

Guaranteed Living Income Toronto Newsbreeze



May 7, 2017

contains;

- * article about May 5th forum on Human rights and Basic Income.
- * Messages from “Put Food in the Budget” and Ontario Federation of Labor.
- * Link to a new “critical Reader” on Basic Income
- * media from Senator Art Eggleton and the Swiss referendum leader Enno Schmidt.

back issues at; <http://www.livinggrant.ch/oldbreezes/top.html>

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Senator Art Eggleton on the Ontario Basic Income Pilot

<http://www.thebasicincomepodcast.com/podcast/ontario-sen-art-eggleton-upcoming-basic-income-pilot/>

Enough level of clawback? Oh, Eggie.

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Enno Schmidt on the Swiss Basic Income Campaign

<http://www.thebasicincomepodcast.com/podcast/swiss-campaign-cofounder-enno-schmidt/>

If there is any leader of the world wide BI movement I really admire, it is Enno Schmidt. I met him in Montreal 2014.

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Basic Income: A Critical Reader:

<https://hammerhearts.wordpress.com/2017/04/29/basic-income-a-critical-reader/>

Here is smething to check out.

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May 11: CLC and OFL host Street Party for a Fair Future:

<https://www.facebook.com/events/442605296092889/>

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## I so badly wish that a UBI movement had a presence at these events.

Hello Tim,

I am writing to invite you to a great event the OFL is co-hosting next Thursday, May 11 at 12 noon.

The OFL is partnering with the Canadian Labour Congress to host a Street Party for a #FairFuture in the heart of the Financial District of downtown Toronto, as part of the CLC Convention next week.

For the labour movement, a #FairFuture includes decent work, a \$15 minimum wage, and the right to join a union. #Fairfuture also means challenging sexism, racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia, while championing equity, social justice, and a green economy.

We'll be leaving the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, North Building at 255 Front St. West around 12 noon and marching towards our destination at King Street West and Bay Street, where we'll have music, dancing, great speakers, popcorn, ice cream, and other festivities.

For delegates to the convention, the lunch period will be extended so that you can participate and still have time for lunch. If you're not at the convention, you can still join in. You can meet us at the Convention Centre or at King and Bay.

I'll see you next Thursday in the streets! Be sure to RSVP here.

In solidarity,

Chris Buckley

President, Ontario Federation of Labour

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## I got this message from "Put Food in the Budget. Worth reproducing whole.

Tim --

99.6% of the approximately 900,000 people in Ontario who receive social assistance will not be part of Basic Income pilot

The Basic Income pilot has been announced. Also the provincial budget was announced – with a meagre 2% increase for OW and ODSP – less than inflation. So now we know more about the intention of Premier Wynne's government.

4000 people will receive a Basic Income. 99.6% of the approximately 900,000 people in Ontario who receive social assistance will not receive the additional benefits recommended by Senator Hugh Segal.

We are interested to know what you think and how you feel about these announcements.

Please write back to us (hit reply to this email or email us at [infopfib@gmail.com](mailto:infopfib@gmail.com)

) with your comments on any or all of the following

the Basic Income pilot

the 2% increase in social assistance rates

How you feel about your community not being selected for the Basic Income pilot (or how you feel if it was selected)

If you participated in the Basic Income consultations – is this the outcome you expected?

What do you think we are going to have to do together to raise social assistance rates to a level that provides a life of health and dignity?

The Put Food in the Budget campaign is part of the Raise the Rates Coalition and a joint statement from the coalition follows below.

#### ONTARIO BASIC INCOME PILOT – PEOPLE IN POVERTY CAN'T WAIT

The Liberal Government's Basic Income Pilot Project will offer increased income to mere handfuls of people in just three communities. It seems that just 4,000 people will be involved. An additional 2000 will be part of a 'control group' who, incredibly, will not get the additional income.

99.6% of the approximately 900,000 people in Ontario who receive social assistance will not receive the additional benefits recommended by Senator Hugh Segal. The paltry 2% increase in social assistance rates contained in the Provincial Budget released on April 27 confirms that the Liberals have every intention of using this study as a way of delaying action on poverty.

During the three years the pilot runs and, for an extended period of study and deliberation after that, the vast majority of people in poverty will be expected to survive as best they can and trust that a sweeping measure of social reform will eventually emerge.

