2008), *The Failed Welfare Revolution. America's Struggle over Guaranteed Income Policy*, Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 304 pages.

In this very well-documented book, Brian Steensland (Sociology, Indiana University, USA) explores the social and political history of the basic income discussion in the USA. The book is mainly focused on the 1960s and 1970s, when policymakers in three presidential administrations tried to replace the existing welfare system with "GAI" plans (Guaranteed Annual Income). The failure of these plans, Steensland argues, had a direct impact on the rhetoric of welfare state retrenchment during the 1980s: Reagan's policies were even a "direct product" of the basic income debates, he writes.

According to Steensland, "the main obstacle to GAI legislation was the cultural distinction that Americans draw between different categories of poor people". If the *Earned Income Tax*

Credit legislation was passed in 1975, this is precisely because it was aimed at supporting the “deserving” poor: “eligibility was restricted to people in the labor force”. In this sense, the basic income discussion showed that when challenging ideas emerge, “they must overcome ‘institutional’ obstacles that are both material and symbolic”. Supporters of GAI plans did not manage to overcome the moral objection to an income by right, which is still central today.

Interestingly, Steensland also shows that basic income proposals arose on the US policy agenda because of the “multiple meanings” of GAI plans: “a broad array of supporters favored them for very different, often contradictory reasons, some of which had little to do with poverty reduction”. Some advocates viewed basic income as urban policy, others as family policy, fiscal policy, or labor policy. In the end, such a broad and diverse coalition did not seem to be strong and stable enough as a political basis for basic income.

In the final chapter of his book, Steensland examines the “lost opportunity to ensure basic economic security for America’s poor” that the failure of the basic income plans represent. He also highlight some “lessons to be learned” from this failure, “that could prove useful for future consideration of similar plans”. His account, based on the extensive original research that constitutes the core of the book, is undoubtedly a good example of how careful policy analysis can inform current political discussion.

Author’s address: bsteens@indiana.edu

* ITALIAN

VAN PARIJS, Philippe (2008), ‘Un reddito di base per tutti’, in F. Totaro (ed.), *La Filosofia del Lavoro*, Special issue of *Paradigmi. Rivista di critica filosofica* (Roma) 1, Aprile 2008, 35-51.

An Italian version of Van Parijs's lead piece in *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) in a dossier on the philosophy of work that also includes contributions by Ulrich Beck and Serge Latouche.

Contact: "Totaro Francesco" <totarofr@unimc.it>

* JAPANESE

VAN PARIJS, Philippe (2008), ‘Basic Income: A Simple and Powerful Idea for the Twenty-First Century’ (in Japanese), *Shakai-Seisaku-Kenkyu (Social Policy Studies)* 8, 2008, 87-129.

A Japanese translation of Philippe Van Parijs's background paper for BIEN's Berlin Congress (2000), subsequently published as lead piece in *Rethinking Distribution* (E.O Wright ed, Verso, 2006).

For further information: <http://www.arsvi.com/2000/0400pp.pdf>

Contact: Taku Saito, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto Japan, <ps004995@ce.ritsumei.ac.jp>

6. NEW LINKS

* CAP AND DIVIDEND

“Cap and Dividend” is a project of “On The Commons,” a US-based network of thinkers and activists that promotes public understanding of “our common wealth.” Its members advocate a new tax on CO₂, “requiring the first sellers of oil, coal and natural gas to buy permits equal to the carbon content of their fuels.” Since fuel companies always pass such costs along to their customers, fuel prices will be higher under the new system. Under cap and dividend, the tax revenue would flow into a not-for-profit trust. “There it’s divided into equal shares and wired to every American’s bank account or debit card. This happens monthly and automatically. As the price of carbon rises, so do the dividends everyone receives. And no large bureaucracy is needed.”

The UK-based “Cap and Share” has a similar project, in which citizens would receive “Production Authorisation Permits” instead of a cash dividend. It has received the official support of the Irish Green Party. Interestingly, Molly Scott Cato, the economics spokesperson of the Green Party of England and Wales is planning to introduce a motion at the Green Party conference in September, seeking to make “Cap and Dividend” its policy rather than the Tradable Energy Quotas of “cap and share.” She opts for Cap and Dividend rather than Cap and Share, because the former would provide the basis of a Citizen's Income.

For further information: <http://www.capanddividend.org/>

UK-based project: <http://www.capandshare.org/>

Molly Scott Cato’s blog: <http://gaianeconomics.blogspot.com/>

* US SOCIALIST LEADER CALLS FOR A BASIC INCOME

According to Stewart A. Alexander, Nominee for Vice President US Socialist Party and Candidate for Vice President the US Peace and Freedom Party, the American federal government “must develop programs to relieve working people from the tremendous debt burden that modern capitalism constantly creates.” It is necessary, Alexander argues, “to establish a Universal Basic Income (UBI) for all working people, and full comprehensive assistance for the aging. Even though many socialists have called for a Universally Guaranteed Personal Income (UGI), in the 21st Century it has become extremely necessary due to the multitude of failures inherent in a capitalist system.”

See Alexander’s post at:

<http://heartlandheretic.blogspot.com/2008/05/working-people-dont-need-stimulus.html>

* A CITIZEN’S PENSION FOR AUSTRALIA

According to the Green Party Blog “Greensmartsite”, Green leader Bob Brown has launched a discussion on the introduction of a Citizen’s pension in Australia.

See: <http://www.greensmartsite.com/weblog/2008/05/citizens-pensio.html>

7. ABOUT THE BASIC INCOME EARTH NETWORK

Co-chair:

Eduardo SUPPLY, Federal Senator, Sao Paulo, Brazil

Guy STANDING, Professor of Economic Security, University of Bath, and Professor of Labour Economics, Monash University

Further details about BIEN's Executive Committee and International Board can be found on our website www.basicincome.org, as well as further details about the Recognised National Networks.

MEMBERSHIP

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 <david.casassas@uab.cat> 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), Helmut Pelzer (DE), Guy Standing (UK), Eduardo Suplicy (BR), Robert van der Veen (NL), Richard Caputo (US), Rolf Kuettel (CH), Jeanne Hrdina (CH).

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 (UK), 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 Moulrier 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 Sheahen (US), Christopher Balfour (UK), 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), 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 Funciello (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 Brüttsch (CH), Phil Harvey (US), Toru Yamamori (JP), René Keersemaaker (NL), Manuel Franzmann (DE), Ovidio Carlos de Brito (BR), Bernard De Crum (NL), Katja Kipping (DE), Jan Beaufort (DE),

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Requests for free subscription are to be sent to bien@basicincome.org

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