

Guaranteed Living Income Toronto Newsbreeze



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Notes from the BICN congress

Friday morning

BICN congress May 25

I caught the last part of the opening plenary. Sarah Bizarro from Portugal was there talking about Human Rights and a BI. She specified that article 25 of the UN human rights declaration gives the right to a Basic Income. That is nice, but there has not been a way to enforce this right for 70 years and none is coming soon.

A more interesting speaker from Quebec talked. I believe Quebec is way ahead of English Canada about it. He delicately implied that French Canada is disdainful of “pilots” and wants to see the real thing. Other than that this stuff was blindingly boring.

Someone talked about an invitation only conference held in Toronto in 2016. It seems that only selected people from civil society organizations were invited. What they found was that most of these institutions were aware of the idea of BI. They saw it as a “file to be worked on”.

By the way, my impression of most of the attendees at Hamilton conference is that they are apparatchiks from across Canada, trying to keep their BI file up to date, but unable or unwilling to act on it. This presenter stated as an aside that so far, most funding for BI activity has come from Faith groups.

Some of these selected people in 2016 saw BI as an “attack on work”. Others saw it as a conspiracy from the industrial complex. This does not say much about the intellectual level of these people. From the left or the right.

But even more moderate “selected people” found that their organizations just could not go anywhere with it. They feared losing funding, or losing their place within the coalitions they were part of. This prevented them from working catalytically. This was a pretty good talk which actually explains the institutional obstacles to a BI.

Converging paths to a Basic Income



This next workshop I attended got fairly interesting. However, it confirmed my belief that most of the recent interest in BI is government systems looking for solutions for growing labor force problems. Some of these folks just

mull over the facts they had received as a result of their work, but seem unable to draw any conclusions. They seem incapable of analysis or understanding.

For example, they tend to think the unemployment rates for different countries really describe the situation in these countries and are comparable. I mean, in some countries the unemployment rate is fudged and does not count people who have stopped looking for work. This is a problem in the US and Canada. Also, in some countries the black economy or family connections are much more extensive and sustains a lot more people.

Another speaker notes that most countries with BI pilots have had some trouble with “temporary employment”. Canada is a good example. By the way, we have this problem because we let slimeball employers get away with it. A crackdown on temp agencies would go a long way toward fixing this.

But the man says that the big predictor of “pilots” is that “self employment” has generally been declining. BI is being looked at as an answer to irregular employment. Of course, this is not a good way to look at it. But he says that the problem is “technology”.

Countries are different in the way they are organized, yet all seem to be having some trouble with integrating the latest technology. So technology is the common problem and so he advocates “conditionality”. He thinks it is shown that positive incentives do not get people working.

He cites some British program which apparently tried to offer people positive incentives to work. When this

program was withdrawn 30% of participants went back to work. He thinks forcing people into “work” is a good thing. It never occurs to him that the aim should be to get people to work less.

He makes the eternal folly of describing the goddamn Alaska dividend as a “universal” income program. He also has a box of four squares. He fills them with programs which are universal and conditional, non universal and conditional, non universal and non conditional, and universal and non conditional.

Okay, Charlie, square four is what is properly called a Basic Income or now a Universal Basic Income, and that is what is needed. The other three are hazards to normal people. It is not an “unemployment trap”; there is no such thing except in the theorizing behind liberal social engineering and conservative class warfare. The first three squares will be poverty traps. So, goodbye, Charlie.

Now, someone wants to talk about “ideational hurdles” to a Basic Income. We have all these Liberals in Canada who think we already have a Basic Income. Many cannot think about a world without work. Also, it is hard to make sense of something which is not yet a serious social problem.

He also finds Basic Income to be a misnomer. He notes that every country will develop its own version. It will complement rather than replace existing programs. All this is already well known.

He has a much more rights based approach to it. But he is questioned about how to “keep people working”, and how to “keep the economy growing”. All he can do was to wheedle about how the “unemployed” may be doing useful stuff.

A more humane questioner asks why the workweek keeps getting longer. The speaker has no answer to this, but it does get us toward the real way to “create more jobs”; make the work week shorter.

