

---

---

Basic Income:  
A simple and powerful idea for  
the twenty-first century\*

*Philippe Van Parijs*

---

---

Give all citizens a modest, yet unconditional income, and let them top it up at will with income from other sources.

This exceedingly simple idea has a surprisingly diverse pedigree. In the course of the last two centuries, it has been independently thought up under a variety of names – “territorial dividend” and “state bonus,” for example, “demogrant” and “citizen’s wage,” “universal benefit” and “basic income” – in most cases without much success. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, it enjoyed a sudden popularity in the United States and was even put forward by a presidential candidate, but it was soon shelved and just about forgotten. In the last two decades, however, it has gradually become the subject of an unprecedented and fast expanding public discussion throughout the European Union. Some see it as a crucial remedy for many social ills, including unemployment and poverty. Others denounce it as a crazy, economically flawed, ethically objectionable proposal, to be forgotten as soon as possible, to be dumped once and for all into the dustbin of the history of ideas.

To shed light on this debate, I start off saying more about what basic income is and what it is not, and about what distinguishes it from existing guaranteed income schemes. On this background, it

\* The first version of this chapter was prepared for the international seminar “Policies and Instruments to Fight Poverty in the European Union: A guaranteed minimum income” organized under the aegis of the Portuguese presidency of the European Union (Almancil, Portugal, February 2000). Later versions served as background papers for the VIIIth Congress of the Basic Income European Network (Berlin, Germany, October 2000) and, jointly with a paper by Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott, for the workshop “Rethinking Redistribution” (Madison, Wisconsin, May 2002).

will be easier to understand why basic income has recently been attracting so much attention, why resistance can be expected to be tough and how it will eventually be overcome. It is the author's firm conviction that basic income will not be forgotten, and that it must not be dumped. Basic income is one of those few simple ideas that must and will powerfully shape first the debate, and next the reality, of the new century.

### WHAT BASIC INCOME IS AND WHAT IT IS NOT

*A basic income is an income paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without means test or work requirement.* This is the definition I shall adopt. It does not fit all actual uses of the English expression "basic income," or of its most common translations into other European languages, such as "Bürgergeld," "allocation universelle," "renta básica," "reddito di cittadinanza," "basisinkomen," or "borgerlon." Some of these actual uses are broader: they also cover, for example, benefits whose level is affected by one's household situation or which are administered in the form of tax credits. Other uses are narrower: They also require, for example, that the level of the basic income should match what is required to satisfy basic needs or that it should replace all other transfers. The aim of the above definition is not to police usage but to clarify arguments. Let us briefly focus on each of its components in turn.

#### An income

*Paid in cash, rather than in kind.* One can conceive of a benefit that would have all other features of a basic income but be provided in kind, for example in the form of a standardized bundle of food, or the use of a plot of land. Or it could be provided in the form of a special currency with restricted uses, for example food stamps or housing grants, or more broadly consumption in the current period only without any possibility of saving it, as in Jacques Duboin's (1945) "distributive economy." A basic income, instead, is provided in cash, without any restriction as to the nature or timing of the consumption or investment it helps fund. In most variants, it supplements, rather than substitutes, existing in-kind transfers such as free education or basic health insurance.

*Paid on a regular basis,* rather than as a one-off endowment. A basic income consists in purchasing power provided at regular intervals,

