

Toronto Guaranteed Living Income Newsbreeze, April 2nd.

Here is a very interesting read from our friends at Canada Without Poverty . Is there really a “middle class in Canada anymore, if there ever really was?

When Middle Class Doesn't Mean Getting By

<http://www.cwp-csp.ca/2017/03/when-middle-class-doesnt-mean-getting-by/?platform=hootsuite>

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Quebec's idea of a basic Basic Income

Quebec is also making some moves toward a Basic Income. Unlike Ontario, they seem to actually intend to create some type of program. It will not be a Living Income, however; no province has the ability to create that.

This puts advocates for a real Living Income in an awkward position. What La Belle Province does could improve the situations of low income people, at least temporarily. We can't just reject it out of hand. But we need to show that something a lot better than that is possible.

We need to distinguish “welfare 2.0 from a living income.

<http://www.precariouswork.com/2017/03/30/quebec-hints-at-basic-income-in-recent-budget-aims-to-bypass-testing/>

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Notes from the latest GLI salon. April 1st, 2017.

Here I sit, all alone...

Well, happy April fool's day, everyone. Here I sit all alone; no one is showing up for this thing again. I have just about the ideal space for a small gathering, free of charge. There is a whiteboard, a projector screen with a computer monitor, and a dozen comfortable chairs. Across the hall is a small kitchen.

This time the weather is even nice. I don't think moving the date around will help. If people were really interested they would show up. The thing is, it is very hard to start a new group. The HSAG people are very effective for some things, but they are rooted in the Riverdale district and dependant on the local community health centre.

It took the people who established the "public space committee" in Toronto a very long time to get an interested group of people together. Ditto the founders of the Toronto chapter of Fair Vote Canada. They called meeting after meeting with nobody showing up. I am going to keep this up for at least another three sessions.

Meanwhile, I have a good place to sit and think deeply about what needs to be done about a GII. I don't have the distractions of home, especially the computer. I have even more to think about today because yesterday I was at a very interesting planing congress of the "15 and Fairness" organization. This is something which "Basic Income" people need to think on seriously.

There I sat, all surrounded...

A lot of the social/political activism which goes on in Toronto is outright ideological warfare. This is one reason why it is so hard to get people involved. But I encountered no hostility at all at this event. I was not on the agenda, but I could talk about the problems with the BI movement at my table. I could lay out the printed stuff I was able to produce; mostly Robyn's leaflets.

Basic Income and the "jobs guarantee" were lumped together in a fifteen minute session on "other ideas", presented by Elizabeth MacIssac from Maytree. The basic message was, these are fine ideas, but we want to hear

details before we make any decisions for or against them. This includes the provincial government's "pilot".

BICN has very foolishly endorsed the province's pilot; which the "Fight 4 15" folks have not explicitly rejected but are very dubious about. They want to hear what the province actually proposes before responding to it. BICN should have had at least that much sense.

Maclsaac articulated some basic demands that should be made of any kind of BIG or jobs guarantee proposal. One is that they cannot threaten existing social provisions. Another is that they cannot take funds away from other programs. Another is that they cannot be used as an excuse to delay other reforms. And finally, all such programs must be voluntary.

These are very sensible demands. If you are following the sturm and drang about the "pilots" you will know that this seems to be the problem with this project of the province. It seems to be a way of freezing discussion about social and labor policy until after the next election. It does not seem to be working.

I talked at my table about my frustrations within the BI moment. I got considerable interest and sympathy. I told them I am part of a kind of rump group trying to get the BICN affiliated groups to rethink their approach. There are some of us out there, but we need to get into contact with each other.

We also need some reinforcements from people in the labor and social movements in order to move the discussion away from "poverty relief" and back to human rights. These people were not too sure how that could happen. They had limited resources themselves.

Making 'work' vs making lives

I talked about the false dichotomy between job guarantees and income guarantees. How do you create more jobs? "Make work" projects do not have a very good history. The old depression era stories of people being paid peanuts to dig ditches and fill them in, then dig them up again, are still remembered in many circles.

The real, time tested way to create more jobs is to reduce working hours. A few years ago I was involved with some people who wanted to reduce the work week to 32 hours. Actually, it could go down to 24 hours. They are not around anymore.

But to reduce work hours, hourly wages have to rise proportionately, if people's incomes are not to be destroyed. It is hard enough to get the minimum wage up to \$15. An authentic BI/GLI would cushion this transit to a shorter work week.

But isn't that the way a BI movement should be answering the problem of technological unemployment? Not "everyone take a full BI and go become artists and 'innovator and 'entrepreneurs' " but "everyone work less". This is the problem when discussion is led by the flakes instead of by a credible organization which has the capacity to develop a thought-through position on these issues.

But that was the "15 and Fairness" provincial strategy meeting. I even bought myself one of their -shirts. They have sold 1000 of them. They have given away 25 000 buttons and dispensed reams of stickers, flyers, and posters. They do not have unlimited funding. I would just love to be able to start selling some GLI t-shirts and buttons to fund some serious activities.

I admire the \$15 and Fairness group in its ability to clearly articulate a goal and work toward it. In contrast, BICN sits around talking out its ass and in secret, is never really clear about its aims, and has become coopted by the "welfare by another name" faction.

There I wasn't

There I was another BI related event I became aware of. I was not interested in going there myself because it was put on by OCAP, who have some members who do not like me and some who are mentally unstable. But they are shaping up as the big voice of opposition to a BI in Toronto. It is important to know what they are saying.

Below are links to information they referred people to. You notice they were capable of putting on some nibbles for people, and giving out tokens. My thanks to Sue at house links for directing this to me.

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Stuff related to OCAP's meeting at Houselinks on BI

The resource list (partial)

<http://www.livingrant.ch/curdocs/resourcelist.pdf>

A scan of the event poster

<http://www.livingrant.ch/curdocs/Scan.pdf>

Backup links to Clarke's articles.

<http://socialistproject.ca/bullet/1350.php>

<http://socialistproject.ca/bullet/1330.php>

<http://www.socialistproject.ca/bullet/1241.php>

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Upcoming events

The next HSAG meet up is April 6 (1:30 to 3:30, South Riverdale Community Health Centre, 955 Queen street east.)

Also on April 6th, our friends with "Put Food in the Budget" and "Raise the Rates Coalition" are conducting a very interesting public action at the AGM of the Royal Bank of Canada. It should be lots of fun. It would be great if there were some GLI presence at it.

<http://www.qaz.ca/calendar.html#AGM>

Next Toronto GLI Salon is April 15th (Ralph Thornton 2 to 4 pm 765 Queen street east.)