
BIEN The 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.

Link to BIEN Online at <http://www.basicincome.org>

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NewsFlash N°16

JULY 2002

BIEN's *NewsFlash* contains up-to-date information on recent events and publications related to BIEN or basic income more generally. The *NewsFlash* is mailed electronically every two months to over 800 subscribers throughout Europe and beyond, and simultaneously made available for consultation or download at [BIEN Online](#). Requests for [free subscription](#) or [items for inclusion or review](#) in future *NewsFlashes* are to be sent to BIEN's secretariat: Philippe Van Parijs, 17 rue de Pavie, 1000 Brussels, Belgium, E-mail: bien@etes.ucl.ac.be.

This *NewsFlash* has been prepared with the help of Laurent Geffroy, Jeremy Seekings, Eduardo Suplicy, Yannick Vanderborght and Karl Widerquist.

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EDITORIAL

With nearly 900 e-subscribers and now over 100 life members, BIEN is looking forward to its 9th congress, to be held in Geneva on 12-14 September 2002, in the building of the International Labour Organisation. If only because of the highly significant location of the congress, a special emphasis will be put this year on the worldwide relevance and appeal of the basic income project (see below the reports on Brazil and South Africa).

BIEN's General Assembly will be held on Saturday 14 September at 2pm, at the end of the congress. Among the issues to be discussed will be the place of BIEN's 10th congress, to be held in September 2004. So far, Barcelona and Dublin have been mentioned as possibilities.

But before thinking about a more remote future, let us make our Geneva congress, like its eight predecessors, a successful, wonderful encounter of a wide variety of scholars and activists from many nations and many disciplines. We greatly look forward to seeing again, or to meeting for the first time, many of you.

The Executive Committee

1. NINTH CONGRESS OF THE BASIC INCOME EUROPEAN NETWORK: "Income Security as a Right ... Sécurité du revenu: un droit"

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See Bien-Online at <http://www.basicincome.org> for updated information & registration instructions

BIEN's General Assembly will be held on Saturday 14 September at 2pm, at the end of the congress. All congress participants are welcome to attend and all full members of BIEN are entitled to vote. Agenda points include:

- The membership and financial situation will be presented (with a proposal to retain life membership only)
- The operation of the newsletter and of the web site will be discussed (with an impending breakthrough as far as the web site is concerned).
- A new executive committee will be elected for the next two years. Candidates are invited to make themselves known to BIEN's secretary (bien@etes.ucl.ac.be) in advance of the meeting. BIEN's statutes can be consulted on our web site: http://www.etes.ucl.ac.be/BIEN/BIEN's_Statutes.html.
- National networks not officially recognised so far can also use this opportunity to apply for recognition by BIEN (along with the British, Dutch and Irish ones). Spain's Red Renta Basica has already done so.
- Next and not least, the place of BIEN's next congress, to be held preferably in September 2004, will need to be chosen. So far, Barcelona and Dublin have been mentioned as possibilities.
- Finally, we shall examine the proposal, already made on earlier occasions, to turn BIEN into a worldwide network.

2. OTHER EVENTS

BRUSSELS (BE), 21 September 2002, Forum social de Belgique

A workshop on basic income ("allocation universelle") is being planned within the framework of the Belgian Social Forum, to be held on the campus of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. Further information: <http://ARTivisme.net/alloconiv.htm>, or contact François Jortay at fran@ARTivisme.net

FIRENZE (IT), 7-9 November 2002 - European Social Forum

In the same vein as the Porto Alegre World Social Forum, this is the first European Social Forum. An attempt is being made to have basic income on the main discussion agenda. Further information, contact Bernard Guibert at julieve@club-internet.fr.

NEW YORK (US), 21-23 February 2003 - Meeting of the Eastern Economics Association

USBIG (the United States Basic Income Guarantee Network) will hold its 2003 meeting in New York in February. The meeting will be held jointly with the Eastern Economics Association's annual meeting. The EEA will handle registration and logistics, and anyone attending the USBIG conference is welcome to attend any of the EEA sessions, but in content USBIG is entirely autonomous, and will continue in its interdisciplinary character. Scholars, activists, and others are invited to attend, to submit papers, and to organize

panels in any discipline. Paper submissions are welcome on any topic relating to the Basic Income Guarantee or the state of poverty and inequality, such as the political economy of BIG; the history of BIG; gender, family, and labor market issues and BIG; empirical issues of BIG and of poverty. Further information: <http://www.usbig.net/>, or to present a paper send a proposal to Karl@Widerquist.com.

