

Guaranteed Living Income Toronto Newsbreeze February 26, 2017

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Basic Income /Guaranteed Living Income Salon

What is there to talk about?

Saturday, March 4th, 2 to 4 PM

Ralph Thornton Center, third floor back room.
765 Queen street east.

Event poster.<http://www.livinggrant.ch/mar4post.pdf>

Explanation of event <http://www.livinggrant.ch/salon-a.pdf>

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Volunteer Mobilization : Case Study for Team Development

Here was a recent webinar from Maytree institute. It is exactly the kind of learning which BI/GLI proponents are deficient in and need to avail themselves of. This is what it is rally about, folks. That is, if you have any ambitions of achieving a BI/GLI rather than just talk long yourselves about it.

We need to learn how to attract volunteers and build campaigns like what is described in this webinar. I will be flagging more learning resources of this type to the GLI community.

The key points are; learn now to build the capacity and power of a BI/GLI movement. Forget about getting support from defenders of the status quo; we are out to change the status quo. You absolutely must have a core of paid organizers to be able to mobilize a large number of volunteers.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rIbhZ3CN9cU&feature=youtu.be>

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Here is something worth reading from our friends at "Put Food in the Budget ("<http://www.putfoodinthebudget.ca/>)

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The Basic Income consultation merry-go-round grinds to a halt. What happens next?

An emergency resolution to immediately raise social rates for everyone to the levels recommended by Senator Hugh Segal received overwhelming support at consultations held in communities across Ontario. The image below shows news headlines typical in many of the communities where consultations were held.

The upcoming budget will reveal whether Premier Wynne's government will respond to this powerful demand and raise the rates in this last budget before the next election.

An article on Basic Income by Rebecca Fortin is printed in Quartz Magazine (See here.) <https://qz.com/914247/canada-is-betting-on-a-universal-basic-income-to-help-cities-gutted-by-manufacturing-job-loss/>

It includes this critique:

“Critics say testing basic income puts off meaningful action to address poverty. Karl Widerquist, associate professor in political philosophy and an economist at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, says the danger is in giving the Ontario government an excuse to put off more expensive policy changes, like addressing the inadequacy of social welfare rates or raising the minimum wage. Similarly, David Macdonald, senior economist at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, is concerned that if it truly becomes universal, the resulting price tag would force the government to cut other social programs to compensate. (The Ontario government has committed to the pilot in their budget but exact costs and where the money will come from have yet to be sorted out.)

Others don't trust the government to succeed in implementing a basic income, given its track record: two earlier poverty-reduction strategies, which both proposed far-reaching structural reforms, have changed nothing, says Mike Balkwill who represents anti-poverty groups in Ontario, including a campaign called Put Food in the Budget. “This government really hasn't done anything for people in deep poverty,” says Balkwill. The moves towards a basic income are just another “consultation merry-go-round.”

Instead of waiting around another three years to see the results of a pilot, he and other anti-poverty advocates are calling for an immediate raise to existing social assistance rates in the province to provide some relief for poor people.”

Onward.

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New book from Philippe Van Parijs and friends. He is one of the co founders of BIEN.
(Basic Income Earth Network)

Basic Income; A Radical Proposal for a Free Society and a Sane Economy

I do not think he and the group around him have been very effective advocates for the idea of a BI. In the past, he has come out with tomes with titles such as “Real Freedom for All. What (if anything) can justify capitalism?” and with a picture of a guy on a surfboard on the cover. Yes, we are looking to justify capitalism and we want a BI just to allow “Malibu surfers” to go on doing their thing.

He has also come out with complicated academic papers that seem to say that treating a job as an asset which can be taxed would help in justifying a BI. The problem with these people is that they are into this “Rawlesian” ie Liberal, idea of “reciprocity”. That is, anyone can do anything which does not diminish anyone else’s living standard. So how do we give “Malibu Surfers” a BI without taking anything away from someone with a job?

He even calls it a “radical concept”, a sure way of marginalizing the idea. With advocates like this, it is no wonder the BI concept hasn’t got anywhere much in 30 years. Nonetheless, I will probably end up reading this book just so I can write a refutation of it which I will have a hard time getting BI people to read. Get your own copy;
<http://www.hup.harvard.edu/catalog.php?isbn=9780674052284>

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We had a lively HSAG meeting last Thursday, February 23rd. I came a bit late and I did not quite follow the discussion about some group that wanted to charge \$80 in advance for people to come to some event. It seems they want to show us that the “one percent” are not our enemy. The establishment is simply in transition as we speak.