such as a week, a month, a term or a year, depending on the proposal. One can also conceive of a benefit that would have all other features of a basic income but be provided on a one-off basis, for example at the beginning of adult life. This has occasionally been proposed (see Cunliffe and Erreygers 2003), for example long ago by Thomas Paine (1796) and far more recently by Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott (1999). There is a significant difference between a regular basic income and such a basic endowment. Yet it should not be overstated. First, the basic endowment can be invested to generate an actuarially equivalent annual or monthly income up to the recipient's death, which would amount to a regular basic income. If left to the insurance market, the level of this annuity would be negatively affected by the length of a person's life expectancy. Women, for example, would receive a lower annuity than men. However, the advocates of a basic endowment (including Paine and Ackerman and Alstott) usually supplement it with a uniform basic pension from a certain age, which erases most of this difference. Second, while other uses can be made of a basic endowment than turning it into an annuity, the resulting difference with a basic income would be essentially annulled if the latter's recipients could freely borrow against their future basic income stream. Even if one wisely protects basic income against seizure by creditors, the security it provides will make it easier for its beneficiaries to take loans at every stage and will thereby reduce the gap between the ranges of options opened, respectively, by a one-off basic endowment and a regular basic income.

#### Paid by a political community

By definition, a basic income is paid by a government of some sort out of publicly controlled resources. But it need not be paid by a nation-state. Nor does it need to be paid out of redistributive taxation.

*The nation-state, beneath and beyond.* In most proposals, the basic income is supposed to be paid, and therefore funded, at the level of a nation-state, as sometimes indicated by the very choice of such labels as "state bonus," "national dividend" or "citizen's wage." However, it can in principle also be paid and funded at the level of a politically organized part of a nation-state, such as a province or a commune. Indeed, the only political unit which has ever introduced a genuine basic income, as defined, is the state of Alaska in the United States (see e.g. Palmer 1997). A basic income can also conceivably be paid by

a supra-national political unit. Several proposals have been made at the level of the European Union (see Genet and Van Parijs 1992, Ferry 2000, Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2001) and some also, more speculatively, at the level of the United Nations (see e.g. Kooistra 1994, Barrez 1999, Frankman 2001).

*Redistribution.* The basic income may, but need not, be funded in a specific, ear-marked way. If it is not, it is simply funded along with all other government expenditures out of a common pool of revenues from a variety of sources. Among those who advocated ear-marked funding, most are thinking of a specific tax. Some want it funded out of a land tax or a tax on natural resources (from Thomas Paine (1796) and Joseph Charlier (1848) to Raymond Crotty (1987), Marc Davidson (1995) or James Robertson (1999) for example). Others prefer a specific levy on a very broadly defined income base (for example, Pelzer 1998, 1999) or a massively expanded value-added tax (for example, Duchatelet 1992, 1998). And some of those who are thinking of a worldwide basic income stress the potential of new tax instruments such as "Tobin taxes" on speculative capital movements (see Bresson 1999) or "bit taxes" on transfers of information (see Soete and Kamp 1996).

*Distribution.* Redistributive taxation, however, need not be the only source of funding. Alaska's dividend scheme (O'Brien and Olson 1990, Palmer 1997) is funded out of part of the return on a diversified investment fund which the state built up using the royalties on Alaska's vast oil fields. In the same vein, James Meade's (1989, 1993, 1994, 1995) blueprint of a fair and efficient economy comprises a social dividend funded out of the return on publicly owned productive assets. Finally, there has been a whole sequence of proposals to fund a basic income out of money creation, from Major Douglas's Social Credit movement (see Van Trier 1997) and Jacques and Marie-Louise Duboin's (1945, 1985) *Mouvement français pour l'abondance* to the more sophisticated (and more modest) proposals of Joseph Huber (1998, 1999, 2000 with J. Robertson).

#### To all its members

*Non-citizens?* There can be more or less inclusive conceptions of the membership of a political community. Some, especially among those who prefer the label "citizen's income," conceive of membership as restricted to nationals, or citizens in a legal sense. The right to a basic

income is then of a piece with the whole package of rights and duties associated with full citizenship, as in the conception of the French philosopher Jean-Marc Ferry (1995, 2000). Most advocates of basic income, however, especially among those who view it as a policy against exclusion, do not want a restrictive entitlement to basic income to further deepen the dualization of the labor market. They therefore tend to conceive of membership in a broader sense that tends to include all legal permanent residents. The operational criterion may be, for non-citizens, a minimum length of past residence, or it may simply be provided by the conditions which currently define residence for tax purposes, or some combination of both.