At the end, the guy wants lots more varieties of BI to study; like we are all guinea pigs. No, No, No!

The next speaker hypothesizes; “is BI a way of changing

the world” This is kind of a dumb question; if the point of a new idea is not to change the world then it has no point. But he is much closer to my heart; thinking about this BI concept “in humanity” is the only realistic place to come from. “We are all human beings” says he.

He says that we must change the basic premises; we cannot talk within the logic of the system. BI must be about a different logic, a different paradigm. He asks “Who thinks ‘universal’ is a side issue to leave aside?” An awful lot of people, thought I.

“We must be thinking universally”, says he, “it can’t be just about “poverty relief”. “I like this guy” thinks I.

He goes on; “We must end the construction of barriers between people and what they need to live.” He notes that most of the left has trouble “blowing apart” present positioning. A BI convergence must be based on Human rights. I am sorry I never got a chance to talk with this guy.

He is questioned rather sharply by the liberals in the room. He is told that BI is part of capitalism and there is no way around it. He replies in effect; “so what is there to do?” He talks a bit about a “gift economy”. I thought we need to look more into the idea of the gift economy.

Now we get someone with a Green argument for a BI. That is, we need to forget about economic growth. A new redistribution system will be needed, including local food security. We also get told that a UBI will not be an exit from the labor market.

Some other odd bits of conversation as this session wound down; a mention of anti capitalist reform versus reformism. Reformism is an end in itself. Reform is a means to an end. I thought the latter was what Gramsci was all about.

We get left with the final thought from some bright lady; “we have to think about how we are getting from here to there.”

Yes indeed, but that is all for this session. It is exhausting; just too much all at once and for too long. I have to think about getting myself on my feet and getting some blood back into my legs. My brain is ready to explode. Now, get from here to where lunch is being served.

About Elections

some background comments on the Ontario election, proportional representation, and various implications for a BI/GLI movement

Pardon my delay in getting my notes from the BICN congress written up. I have been busy with some other things and was not feeling good for a little while.

I worked for elections Ontario on elections day. It was exhausting. I don't know if I can keep doing that kind of work. It is twelve hours of looking people up and giving them their ballots, plus setting up and taking everything down and tallying everything up.

I was in one of the polls where they tried out electronic balloting. I am dubious about that; I don't think it can be made fully secure. Plus the poll consisted of a few really tall downtown buildings where the population is very transient. It was good money, though.

I think it will all get easier for everyone when we get proportional representation (PR) voting. We will not get disasters such as Big Brudder Buckethead getting himself elected premier because the more intelligent vote is split. I feel safe to write these things now because the vote is past and I do not have to avoid all political activity.



PR will make it easier to get more progressive things such as a Basic Income/ Guaranteed Living Income. It advances democracy and forces legislatures to listen more closely to voters. It allows smaller parties with the right ideas to get into the legislature where they can grow themselves by growing support for their idea.

I could say a bit about the proportional representation

movement and the lessons it has for a BI/GLI movement. I assume people reading this newsletter are at least vaguely familiar with the concept of PR. If not, go to the Fair Vote Canada web site. <https://www.fairvote.ca/rural-urban-proportional/>

Pay special interest to the “Rural Urban Proportional” system which FVC is now promoting. This is the big reason why after over twenty years of confusion, the PR movement in Canada, lead by Fair Vote, is finally getting somewhere. There are now two provinces in Canada which are likely to adopt PR within the next year.

I have been associated with FVC over a long time. I am not working with them now because the BI movement is becoming more interesting. The way FVC has developed has lessons for BICN.

For many years FVC seemed to be dominated by these mathematical types who just wanted to debate the intricacies of different voting systems. Oh, my! The permutations we can get into about the St. Lague versus D’Hondt methods of allocating seats in an open party list system.

There were numerous ruptures within FVC over what sort of voting system it should support. For example, many of the founders left in a huge snit when the members decided they would support looking into the STV system as well as the European style party list voting. This made the executive of FVC paranoid about offending any factions. This worked badly against FVC when there was an attempt to coopt it into supporting Ranked Ballots, which is totally contrary to the object of PR.

