

Guaranteed Living Income Toronto Newsbreeze January 15, 2017

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BI/GLI matters as of January 15.

I did not get to the HSAG/SHAPE group meeting January 12 as I had a more critical function to attend. I can't be in two places at once. I have not heard much yet about how things went down there. I understand there was some discussion of the need to get out and meet people. That is a fairly mundane observation. I have nothing about whether the name change to SHAPE was approved.

I am very glad I attended the event at Christian Resource Centre at 40 Oak instead. More than anywhere else in Toronto right now, there is where some things are happening regarding an income guarantee. On the 12th was a more general discussion of the Basic Income pilots, to help plan the January 18 event. This was led by someone from one of the food security agencies.

On January 18th, they will hold a community consultation along the same lines as the provincial consultations, but asking different questions. This will be presented to the provincial government. It would be a good idea if various community groups in Ontario would look at this model and try emulating it rather than chasing after the province.

I found this open discussion among low income people, mainly from Regent park, to be very exciting. They get the issues around a Basic Income much more than do the mostly middle class people who have made up the BI advocacy groups until now. It seems the old Regent park spirit of defiance lives on.

I had not been in Regent park for some time. I used to live, not in it, but in a social housing building near it. I would come every week to a meeting of one of the groups there, which met in the old Christian Resource Center. We would have a community meal and discussion of matters of interest.

Back then, it was about how to cope with the dire effects of the Harris/Eves government on the community. A frequent topic as well was the antics of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, who tried to use poor people as cannon fodder for their delusions of being “revolutionaries”, basically getting people in trouble for no reason. Also, we had to deal with some of the social work types who tried to cut off resources for the group because we did not always want to go along with their agenda.

Something I learned there was that the first priority of any poverty group was self help; looking after each other. Never get roped into someone else’s cause. It is the social work cum political types who have to get it through their heads that poor people are poor. The whole point of keeping them poor is to keep them powerless. All they can really do is survive.

It is for the people who are not in a complete state of economic powerlessness to get over the mental controls that neutralize them and develop the resources with which to bring about the political/economic changes which will end poverty and their own security. This is one reason why a BI/GLI has to be looked at as a human rights issue, not as a poverty relief issue.

So here I was back at Regent, a dozen years after they had moved me down to the Esplanade and concurrently started tearing it all apart. I have met some members of the old gang from time to time, but it seems they had gotten used to where they had been moved to during the reconstruction phase and were not so interested in being moved back.

The new Christian Resource Centre has been open for four years and this is the first time I have been there. I have already related the incident in which some OCAP attack dogs stopped me from entering to hear their great leader hold forth about the BI issue. I have never got around to really following up on that, but I will suggest that the kind of groups who have enemy lists do not need meeting space in facilities such as CRC.

As I said, the people attending this idea session had a very good idea of the Basic Issues about Basic Incomes. How it will be delivered is as important as how much it pays. They know what a “Negative Income Tax” model is

going to mean for them. By the way, 42 people turned out on a very cold day.

One of them described for me an incident within the Scarborough official consultation which I had not heard until then. It seems three of the tables started a mini revolt, pounding the tables and chanting “Demogrant! Demogrant!” The Etobicoke consultation I attended was a lot tamer than that, although some of us did stand up and pronounce some of the questions to be unworthy of an answer.

I encountered one person who had attended one meeting of Basic Income Toronto Organization. It was one of the more poorly attended ones. I told her why; because the people running BITO cannot seem to understand that if people are going to attend meetings and be involved in the group, they have to know about the meetings. More about that below.

I also began what should be a useful relationship with one of the organizers at CRC. We might be able to get access to a suitable meeting space there. It is even handier to streetcars than SRCHC and Ralph Thornton, and is on this side of the river, as that seems to concern some people. The new CRC is a beautiful building.

This would solve the HSAG/SHAPE problem, of a space for Robyn to hold her training sessions in. As well, it might be a place for more regular general discussions of a Guaranteed Living Income. This seems to be what is needed now.

Finally, I discuss the prospects for the next BITO meeting. The next meeting should be due on the 17th, two days away now. I certainly have no word about it. There was never clarity about when the next meeting would take place, except “some time in January”. We will see what develops.

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Basic Income Toronto Meeting

I thought if I was a day late in publishing this, I might hear something about BITO. I did.

