

BIEN Congress 2008

Completed paper to be sent to info@basicincomeireland.com.

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How a basic income system may be achieved politically

Abstract:

The change from industrial to post-industrialism society will lead to changes like the development from farming to yesterday's industrial society did, but in a much shorter time. Lack of employment opportunities will lead to problems with those who are "not needed", But a basic income would give everyone a basic security. However, there is a political problem since handing out money without any demands is not generally accepted. The solution is to link "**personal contribution**" to **basic income**. In every society there are simple tasks that must be carried out and that cannot be automated.

Everyone must thus help out regularly in society. The frequency and length can depend on personal preferences or the work carried out.'

Society will be given resources of great value for tasks that are necessary to do, but there is another great value: If many do not feel included in society there will be problems. It is important to ensure that as many people as possible are included. Anyone who lived through the 2nd world war knows that everyone was involved in supporting their country. This sense of participation was significant - everyone was needed – everyone participated.

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How a basic income may be achieved politically

Background

In the beginning of the 21st century, Swedish Senior Party - S P I, discussed the future of the Swedish welfare. These discussions led to a study of the conditions of a welfare-system based on basic income and resulted in a suggestion to a New Welfare Model (in Swedish En Ny Valfärdsmodell ENV).

This presentation is partly built on the work done within SPI but it has been developed.

- I will start with explaining why the change from the industrial to the post-industrial society will give new challenges.
 - Then I will say a few words about basic income and the obstacles for its implementation.
- and finally
- How basic income may be achieved politically.

Future

Looking back it is easy to see that the future is mostly different to what was foreseen

For instance:

40 years ago the vision of Internet was not mentioned by many if any, except science fictions authors.

40 years ago the fall of the wall to east Europe before the millennium was not expected.

The development of society

The change from industrial society to post-industrialism will lead to as many changes as the change from the old farming society to yesterday's industrial society. However, there is an important difference: Industrialisation began in England in the 18th century but is still ongoing in many parts of the world. The change from farming society to industrial society has thus taken almost 300 years. The change to post-industrial society will be faster.

In the post-industrial society the supply of goods will be great, things will get increasingly cheaper. Goods will be produced in fully automatic factories without the need for many employees.

One example is today's paper industry machines which produce as much paper in 24 hours as the best machine 100 years ago produced in one year – and about 10 times as many workers were used then compared with today.

There are branches where the need of “hands” still are big, for instance within health care and care for old people. But not everybody can work with that, or is suitable. Furthermore the technical development will reduce the need for employees even in these branches.

Today it is already possible to continuously monitor the heart rhythm of a patient through the Internet straight into a computer at the hospital wherever the patient is. Computers will take care of much more than we can even imagine today and the need for labour within many of today's labour intensive sectors will go down.

The conclusion is that there will not be enough employment opportunities in the future. Only those with a good education will be sure to find employment.

In this “New World” not everybody will have the pleasure of having a job.

Many may be on a life time vacation and we may get huge problems with the millions of people who are “not needed”.

However a civilised society should take care of everyone and everyone must be given a reasonable opportunity to take care of themselves.

Soup kitchens are not the solution, but basic income is part of the solution!

Basic income

Basic income from birth until death is the right concept. No other allowance, grants, economical support, and so on from society to the quote “normal citizen”. More protection in case of illness, unemployment, and pension when retiring and so on is the concern of the person in question - not the state. Due to limited financial resources society must treat everyone equally.

There are many different concepts of basic income but I will not discuss different forms and concepts. I will concentrate on the main objections.

But first - I would like to mention some facts from a study done by SPI.

The Swedish welfare model means that large amounts - about 90 billion Euros – one third of the GNP - are transferred, paid out to people in form of grants, sick payment, unemployment payment, pensions and so on. Many citizens cannot live on their income and have to rely on these grants. But many think that they are not given necessary support, whilst others, who do not need support as much, receive grants.

The yearly transfer amount in Sweden is approximately 90 billion Euros. This is 10,000 Euros per inhabitant yearly. Hence, it would be possible to give every inhabitant in Sweden a basic income of 800 Euros monthly. A lower basic income to babies, children and young people would mean that more money could be given to the older ones.

From a financial point of view basic income is feasible in Sweden!

Now back to the main objections.

We have a political problem with Basic Income.

Handing out money without any demand is not generally accepted. It is denoted as communism, socialism etc. Anyone who has discussed the concept of basic income has heard these arguments, often motivated by feelings rather than by rational reasons.

But changes in a democratic society must be widely accepted and to obtain a political majority for basic income these counter-arguments must be eliminated.

The Solution

In order to implement basic income society must get something in return.

Let us have a look at society today.

Do we see any problems?

Some people are today choosing to create their own society – outside the established society – an example is Hell Angels

Some religious groups are creating their own rules.

If today's society creates different sub-groups, with different basic norms and rules there will be problems with different values.

In order to give all citizens the same basic norms everybody must be engaged in the society. The solution is “**personal contribution**”

In every society there are tasks that must be carried out and that cannot be automated. It is not possible to have the necessary personal resources standing by. Fire services, flood protection and snowstorms are examples of situations that can be difficult to handle even in a post-industrial society. There are also jobs that few people want to carry out full time – but that must be done!

The idea is that all citizens not only get rights, but also have duties.

Rights - **basic income**
Duty - **personal contribution**

Everyone must thus help out in society for a period of for instance 6 months every year one turns 20, 30, 40, 50 etc. The personal contribution expected depends on interests, current societal needs and what every individual can cope with.

The first period of personal contribution, around the age of 20, should mainly be focused on education. Partly general education and partly tailor-made education for future expected personal contributions. The education should aim to raise personal standards and could for instance include getting a driving licence. Following this, every individual has 5 periods of personal contribution with a final period around the age of 65. In total this will amount to 36 months; 6 periods of 6 months.

The personal contributor can for instance participate in old age care and give the responsible care assistant an extra hand.

A 65-year-old can obviously not be given the same tasks as a 40-year-old. We know that the percentage of 80-year-olds in our society will increase sharply and many of these old people may need social support and help. A 65-year-old (person) can do a lot socially for their older fellow-beings. It is obvious that it is easier for a person of 65 to understand an 80-year-old than it is for a young care assistant who neither has time nor has the same experience in life yet.

In this way society will be given considerable extra resources for tasks that are necessary to maintain. There are many areas where resources are needed. Sometimes it may be better to carry out the personal contribution during a shorter period of life. This is for instance suitable for a person who chooses to do his personal contribution within fire or military service where physical strength is important.

But of course, the contributor can not and should not substitute the ordinary professionals. The contributor should be an “extra hand”

Participating

Through personal contributions society will receive significant resources - but there is an even greater value for many of those individuals making personal contribution.

A society where many people do not feel that they participate - is a society with problems. It is necessary to develop our society to ensure that as many people as possible participate. Anyone who lived through the 2nd world war, in war zones as well as occupied countries or neutral countries, knows that everyone was involved in supporting their country. Everyone felt that their contribution was needed – everybody participated.

Starting point

A change to a new system must be introduced gradually. The natural starting point is to make everyone born after a specified “starting date” part of the new system. They will receive basic income from birth, but no other grants, and will have to carry out a personal contribution starting when they are about 20 years old.

Conclusion

In the post-industrial society there will not be a great need for unqualified work force. Qualified people, computers and the Internet will be able to handle most difficulties and problems. Many will not be needed – and there is a risk that they start their own sub-society. By demanding that everyone, depending on capacity, carries out a personal contribution for their society regularly, everyone will participate and feel that they are needed.

Personal contribution is the right way to implement basic income

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