*Children?* There can also be a more or less inclusive conception of membership along the age dimension. Some restrict basic income, by definition, to adult members of the population, but then tend to propose it side by side with a universal, that is, non-means-tested, child benefit system, with a level of benefit that may or may not be differentiated as a (positive or negative) function of the rank of the child or as a (positive) function of the child's age. Others conceive of basic income as an entitlement from the first to the last breath and therefore view it as a full substitute for the child benefit system. The level of the benefit then needs to be independent of the child's family situation, in particular of his or her rank. Some also want it to be the same as for adults, and hence independent of age, as is actually the case in the modest Alaskan dividend scheme and as would be the case under some more generous proposals (for example Miller 1983). But the majority of those who propose an integration of child benefits into the basic income scheme differentiate the latter's level according to age, with the maximum level not being granted until majority, or later.

*Pensioners?* Analogously, some restrict basic income to members of the population which have not reached retirement age and then see it as a natural complement to an individual, non-means-tested, non-contributory basic pension pitched at a higher level, of a sort that already exists in some European countries, like Sweden or the Netherlands. In most proposals, however, the basic income is granted beyond retirement age, either at the same level as for younger adults or at a somewhat higher level. In all cases, this basic income for the elderly can be supplemented by income from public or private contributory pension schemes, as well as from private savings and from employment.

*Inmates?* Even on the most inclusive definition of the relevant notion of membership, any population is still likely to contain some people who will not be paid a basic income. Detaining criminals in prison is far more expensive to the community than paying them a modest basic income, even if full account is taken of any productive work they may be made to perform. Unless the detention turns out to have been ill-founded, it is therefore obvious that prison inmates should lose the benefit of their basic income for the duration of their imprisonment. But they can get it back as soon as they are released. The same may apply to the long-term inmates of other institutions, such as mental hospitals or old people's homes, to the extent that the full cost of their stay is directly picked up by the community rather than paid for by the inmates themselves.

#### On an individual basis

*Paid to each.* The basic income is paid to each individual member of the community, rather than to each household taken as a whole, or to its head, as is the case under most existing guaranteed minimum schemes.

*Uniform.* Even if a benefit is paid to each individual, its level could still be affected by the composition of the household. To take account of the fact that the per capita cost of living decreases with the size of the household, existing guaranteed minimum income schemes grant a smaller per capita income to the members of a couple than to a person living alone. A fair and effective operation of such schemes therefore supposes that the administration should have the power to check the living arrangements of their beneficiaries. A basic income, instead, is paid on a strictly individual basis, not only in the sense that each individual member of the community is a recipient, but also in the sense that how much (s)he receives is independent of what type of household she belongs to. The operation of a basic income scheme therefore dispenses with any control over living arrangements, and it preserves the full advantages of reducing the cost of one's living by sharing one's accommodation with others. Precisely because of its strictly individualistic nature, a basic income tends to remove isolation traps and foster communal life.

#### Without means test

*Irrespective of income.* Relative to existing guaranteed minimum income schemes, the most striking feature of a basic income is no

doubt that it is paid, indeed paid at the same level, to rich and poor alike, irrespective of their income level. Under the simplest variant of the existing schemes, a minimum level of income is specified for each type of household (single adult, childless couple, single parent of one child, and so on), the household's total income from other sources is assessed, and the difference between this income and the stipulated minimum is paid to each household as a cash benefit. In this sense, existing schemes operate *ex post*, on the basis of a prior assessment, be it provisional, of the beneficiaries' income. A basic income scheme, instead, operates *ex ante*, irrespective of any income test. The benefit is given in full to those whose income exceeds the stipulated minimum no less than to those whose income falls short of it. Nor are any other means taken into account when determining the level of benefit a person is entitled to: neither a person's informal income, nor the help she could claim from relatives, nor the value of her belongings. Taxable "means" may need to be taxed at a higher average rate in order to fund the basic income. But the tax-and-benefit system no longer rests on a dichotomy between two notions of "means": A broad one for the poor, by reference to which benefits are cut, and a narrow one for the better off, by reference to which income tax is levied.