I wish I had done better notes on this one. But it is typical of the establishment efforts at cognitive control of its human herd.

A part of this pitch also seemed to be about solving unemployment by creating jobs for everybody. Of course there are two ways to do that. One is to sharply reduce the work week, which will still require a BI/GLI.

The other is to make up jobs for everybody. As has been noticed lately, a large part of the workforce thinks their jobs are already made up; are “bullshit” jobs, contributing nothing to society. There are great hazards in making up jobs for people. One of the least

is having people doing things like digging ditches and filling them in. It can lead to people doing dangerous and unhealthy things.

At present, the forty hour work week is a joke. Some people are working much more than that, while others have nothing at all to do. Yet it was predicted fifty years ago that we would all be working fifteen hour work weeks by now.

The upshot is that the problem of unemployment could be largely solved by reducing work hours, but BI/GLI will still be required. And if labor costs go up, there will be greater incentive for employees to bring in automation.

We also got into the idea of forgiving all the world's debt. Presently all the world's currencies are issued by banks as a loan. That is what is meant by a "debt based" currency. Going back to a system where the government issues the money would make it easier to finance public goods including a BI/GLI.

There is no real need for banks at all. Credit Unions and postal banking could handle all consumer credit, checking, mortgage etc needs. The check clearing system might just as well be run by the government. Banks never made loans to industry for capital spending. The money was raised on the stock market. A big part of the problem now is that the big banks have taken over the stock markets.

The next topic; how much do people need to live on in Canada at the present time? It should not be hard to figure this out for each locality. For some reason it is not done. Instead we have these "Low Income Cutoffs" and "Low Income Measures" which are completely abstract.

Finally, someone wanted to know just what was a "globalist". It seems, someone who believes in a world government. Globalists see nation states as merely getting in the way of "The Market". Does this then mean they are "neo-feudalists?" That is, want to go back to how it was in medieval times, where there was no effective government and land owners with their own paramilitary organizations ruled over the populace, who were serfs tied to their places by debt. Hm.

Of course, eliminating nation states would be very bad for people. There needs to be some strong social movement against globalism and for a Basic Income. How to create one? That is a question I will keep trying to answer in this newsletter.

I should compare my notes of these meetings with Paul.

But that was the end of the philosophical part of the meeting. We got to the business part.

The Wynne government is coming up with even more consultations, this time about "community hubs". There has been a lack of them ever since the Harris government took over the school boards and made it almost impossible to use the neighbourhood schools for community activities. This "community hubs" conference is happening in May.

Meanwhile, it is thought that the South Riverdale Community Health Centre was acting as a pretty good community hub. They are going to give out some \$1000 grants for local groups to do "healthy Community" projects. It is thought that HSAG should apply. The question is; how would Guaranteed Living Income advocacy square with a community health aim?

There is a local group called Appletree which might help us get buttons done, among other things.

And Paul will develop a twitter handle for HSAG.

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The idea of Basic Income

As for the ATTAC meeting on Basic Income at 519 Church on February 24th, ATTAC stands for something in French to do with establishing a financial transactions tax.

I have heard of Dix Sandbeck and his ideas about "labor intermediation" before. He is holding a series of meetings on different political-economic topics that he tries to draw into this "labor intermediation" idea. He also sees his "ATTAC" as a branch of this French Group. His web site is at <http://attac-ontario.org/texts.html>

I have read about his labor intermediation scheme before. He wants some sorts of non profit agencies to act as intermediaries between workers and employers. He is not clear how this would work but says he gets the idea from the "flexicurity" policies of some European governments.

The point is to allow people more job security and ability to take time off from employment by taking control of fitting people into available jobs. This would create an intrusive bureaucracy which both workers and employers would soon come to hate. In Canada labor unions or temp agencies perform this mediation function.

Nine people attended this event. Some of them were very knowledgeable about the topic and made for an interesting discussion. There was too much to post on this newsletter so I am going to move it off. <http://www.livinggrant.ch/curdocs/feb26attach.html#a>

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Next GLI news breeze is March 5th, with hopefully lots to say about the March 4th Salon.