The Raise the Rates Coalition says there is no need to wait for the results of this test. Giving people increased income with less intrusion into their lives will be beneficial and, so, everyone on social assistance in Ontario should have their income raised to 75% of the Low Income Measure the test group will receive and with the same terms and conditions. At the same time, the needs of Ontario's low waged workers should be addressed by raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour. The latter measure is especially important, given that up to 70% of those studied in the Basic Income pilot may be waged and we can't allow the Government to design a de facto wage top up subsidy to employers who want to avoid paying decent wages.

We also note with alarm the role of a private sector consortium in this pilot and demand that it not be used as a Trojan horse to further an agenda of privatization. Income support programs must be delivered as public services and not handed off to private interests.

The poor in Ontario have very little reason to trust Wynne Liberals when it comes to moving towards a system of

adequate income. For this Government, the pilot is a cynical ploy and a means of continuing to stall on taking meaningful action to address poverty. We demand Premier Wynne stop evading the central issue and raise the rates immediately and ensure that everyone on social assistance gets the levels of income proposed in the pilot project.

Put Food in the Budget

## A forum on Basic Income and Human Rights

Thanks to somebody for tipping me off to the forum on Human rights and the social determinants of Health on Friday, May 5 at the U of T campus. It included a large segment called "Focus on Canada and Basic Income Grants". Sheila Regehr from BICN was one of the panelists, which included some very interesting people from abroad.

The whole thing was sponsored by the Lupina foundation and Dalla Lana school of public health. The Munk school of Global Affairs, funded by gold mining profits with all their bad effects on the third world, also had a hand. I could not get there until after 10 AM, the most of the stuff on the relation between human rights and "social determinants of health" had already passed. I am already familiar with all that.

I was really interested in the connections between a Universal Basic Income and Human Rights. I was not disappointed. I have had the weekend to mull over what I heard and I think the big point of it is this; human rights require a way of enforcing them. That means, a well organized mass movement which can put laws into place and make sure they are complied with.

### From Brazil

This conclusion was somewhat influenced by what I heard at the Montreal BIEN forum in 2014. What impressed me there was on Brazilian speaker who spoke about the futility of expecting judges to enforce rights. Judges are almost always very conservative. This speaker thought laws limited rights, rather than granted them.

I was not entirely convinced about that. You still have to define rights in some concrete way. You can't enforce something if you can't explain exactly what it is. This inability or unwillingness to spell things out is why progressive social movements, or even groups like BIEN and BICN,

get nowhere.

So, last Friday here was another guy from Brazil. He explained the Brazilian law 10.935/2004. It was supposed to mandate a "Basic Citizen's Income" in the country by 2005. It was supposed to grant a right to each citizen and to every resident with five years in the country.

This has not happened. It did not occur during the labor party's time in government. It is not likely to happen since the constitutional coup last year deposed Dilma Rousseff and put neo-liberals back into office. The Brazilians did manage to enact the "Bolsa Familia", the family allowance much more familiar to followers of the BIEN movement. Of course, that is now in great danger along with all over social programs passed during the DaSilva and Rousseff years.

### in other lands

There was some intonement of the need to look at the "cause of causes"; meaning the powers which do not want any kind of human rights, human progress, and which will have to be defeated if any kind of "Human Rights" are going to become real. This received some assent from the audience. It is surprising how "revolutionary" these people are, considering most of them come from various non profit agencies.

Some of the speakers were from countries where talking about, never mind doing anything about, human rights and public health, can get you killed. In particular, the guys from Guatemala and Uganda. I gather they described their experiences in some detail before I got there, but they had pretty much the same message.

In Uganda, they have a very murderous government, a condition brought about by a colonial legacy. The point was, there is small possibility of any peaceful change because the

present ruling clique are not going to give up their privileges. They will have to either go away or die, and that will likely require war. I was surprised at how strongly that statement was applauded.

The Guatemalan had a somewhat different message because the situation is somewhat different in his country. They have had a history of vicious civil war against the indigenous population of the country. In more recent times they have developed a more democratic government. Why, is not sure, but I has had something to do with the movement to the left throughout Latin America. Military despotisms are just not in fashion there anymore.

What the Guatemalan had to say was that you have to fight power with power. They have been doing it that way in his country, he says, and it has been working. He makes the parable of a woman going to a doctor to get medical care. Where before, the doctor would tell her he can't do anything for her, get lost, now she can point to a law that says medical care must be provided. It gets provided. But here is the key; if the doctor tries to ignore the law, the woman soon has supporters in the office demanding that the doctor obey the law.