They will meet Wednesday January 18th @ Metro Hall room 303, 7:00 - 8:30.

An agenda will be circulated the afternoon of the 18th. I won't get it because I will be away from home that afternoon. Agendas and minutes need to arise at least a week in advance of the meeting.

It seems Matt was waiting for confirmation from Metro hall staff about the room booking.

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Martin Luther King day

January 16 is the anniversary of old MLK's assassination. I hope people on this list know who he was, and not the sanitized version either. When he was alive, he was demonized with hysterical intensity before being assassinated by the CIA as a "national security threat".

An associate of mine forwarded a hard to obtain video of an interview with King. I was concerned that his voice was mysteriously erased in a couple of places. I don't lip read well. It shows how well he understood the need for a guaranteed income, and the difficulty in bringing it about.

Basically, it has to be given to everybody. Otherwise it becomes a new way to stigmatize underclasses. But the conversation is a real reflection of its time. The problems then are still with us. They seem to be still with us because people were too optimistic then and when they failed to win easily they became discouraged, cynical, and then coopted.

People trying to build social movements today, like the Basic Income movement, need to consider this.

The most important points are at around minute 12.

<https://twitter.com/Orf/status/819747164897288196>

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The Counter Consultations Roll On.

At Northumberland County https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_n85L9x9rtKbGw0b01fNFZ0Rnc/view

At Kitchener https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B_n85L9x9rtKYIFEN3dWOW5NTjA/view?ts=587aec23

More on the Kitchener consult, which sounds like a particularly lively one, quoted from "Put Food In the Budget"

Later in the consultation, when asked what could be done to promote participation in the pilot, participants said that the Ministry could reduce the skepticism surrounding this pilot by immediately raising welfare rates to show that they are serious about actually doing something to address the inadequacies of the OW/ODSP system.

One table group of people drew applause and shouts of support from others by calling on the Ministry to abandon its consideration of a Basic Income pegged at anything below 100% of the Low Income Measure.

In the final, open round of comments that wrapped up the session, a woman stood up to express her support for testing out a Basic Income, but to also very clearly state her support for the emergency resolution that social assistance be raised in the meantime. Once again, these comments received loud applause and shouts of "hear! hear!" from throughout the audience."

And at Regent park in Toronto, an alternative consult is taking place, as discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. Information about it is at <http://www.qaz.ca/calendar.html#j18b>

Here is something which other BI groups should be working with anti-poverty groups all across Ontario to emulate. Why not?

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The Federal Government

As is repeated endlessly in this newsletter, only the federal Government has the fiscal and constitutional power to implement a real Basic Income. It is starting to look into developing anti poverty strategies. The Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities has been holding hearings on a poverty strategy.

Here is the perfect opportunity for the Basic Income movement to get the BI idea onto the federal government's agenda. Yet the BI movement in Canada seems to have completely dropped the ball. Instead BI activists all over the country are obsessed with chasing these decoys, these pilot projects, which can't go anywhere.

There is still some time to file a brief with this committee. See the web site;

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Committees/en/HUMA/StudyActivity?studyActivityId=8845428>

There was not one single brief that spoke about a Guaranteed Income. Where was Basic Income Canada Network? No indication on their site they are even aware of this. That is bewildering since some of the strongest advocates of human rights and a basic income in Canada are on the board of BICN.

It is even stranger that the “Canada Without Poverty” and “Dignity for All” groups made deputations to this committee, talked strongly about Human Rights, but made no mention of BI. It is this group which did considerable research into BI and tried to set it in the framework of Human Rights. Their brief to the committee is here.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/Content/HOC/Committee/421/HUMA/Brief/BR8634456/br-external/CanadaWithoutPoverty-e.pdf>

They did a great service to a BI/GLI movement by urging that any public consultation on poverty reduction give priority to people in an impoverished state. This can give the BI/GLI movement a way to get into the game.

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About structure of Local BI/GLI groups

There is a problem of a lack of understanding of the importance of structure and process. There is a solution for this; training. There are several sources of training in how to run a small organization effectively. On February 4th the “Tools for Change” group is holding a workshop on structure. Find the sign up page here.

<https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/forming-reforming-your-groups-structure-tickets-27916276334>

I strongly suggest that members of Basic Income Toronto Organization in particular sign up for this. It is also time to make inquiries about help in setting up a structure. We could do that on February 4th.