*Does not make the rich richer.* From the fact that rich and poor receive the same basic income, it does not follow, however, that the introduction of a basic income would make both rich and poor richer than before. A basic income needs to be funded.

(1) If a basic income were simply added to existing tax-and-benefit systems, it is clear that the comparatively rich would need to pay both for their own basic income and for much of the basic income of the comparatively poor. This would clearly hold if the funding were through a progressive income tax, but would also hold under a flat tax or even a regressive consumption tax. For the *ex nihilo* introduction of a basic income to work to the financial advantage of the poor, the key condition is simply that, relative to their numbers (not necessarily to their incomes), the relatively rich should contribute more to its funding than the relatively poor.

(2) In most proposals, however, the introduction of a basic income is combined with a partial abolition of existing benefits and tax reductions. If the proposed reform simply consisted in spreading more thinly among all citizens the non-contributory benefits currently concentrated on the poor, the latter would clearly lose out. But no one is making such an absurd proposal. In most proposals that

rely on direct taxation, the basic income replaces only the bottom part of the non-contributory benefits, but also the exemptions or reduced tax rates on every taxpayer's lower income brackets. The immediate impact on the income distribution can then be kept within fairly narrow bounds for a modest basic income. But the higher its level, the higher the average rate of income tax and therefore the greater the redistribution from the comparatively rich to the comparatively poor.

*Better for the poor to give to the rich?* Thus, giving to all, rich and poor, is not meant to make things better for the rich. But, for a given level of minimum income, is there any reason to believe that it is better for the poor than a means-tested guaranteed income? Yes, for at least three interconnected reasons. First, the rate of take-up of benefits is likely to be higher under a universal scheme than if a means test is in place. Fewer among the poor will fail to be informed about their entitlements and to avail themselves of the benefits they have a right to. Second, there is nothing humiliating about benefits given to all as a matter of citizenship. This cannot be said, even with the least demeaning and intrusive procedures, about benefits reserved for the needy, the destitute, those identified as unable to fend for themselves. From the standpoint of the poor, this may count as an advantage in itself, because of the lesser stigma associated with a universal basic income. It also matters indirectly because of the effect of the stigma on the rate of take-up. Third, the regular, reliable payment of the benefit is not interrupted when accepting a job under a basic income scheme, whereas it would be under a standard means-tested scheme. Compared to means-tested schemes guaranteeing the same level of minimum income, this opens up real prospects for poor people who have good reasons not to take risks. This amounts to removing one aspect of the unemployment trap commonly associated with conventional benefit systems, an aspect to which social workers are usually far more sensitive than economists.

*Makes work pay?* The other aspect of the unemployment trap generated by means-tested guaranteed minimum schemes is the one most commonly stressed by economists. It consists in the lack of a significant positive income differential between no work and low-paid work. At the bottom end of the earnings distribution, if each euro of earnings is offset, or practically offset, or more than offset, by a loss of one euro in benefits, one does not need to be particularly lazy to turn down a job that would yield such earnings, or to actively look for

such jobs. Given the additional costs, travelling time or child-care problems involved, one may not be able to afford to work under such circumstances. Moreover, it would generally not make much sense for employers to design and offer such jobs, as people who would be grateful for being sacked are unlikely to constitute a conscientious and reliable workforce. A minimum wage legislation may anyway prevent full-time jobs from being offered at a wage lower than the income guarantee, in which case the latter consideration only applies to part-time jobs. The replacement of a means-tested guaranteed income by a universal basic income is often presented as a way of tackling this second aspect of the unemployment trap too. If one gave everyone a universal basic income but taxed at 100 percent the portion of everyone's earnings that does not exceed the minimum guarantee (see for example Salverda 1984), the unemployment trap would be the same, in this respect, as under a means-tested guaranteed minimum income. (See Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.3 in the appendix.) But if one makes the mild assumption that the explicit tax rate applying to the lowest income brackets must remain noticeably lower than 100 percent, then the following statement holds. Since you can keep the full amount of your basic income, whether working or not, whether rich or poor, you are bound to be better off when working than out of work. (See Figure 1.2 in the appendix.)