### **here in Canada**

This is something which justice advocates in Canada, especially in Ontario, can't seem to figure out. Rights do not happen automatically. They have to be continually enforced. They are not going to be enforced by the courts, but by people standing up for each other en masse. The Guatemalan was not as loudly applauded, which concerned me.

Both Uganda and Guatemala shame Canadians. Compared to either of these countries, we have vastly more safety from retaliation to be able to raise hell to enforce rights. We do not use it. Ugandans are very harshly persecuted but still manage to speak out. The Guatemalans are making the best of the space they have gained in order to assert their rights.

Considering that, Sheila Regehr was a disgrace.

She claims that BICN is broadly represented and has a network of allies. In fact it is a very undemocratic, self selecting and self isolating group. The few actual low income people on its board are handpicked. It is an ultimate "we know best" outfit.

She makes the same tired pitches about a BI which ignores the direction in which debate has gone over the past year. She recognizes only two approaches. There is the neoliberal Milton Friedman approach which she claims to reject. Yet she supports the provincial pilot, which has a lot of Milton Friedman baked into it.

She refers to the Martin Luther King approach, which is to use BI to free people. But what she advocates is actually the liberal approach; she sees it as an improved form of "welfare". She ignores the truly liberating idea of a BI which was what was really being advocated back in MLKs time.

### **BICN and Human Rights**

Sheila acknowledges that human rights are not a big factor in BI discussions. She thinks it should not be. She made the strange statement that when we say "human rights", we are saying that "the conversation is over".

The conversation about what exactly is over? About Basic Income? About what people's fundamental rights are? I regret not being but quicker thinking this through and getting to the mike to ask her to clarify this strange statement.

Regehr further decried the lack of trust in government. This leads people to think that BI is merely a part of some austerity agenda. Of course, as set up by the Ontario government and a few other polities such as Finland, it is very much a part of an austerity agenda.

Later, in the open mike section, someone asked her why businesses support BI? Does this not let "them", ( presumably capitalism in general ) off the hook for not providing a decent income for all?

Sheila's reply was that many "tech" entrepreneurs know they are putting a lot of people out of work and so they are doing such and such. This

completely misses the point of the question. I would add the comment that it is not the right of business people in general to define the solutions to problems they create.

Sheila Regehr is not a terribly impressive advocate for a Basic Income. But then, she does not get paid for the job. But that is another problem with the BICN organization.

### **a problem of definition**

One last thing I should comment on is the ideas of Bruce Porter on the Human rights debate. I had a hard time understanding what his problem was with advocating for human rights. His thinking does not seem to connect up.

He talked about the courts in South Africa refusing to define a minimum income because it is a political decision and not justiciable. This is very smart of the south African court but how does that become an argument against advocating for human rights?

Rather than defining human rights, we should focus on changing structures, says he. Change them to what? To change anything, you have to be able to define a problem and a solution.

He seems to say that we should not define rights because we might leave something out. This is a close relative of the idea that we can't make a decision because it might be the wrong one. Perfect is the enemy of good.

We define rights as best we can, and from there we can understand what we need to change. Inevitably, we will leave something out by describing, but we never describe reality exactly. We define problems and solutions and go with them. Then we analyze the results and decide what needs to change in our understanding.

This is called "living in the real world". The problem with any human rights and Basic Income advocates, as well as many critics of them, is they tend not to want to deal with reality. Porter gave me a perfect example of what I call "cloud thinking"; a disdain for anything real and concrete.

If we cannot define where we are trying to get to, we will never get there. Also, if we do not define an issue, other people will define it for us and take it in their own direction. That is how reality works.

As for enforcing rights once they are defined, that requires a mass movement. The big criticism of the world wide BI movement is that they are hostile to engaging the mass of people who their proposal will supposedly benefit. They think politics is about a small group of smart people like them influencing government in a positive way.

That is why they are failing even when the idea itself is gaining ground. But that is getting into another discussion.

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**I hope everybody likes the new format. I hope everybody can find the "open attachment" function on their e-mailer if it doesn't open automatically. I have to do this with rudimentary software. I will continue to refine it.**

**There always seems to be so much to talk about, regarding a BI and organizing a local movement. People seem to like this publication. There are now 110 people receiving it. Constructive suggestions always welcome.**

**I might, however, decide to turn it into a bi weekly or monthly if it starts to take up too much time.**

**Next is Due May 14.**