What saved FVC was its democratic structure. The membership could ask what the hell was going on with the national executive, and nominate a slate of candidates to put FVC back on course. This would not work with BICN because of its very secretive and non democratic structure.

In recent years FVC has become an effective organization because it decided to be an organization instead of a floating discussion. It set out exactly what kind of voting system was needed, one that would fit Canada’s

geography and political structure, and has held to it. This has kept it on track.

This is what BICN, or some successor organization, needs to emulate. First, it needs a democratic structure such as what BIEN has recently put into place. Second, it needs to decide just what it exists for, and just what kind of an income guarantee system it wants to see in Canada. Third, it needs to develop a funding base and a staff.

There is something in which BICN is much different than FVC. Far more than with FVC, it has the problem of conflicting visions of society. There are elements in society who really do not agree with increased democracy, who want us to continue as an oligarchy. You may be surprised that there are many of such people on the left as well as the right. But most people can be persuaded about a PR voting system.

With BI/GLI, you are talking about a much more fundamental change in society. We are in an interregnum period, when an old order is becoming discredited and people are becoming increasingly divided over what should replace it. The three basic tendencies about Basic Income correspond to the three basic divides which are squaring off in society.

The idea that there is going to be some compromise position among these three is delusional. Further, most people had best fervently hope that the liberating vision for a BI and society prevails, because the other two options will lead to a very grim future for them. BICN has pretty much been taken over by the Liberal faction, the welfare plus faction, who want a better tool for managing the working classes in order to "improve" them.

The liberating faction in the BI/GLI movement, who want to create real personal freedom leading to a more stable economy and society, need to either take control of BICN or just move off and start their own organization. I am seeing some evidence that things are starting to move in that direction. I will get into this more in subsequent newsletters, which will come frequently for awhile.

HOT LINKS

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=snWS4xWhxk>

NABIG 2018 - Opening night Discussion Pathfinder

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Basic Income Guarantee could expand across Ontario, Leal tells debate

https://www.thepeterboroughexaminer.com/news-story/8629286-basic-income-guarantee-could-expand-across-ontario-leal-tells-debate/?utm_source=isac+media+%26+policy+news&utm_campaign=0245ac6361-media+and+policy+news+emails&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_342c280cba-0245ac6361-161199393

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Baranyai: Basic income pilots have all-party support, so far
<http://lfpres.com/opinion/columnists/baranyai-basic-income-pilots-have-all-party-support-so-far/>

Warren: Is universal basic income the future? <http://lfpres.com/opinion/columnists/warren-is-universal-basic-income-the-future/>

[income-the-future/](#)

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Manitobans support effort to raise people from poverty:
poll <http://winnipeg.sun.com/news/provincial/manitobans-support-plan-to-raise-people-from-poverty-poll/>

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[Here is something really interesting; it looks like in Calgary you have two groups going, a Basic Income and a Guaranteed Annual Income group.]

Alberta's guaranteed income movement planted by Calgary group <https://www.thestar.com/calgary/2018/06/07/albertas-guaranteed-income-movement-planted-by-calgary-group.html>

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Livable Income Vancouver

“Currently, many people with paid jobs are perpetually squeezed for time. People who are unemployed or under-employed have surplus time... Read Full article by @Livable4All HERE: <http://livableincome.org/atimetochange.htm> pic.twitter.com/dvXtjzGC

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Livable Income Vancouver

(1 of 10) Reasons Why We Need a GLI by @Livable4All 1.

NATURE: A guaranteed livable income would prevent the destruction of the environment due to the attempt to grow the world's economy to create full employment. https://www.instagram.com/p/Bj2_vGkHRNK/?taken-by=livableincomevancouver pic.twitter.com/gpxPEJAnJM

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Four labour lessons from the Harris years <http://www.socialist.ca/node/3605#.WyWQ3MOlhsc.twitter>

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Ontario election results: polarization and the fight against austerity <http://www.socialist.ca/node/3608> <http://www.socialist.ca/node/3608>