*Equivalent to a negative income tax?* Note, however, that this second aspect of the unemployment trap can be removed just as effectively, it would seem, by a means-tested scheme that would phase out the benefit less steeply as earnings rise. This is achieved through the so-called negative income tax, a uniform and refundable tax credit. The notion of a negative income tax first appears in the writings of the French economist Augustin Cournot (1838). It was briefly proposed by Milton Friedman (1962) as a way of trimming down the welfare state, and explored in more depth by James Tobin (1965, 1966, 1967, 1968) and his associates as a way of fighting poverty while preserving work incentives. On the background of an explicit tax schedule which taxes no income at 100 percent and which can be, but need not by definition be, linear, a negative income tax amounts to reducing the income tax liability of every household (of a given composition) by the same fixed magnitude, while paying as a cash benefit the difference between this magnitude and the tax liability whenever this difference is positive. (See Figure 1.3 below.) Suppose the fixed magnitude of the tax credit is pitched at the same level as under some basic income scheme under consideration. Someone with no income, and

hence no income tax liability, will then receive an amount equal to the basic income. As the income rises, the benefit will shrink, as in the case of conventional means-tested schemes, but at a slower rate, indeed at a rate that will keep post-and-transfer income at exactly the same level as under the corresponding basic income scheme. (See Figures 1.3 and 1.4.) The NIT variant simply consists in netting out taxes and benefits. Under a basic income scheme, the revenues needed to fund the NIT's universal tax credit are actually raised and paid back to all. Under NIT, transfers are all one-way only: positive transfers (or negative taxes) for households under the so-called break-even point, negative transfers (or positive taxes) for households above. (See Figure 1.3.)

*Cheaper than a negative income tax?* How much of a real difference there is between a basic income and a negative income tax depends on further specification of administrative procedures. It shrinks, for example, if taxes are levied at source on a pay-as-you-earn basis (rather than only after tax returns have been processed), or if tax liabilities are assessed on a weekly or monthly, rather than an annual basis, or if everyone is entitled, under a NIT scheme, to an advance payment of the presumptive tax credit (subject to subsequent correction), or if everyone is entitled, under a BI scheme, to get the BI as a tax discount rather than in cash. But even in the closest variant, there remains a difference between a system that operates, by default, "ex ante," and one that operates, by default, "ex post." Any remaining difference would count as an advantage for the basic income variant with respect to the first, uncertainty-linked dimension of the unemployment trap. Yet, with a rudimentary benefit payment technology (coins carried by the postman!) or with a tax collection administration plagued by corruption or inefficiency, the case for the NIT variant, which does away with the back-and-forth of tax money, may be overwhelming. In an era of technological transfers and with a reasonably well-run tax administration, on the other hand, the bulk of the administrative cost associated with an effective guaranteed minimum income scheme is the cost of information and control: The expenditure needed to inform all potential beneficiaries about what their entitlements are and to check whether those applying meet the eligibility conditions. In these respects, a universal system is bound to perform better than a means-tested one. As automaticity and reliability increase on both the payment and the collection side, it is therefore, in this administrative sense, increasingly likely to be the cheaper of the two, for a given degree of effectiveness at reaching all

the poor. It is for this sort of reason that James Tobin (1997), for example, preferred a universal "demogrant" to its negative-income-tax variant.