3. GLIMPSES OF NATIONAL DEBATES

BRAZIL

After his predicted victory in the primaries against Senator Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, the leader and presidential candidate of the Workers' Party (PT), Luiz Inacio a Lula, is leading in the polls in the campaign for Brazil's presidential election of October 2002. The "Social Inclusion" Chapter in Lula's Government Program, as made public at the end of July 2002, includes a Guaranteed Minimum Income Policy strongly influenced by Senator Suplicy's tenacious advocacy. The concrete proposals are quite a distance from a universal basic income paid to all Brazilians, but, in line with the perspective developed in Suplicy's recent book (*Renda de Cidadania. A saida è pela porta*, Sao Paulo, 2002), the manifesto states: "The minimum income that our government proposes should be seen as a step in the direction of the implementation - when the fiscal conditions are ready - of a citizen's basic income". The dynamics of the presidential campaign, however, forces all candidates to put great emphasis on the creation of jobs.

SOUTH AFRICA

In the Autumn of 2001, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the Coalition for a Basic Income Grant, TAC, and more than a dozen other non-governmental organizations made a declaration in favor of a monthly basic income grant of 100 Rand (about EUR 10) for all South Africans. This was followed by a march on the South African Parliament in Cape Town on 20 February 2002 in support of the proposal (http://www.tac.org.za/newsletter/ns22_02_2002.txt).

The South African debate on basic income has now made its way into the pages of the *Washington Post* (9 July 2002, p. A01): "Promoted by a broad coalition of labor unions, churches, children's advocates, the elderly, women, opposition politicians and even AIDS activists, a plan to provide each man, woman and child age 7 to 65 with a monthly welfare check of \$10 has dominated the political debate here this year." The thoughtful and informative article (by Jon Peter) usefully describes the background of the proposal: "More than half of South Africa's 42 million people survive on less than \$2 a day and the economy has shed nearly 1 million jobs since 1994. Virtually the only safety nets available to South Africans are a poorly administered child support grant, for single mothers with children under age 7, and the state-funded old-age pension created by the apartheid government nearly three decades ago...". It also says why the ANC government is unlikely to implement it: "The government's minister for social development, Zola Skweyiya, has expressed support for the plan. But Finance Minister Trevor Manuel denounced the proposal in his budget speech in February, calling it "economic populism" and saying it was unaffordable. Supporters of the plan speculate that while the plan has gained too much momentum for the ruling African National Congress to reject it outright, Mbeki and his cabinet ministers may delay its implementation. They say that is because BIG is incompatible with the government's fiscally conservative agenda, which seeks to lure foreign investment by keeping a lid on state spending, deficits and inflation."

4. RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ENGLISH

BELORGEY, Jean-Michel. "Can Social Protection Respond to the Challenges of Precarious Jobs, Better Access to Employment and Equitable and Universal Decent Standards of Living? Lessons from the French Experience", in Hedva Sarfati and Giuliano Bonoli (eds.), *Labour Market and Social*

Protection Reforms in International Perspective. Parallel or converging tracks?, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002, pp. 311-347 (ISBN 0 7546 1927 3 Paperback).

As an adviser to former French prime minister Michel Rocard and socialist member of the French Parliament, Jean-Michel Belorgey was one of the main initiators of the French minimum income (Revenu Minimum d'Insertion - RMI), introduced in 1988. Currently a member of the Council of State (Conseil d'Etat), he is considered a prominent expert on the question of income security. In this chapter he examines several trends in the French labour market, including the expansion of atypical forms of employment and part-time work, and the emergence of a new class of working poor. He argues that the French social protection system has to adapt in order to deal with these new challenges. According to Belorgey, the alternative which would consist in introducing a basic income for all must be rejected. For "it does not in practice make any economic sense once the question of its financing is taken into account" (323). If basic income is financed through a proportional income tax, "the allowance in practice becomes progressive in relation to income" (324); hence, Belorgey writes, it is no more "uniform". If it is financed through progressive income taxation, then it "fails to guarantee either the incentive to work or the redistribution effect" (324). Although a basic income is not an appropriate welfare reform, Belorgey suggests that an "allowance for single young persons" should be made available for the young persons not covered by any other benefit. In France, people under 25 are not entitled to the minimum income.

