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GLI Newsbreeze Toronto October 16 2016

Eggleton and Mendelson at OISE

On October 12, as part of their speaker series, CLSEW, the Centre for Social Economy. and Work at OISE, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, hosted a discussion on BI. The speakers were senator Art Eggleton and Michael Mendelson.

It seems a webcast of their presentations will eventually be up on their web site at: http://www.oise.utoronto.ca/clsew/Speaker_Series/Archived_Talks.html

Both presenters were quite surprising. Eggleton understands the "job creation" angle to BI/GLI; the only way to create more work is to reduce work times. This requires a GLI. Further, the only real job creators are customers. That is, people with money to spend.

He also advocates closing all tax loopholes and tax havens in order to pay for a GLI. He says that tax cuts, meaning to businesses, and wealthy people, have not paid off. They need to be reversed.

He also wants a BI pilot; why? He believes it will help create public will toward a BI/GLI.

Eggleton is a former mayor of Toronto and a very strong advocate for GLI. He has refused to be part of most forums organized by BI groups, including Toronto BI initiative. He has little patience with groups which just want to talk among themselves. This is a good motivation.

The second speaker was Michael Mendelson. He works with Caledon institute, which I recall is supposed to be. Hostile to the idea of a BI/GLI. However, many of these hostile groups seem to be coming part way around to supporting it, with caveats.

Mendelson says that everybody wants a BI until they think about the details. Basic Income Equals Bait and Switch. The right wing wants it to be "revenue neutral", meaning that it just replaces existing "welfare". Everyone gets it but at a much lower rate.

The good form of BI would replace only a few existing programs. Taxes would be raised to pay for it.

Bad BI would not end poverty but would redistribute from low income people to the very low income.

Good and Bad BI; can we get the good?

He opposes a Negative Income Tax for the very good reason that it starts to pay the taxman, not the people. If you pay up to the poverty line, one half of median income, you pay the lowest quarter of the population from the next quarter. The math of a NIT is irrefutable; income must be much below the poverty rate or the tax back rate very high.

Mendelson is a very valuable addition to the discussion of BI/GLI because he does a very good refutation of NIT.

But he also criticizes a Universal Basic Income UBI. It will have to be very expensive, about 30% to 40% of the GDP. It will just flow through government, reversing the present condition of flowing to investors and out of the country. But it will have the same problem; if taxes have to be paid, then one half will subsidize the other half.

To conclude, he said he was asking 25 years. Ago why we were chasing these phantoms. There are other ways to reduce poverty. He did not say what these were.

During the question period, I made the following statement about the "half vs half" problem. I cited. the John Stuart Mill essay, "Unto This Last". In other words, those complaining. about. Subsidizing "idlers" could be told, "you have an above average income, so stop bitching about it. It is not your money, it is society's money, so who the hell are you?"

He agrees, but says this will not be accommodated within the present tax structure. Of course I could not get to the problem of the tax structure, which gives and then takes away. In other words, it is back ended, not front ended.

As to concluding statements; Mendelson says we are still living in 1990's paradigms. We are not yet able to create unconditional benefits. Politicians will not try it. Eggleton says there is growing interest in the topic. He is making three

more presentations this month.

Mendelson's papers now on the Livingrant web site at <http://www.livingrant.ch/curdocs/1106ENG.pdf>

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Webinar October 14

Basic Income: What is it and what could it mean for social assistance?

Presented by ISAC; Income Security and Advocacy Centre.

Some information about it is at this URL, and an archived recording of it is promised.

http://yourlegalrights.on.ca/webinar/basic-income-what-it-and-what-could-it-mean-social-assistance?tid_ref=16

There is little new information and no really new ideas in Jennifer Laidley's presentation she and ISAC appear to have concerns that a GLI will negatively impact other social programs, and probably the funding of some existing agencies.

Webinars. Are a good way to get information out and facilitate discussions. The technology is still a bit shaky. You have to make sure your browser can handle the audio. The sound is often poor. One day the BI/GLI movement will be able to get together regularly by webinars and conference calls.

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In case you haven't found it yet, the address for the **Robert Reich video** is:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=UqESogRgrYwRe

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Events coming up

The next BITO meeting is Tuesday 18th at Metro hall, 7 PM. It is room 303 instead of 304 this time. I am sure we can all find it. There is no agenda at this time.

The next HSAG is October 20 at The Riverdale Community Health Centre at 955 Queen street east at 1:30 PM. We will have some interesting things to talk about, especially the debrief of the October 6 event and ideas for a speaker's bureau.

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