#### Without work requirement

*Irrespective of present work performance.* The right to a guaranteed minimum income is by definition not restricted to those who have worked enough in the past, or paid in enough social security contributions to be entitled to some insurance benefits. From Juan Luis Vives (1526) onwards, however, its earliest variants were often linked to the obligation to perform some toil, whether in the old-fashioned and ill-famed workhouses or in a more varied gamut of contemporary private and public workfare settings. Being unconditional, a basic income sharply contrasts with these forms of guaranteed income intimately linked to guaranteed employment. It also diverges from in-work benefits restricted to households at least one member of which is in paid employment, such as the American Earned Income Tax Credit or the UK's more recent Working Families Tax Credit. By virtue of removing the unemployment trap – i.e. by providing its net beneficiaries with an incentive to work – a basic income (or a negative income tax) can be understood and used as an in-work benefit or a top-up on earnings. But it is not restricted to this role. Its unconditionality marks it off from any type of employment subsidy, however broadly conceived.

*Irrespective of willingness to work.* It also marks it off from conventional guaranteed minimum income schemes, which tend to restrict entitlement to those willing to work in some sense. The exact content of this restriction varies a great deal from country to country, indeed sometimes from one local authority to another within the same country. It may involve that one must accept a suitable job if offered, with significant administrative discretion as to what "suitable" may mean in terms of location or skill requirements; or that one must give proof of an active interest in finding a job; or that one must accept and respect an "insertion contract," whether connected to paid employment, to training or to some other useful activity. By contrast, a basic income is paid as a matter of right – and not under false pretences – to homemakers, students, break-takers and permanent tramps. Some intermediate proposals, such as Anthony Atkinson's (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 1998; Vanderborght and Van Parijs 2001) "participation income," impose a broad condition of social contribution,

which can be fulfilled by full- or part-time waged employment or self-employment, by education, training or active job search, by home care for infant children or frail elderly people, or by regular voluntary work in a recognised association. The more broadly this condition is to be interpreted, the less of a difference there is with a basic income.

#### WHY DO WE NEED A BASIC INCOME?

*If we want no means test, it is important to drop the work test.* Bringing together the last two unconditionalities discussed – the absence of the means test and the absence of the work test – makes it possible to briefly formulate the core of what makes basic income particularly relevant under present circumstances. At first sight, there is total independence between these two unconditionalities, between the absence of an income test and the absence of a work test. But the strength of the basic income proposal crucially hinges on their being combined. The abolition of the means test, as we have seen, is intimately linked to the removal of the unemployment trap (in its two main dimensions), and hence to the creation of a potential for offering and accepting low-paid jobs that currently do not exist. But some of these jobs can be lousy, degrading dead-end jobs, which should not be promoted. Others are pleasant, enriching stepping-stone jobs, which are worth taking even at low pay because of their intrinsic value or the training they provide. Who can tell the difference? Not legislators or bureaucrats, but the individual workers who can be relied upon to know far more than what is known “at the top” about the countless facets of the job they do or consider taking. They have the knowledge that would enable them to be discriminating, but not always the power to do so, especially if they have poorly valued skills or limited mobility. A work-unconditional basic income endows the weakest with bargaining power in a way a work-conditional guaranteed income does not. Put differently, work-unconditionality is a key instrument to prevent means-unconditionality from leading to the expansion of lousy jobs.

*If there is no means test, no work test is needed.* At the same time the work incentives associated by means-unconditionality make work-conditionality less tempting as a way of alleviating the fear that benefits without a counterpart would nurture an idle underclass. In the absence of a means test, the tax and benefit structure can be expected to be such that beneficiaries can significantly increase their disposable incomes by working, even at a low rate and on a part-time

basis, and without being trapped in such jobs once their skills improve or once they can improve their working time. Moving (back) into the work sphere will therefore be facilitated and encouraged, and, for those who fear a dualization of society into workers and non-workers, there will therefore be far less of a need to insist on coupling the right to the benefit to some obligation to (be available for) work. To put it (somewhat too) succinctly: Just as work-unconditionality prevents means-unconditionality from unacceptably supporting exploitation (which it would do by subsidizing unworthy low-paid jobs accepted under the threat of losing the benefit), similarly means-unconditionality prevents work-unconditionality from unacceptably fostering exclusion (which it would do by inviting one to no longer regard as problematic a system that durably disconnects the less productive from any labour participation by effectively killing off low-productive jobs). The two key unconditionalities of basic income are logically independent, but they are intrinsically linked as components of a strong proposal.