GEORGE, Robley. *Socioeconomic Democracy. An Advanced Socioeconomic System*. Westport (Ct) & London: Praeger, 2002, 306p (ISBN 0 275 97376 X). Author's address: GeorgeCSDS@aol.com.

From his California-based Center for the Study of Democratic Society, Robley George has been working for many years to formulate and advocate his ideal of "socioeconomic democracy", culminating in the publication of this book. What does this ideal consist in? A model of society and the economy "in which there is some form of Universal Guaranteed Personal Income, as well as some form of Maximum Allowable Personal Wealth, with both the lower bound on personal material poverty and the upper bound on personal material wealth set and adjusted democratically by all". To justify his model, George draws on many traditions, including Rawlsian political philosophy and Islamic theology. His "Universal Guaranteed personal Income" is the sort of unconditional citizen's income which has been the focus of the activities of BIEN, of which Robley George is a life member.

MILNE, Alan John Mitchell, *Politics, Wellbeing and the Market*, Houndmills: Palgrave, 2001 (ISBN 0-333-71444-X)

This essay on the welfare state and the market by Alan Milne (1922-1998), Emeritus Professor of Political Theory and Institutions at University of Durham (UK), was published posthumously by his son Alistair Milne (City University Business School) and Roger Crisp (St Anne's College, Oxford). Its third chapter is entitled "Inequality, Property and the Idea of a Citizen's Income" (pp.66-97) and makes a vigorous plea for the introduction of a "Citizen's Basic Income" (CBI). "Universal allowances", he writes, are a better way to tackle poverty than means-tested allowances, "because they do not entail a low-income trap and are not socially divisive" (84). The level of the CBI should be sufficient to cover all an adult's essential needs, i.e. adequate food, clothing and shelter. Milne suggests the amount of EUR 400 per month. He also considers an alternative proposal which he calls the "Citizen's Basic Patrimony". Reaching the age of 18, each citizen would be entitled to a "once-for-all lump sum" of £130.000 (nearly EUR 210.000), irrespective of other wealth, income, and assets. Although Milne thinks that a regular payment of the CBI type is a more reliable way of preventing poverty, he nevertheless stresses that a Basic Patrimony scheme would spread capital in an innovative way and increase the opportunities for investment and entrepreneurship. Finally, the author also scrutinizes classic objections to the idea of a guaranteed income. "The proposal to introduce it is necessarily controversial", Milne concludes. "But we know that controversy is ineliminable in politics."

MINFORD, Patrick. "Basic income could prove an escape route from the benefits trap", in *The Daily Telegraph* 13 May 2002; reprinted in *Citizen's Income Newsletter* 2, 2002, pp. 6-7. Author's address: comment@patrickminford.com.

Professor Minford, previously at the University of Liverpool and now at the University of Cardiff Business School, used to be an adviser to Margaret Thatcher. In this article in the conservative newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*, he points out that, with the latest reform by the UK's finance minister Gordon Brown, families with incomes as high as EUR 30.000 will receive a tax credit (at decreasing levels as the income rises). One implication is that "people right up to average incomes are now caught in a poverty trap", with effective marginal tax rates of 70% or so. As an alternative, Minford proposes to switch some of the Brown tax credits into a much expanded universal child benefit. "The dependency culture afflicting our inner cities is caused by high marginal tax rates on honest effort and retraining interacting with the untaxed gains from crime. Eliminating those high tax rates on our poorest citizens by moving further to a toughly-calibrated Basic Income would not cure dependency; but it would remove one of its key ingredients."

FRENCH

GEFFROY, Laurent, " L'État social sélectif. Une relecture comparée du PARE et de la PPE en France", *Raisons politiques* (Paris) 6, mai-juillet 2002. Author's address: lego@noos.fr.