*Activating while liberating.* This solidarity between the two unconditionalities underlies the central case for basic income as a specific way of handling the joint challenge of poverty and unemployment. Compared to guaranteed income schemes of the conventional sort, the crucial argument in favor of the desirability of basic income rests on the widely shared view that social justice is not only a matter of right to an income, but also of access to (paid and unpaid) activity. The most effective way of taking care of both the income and the activity dimension consists in maintaining the income transfer (in gross terms) whatever the person’s activity, thereby “activating” benefits, i.e. extending them, beyond forced inactivity, to low-paid activity. It can correctly be objected that there are other schemes – such as earned income tax credit or employment subsidies – that could serve better, or more cheaply, the objective of securing the viability of low-productive jobs and thereby providing a paid job to the worst off. However, if the concern is not to keep poor people busy at all cost, but rather to provide them with access to meaningful paid activity, the very unconditional nature of a basic income is a crucial advantage: It makes it possible to spread bargaining power so as to enable (as much as is sustainable) the less advantaged to discriminate between attractive or promising and lousy jobs.

*Basic income and social justice.* The preceding argument implicitly appeals to a conception of social justice as the fair distribution of the

real freedom to pursue the realization of one's conception of the good life, whatever it is. It is such a conception that I have developed and defended in my *Real Freedom for All* (Van Parijs 1995). A handful of alternative principled justifications of basic income have been proposed (see Van Parijs 1992) and a large number of pragmatic justifications have been offered for it, as a simple handy second-best for a more complicated ideal package of policy instruments (see e.g. Goodin 1992, Barry 2003). However, I am convinced that any cogent case for basic income as a first-best must adopt some notion of "real freedom" (not only the right but also the means to do what one may wish) as the distribendum of social justice and combine it with some strongly egalitarian criterion of distribution. The particular "real-libertarian" conception I offered gives a key role to the view that the substratum of our real freedom essentially consists in very unequal combinations of gifts we have received throughout our existences, among them the opportunities that enable us to hold our jobs. As a result there are massive "employment rents" incorporated in our jobs which can and must be (partly) captured through predictable and sustainable revenue-maximizing income taxation whose proceeds are to be used to fund a universal and unconditional basic income. The formulation I offer can no doubt be improved (see the critical essays collected in Elkin 1997, Krebs 2000 and Reeve and Williams 2003, followed by my replies), but I have no doubt that if a first-best case for basic income can be made, it must be some fairly close variant of what I propose.

#### IS A BASIC INCOME AFFORDABLE?

*An underspecified question.* Phrased in this very general way, the question makes no sense. Let us bear in mind that it is *not* part of the definition of a basic income that it should be sufficient to satisfy the beneficiaries' basic needs: Consistently with its definition, the level of the basic income could be more and it could be less. Nor is it part of the definition of a basic income that it should replace all other cash benefits: A universal benefit need not be a single benefit. A meaningful answer can only start being given to the question of affordability if one specifies the level at which the basic income is to be pitched and stipulates which benefits, if any, it is to replace. Under some specifications – for example "abolish all existing benefits and redistribute the corresponding revenues in the form of an equal low benefit for all" – the answer is trivially yes. Under other specifications – for example, "keep all existing benefits and supplement them with an equal benefit for all citizens at a level sufficient for a single person to live comfort-

ably" – the answer is obviously no. Each of these absurd extreme proposals is sometimes equated, by definition, with basic income. But neither has, to my knowledge, been proposed by anyone. Every serious proposal lies somewhere in between, and whether some basic income proposal is affordable must therefore be assessed case by case.