In 2000, the association of French employers (MEDEF) proposed a new contract between social partners and the unemployed (PARE), strengthening personalised assistance and setting stricter conditions for workers' compensation. The following year, the French Parliament adopted a refundable tax credit scheme focused on low wages (PPE), thus bringing France closer than it has ever been to a negative income tax. Though promoted by different constituencies, Geffroy argues that the PARE and the PPE have the same objective: activating previously "passive" expenditures. Both seek to accelerate the reintegration of the unemployed into the workplace through the creation of incentive mechanisms or through the imposition of financial sanctions. The author argues that the consequences of both the PARE and the PPE have been to increase control over workers and their dependence on welfare state institutions.

VANDERBORGH, Yannick, "Quelles sont les chances politiques de l'allocation universelle? Hypothèses à partir des exemples canadien et néerlandais", *Raisons politiques* (Paris), 6, mai-juillet 2002, pp. 53-66. Author's address: vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be.

Under various forms, the concept of a basic income has already been advocated in most OECD countries, and yet the proposal has never been implemented. Is the idea of an unconditional minimum income politically unfeasible? To sketch a precise (and partial) answer to that question, Vanderborght focuses on the Dutch and Canadian cases. In both countries the idea has been widely discussed. But an ethical objection has acted as a brake upon the introduction of such a scheme: in both the Netherlands and Canada, the welfare reform process was never favourable to income security schemes which did not include work requirements.

VAN PARIJS, Philippe. "Etre payé à ne rien faire?", in *Bizz. Le magazine qui se mêle de vos affaires* (Brussels) 26, avril 2002, pp.102-107. Interviewee's address: vanparijs@etes.ucl.ac.be.

A lengthy interview on basic income with Philippe Van Parijs, professor of economic and social ethics at Louvain University and secretary of BIEN, in a popular business magazine. Not certain that the title ("Being paid for doing nothing?") will help the cause.

SPANISH

RED RENTA BASICA. *La renta básica*, Barcelona: Red Renta básica (c/ Mallorca, 237 principal 1a, 08008 Barcelona, E-mail: secretariat@redrentabasica.org; <http://www.redrentabasica.org>), 32p. EUR 3 (EUR 1 for members of RRB).

A well-informed and neatly produced short introduction to basic income in the form of replies to 21 questions such as "Would it increase workers' bargaining power?", "Would it not be better to guarantee a right to work?", "What would be the impact on women?", "How would it affect immigration?".

5. MORE ABOUT BIEN

BIEN's EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- Prof. Ilona Ostner (iostner@gwdg.de), co-chair;
- Dr Guy Standing (GuyStanding@compuserve.com), co-chair;
- Alexander de Roo MEP (aderoo@europarl.eu.int), treasurer;
- Prof. Claus Offe (coffe@sowi.hu-berlin.de), research coordinator;
- Prof. Philippe Van Parijs (vanparijs@etes.ucl.ac.be), secretary, with support from Yannick Vanderborght (vanderborght@etes.ucl.ac.be)
- Dr Stuart Duffin (Stuart.Duffin@SINE.org.uk), communication co-ordinator, with support from Jurgen De Wispelaere (J.De-Wispelaere@lse.ac.uk).

HONORARY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

- Prof. Edwin Morley-Fletcher (m-fletcher@cnel.it)
- Prof. Robert J. van der Veen (vanderveen@warwick.ac.uk)
- Dr Walter Van Trier (Walter.VanTrier@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be)

- Dr Steven Quilley (steve.quilley@ucd.ie).

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BIEN'S LIFE MEMBERS

Link to <http://www.basicincome.org/> to find out how to become a Life Member of BIEN

James Meade (+)	Yann Moulrier Boutang (FR)	Cristovam Buarque (BR)
Gunnar Adler-Karlsson (SE)	Joachim Mitschke (DE)	Michael Lewis (US)
Maria Ozanira da Silva (BR)	Rik van Berkel (NL)	Clive Lord (UK)
Ronald Dore (UK)	François Blais (CA)	Jean Morier-Genoud (FR)
Alexander de Roo (NL)	Katrin Töns (DE),	Eri Noguchi (US)
Edouard Dommen (CH)	NN (New York, US)	Michael Samson (ZA),
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