#### More expensive because work-unconditional?

Are there, however, some general reasons why a basic income would not be affordable at a level at which a conventional guaranteed income would? One obvious reason might simply be that a basic income is given to all, whether or not they are willing to work, whereas a conventional guaranteed minimum income is subordinated to a willingness-to-work test. As a result, it is claimed, more poor people will be receiving a basic income than a conventional guaranteed income, or, if the number of beneficiaries is not much greater, they will be doing less work than would be the case under a work-conditional benefit system. In net terms, therefore, a basic income scheme is certain to cost more.

*Job seeker's allowance versus state-sponsored workfare: A dilemma.* Closer scrutiny reveals that this expectation rests on feeble grounds indeed. For suppose first that the work test is conceived as an obligation to accept work if offered by some (private or public) employer concerned to get value for money. If the worker has no desire to take or keep the job, her expected and actual productivity is unlikely to be such that the employer will want to hire and keep her. But if the worker is formally available for work, the fact that she is not hired or that she is sacked (owing to too low a productivity, not to anything identifiable as misconduct) cannot disqualify her from a work-tested guaranteed income any more than from an unconditional basic income. The only real difference between the former and the latter is then simply that the former involves a waste of both the employer's and the worker's time. Alternatively, suppose that the work test is conceived as an obligation to accept a fall-back job provided by the state for this very purpose. Rounding up the unemployable and unmotivated is not exactly a recipe for high productivity, and even leaving aside the long-term damage on the morale of the conscripted and on the image of the public sector, the net cost of fitting this recalcitrant human material into the workfare mold might just about manage to remain lower than plain prison, with the cost of supervision and blunder correction overshadowing the work-shy workers' contribution



to the national product. The economic case for the work test is just about as strong as the economic case for prisons.

*Giving to the lazy is cheaper.* Thus, as fully recognized by no-nonsense advocates of workfare (e.g. Kaus 1990), if a willingness-to-work condition is to be imposed, it must be justified on moral or political grounds, not on the basis of a flimsy cost argument inspired by the shaky presumption that a benefit coupled with work is necessarily cheaper than the same benefit taken alone. From the fact that workfare is likely to be costlier than welfare, it does not follow that the “unemployable” should be left to rot in their isolation and idleness. There can and must be a way of helping them out of it, namely by creating a suitable structure of incentives and opportunities of a sort a universal basic income aims to help create, whether or not a willingness-to-work test is coupled with it. Setting up such a structure is costly, as we shall shortly see, but adding a work test will not make it any cheaper – quite the contrary. And the absence of such a test, therefore, cannot be what jeopardizes basic income’s affordability.

#### More expensive because income-unconditional?

*The equivalence of means-tested and universal schemes.* Instead of resting on the fact that a basic income is paid to all, whether or not they show any willingness to work, the claim that a basic income is unaffordable invokes even more often the fact that it is paid to rich and poor alike. The earlier discussion of the means test – in section 1(v) – should have made plain that this allegation is wrong, misled as it is by too superficial a notion of cost. As a comparison of Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2 shows, it is in principle possible to achieve with a basic income exactly the same relationship between gross and net income as with a conventional guaranteed minimum income. If this relationship is the same, it means that the cost to those taxpayers who are net contributors to the scheme is the same in both cases. If one is politically affordable, therefore, the other should be too. If the relationship is the same, it also means that the marginal tax on earnings at any level of earnings is the same in both cases. If one of the two schemes is economically affordable, therefore, the other should be too.

*Giving to the rich is cheaper.* Of course, the budgetary cost is hugely different in the two cases, and if one could sensibly reason about transfers in the same way as about other public expenditures, there would indeed be a strong presumption that a basic income may be

“unaffordable” when a conventional guaranteed minimum income is within our means. But transfers are not net expenditures. They are reallocations of purchasing power. This does not mean that they are costless. They do have a distributive cost to the net contributors, and they do have an economic cost through the disincentives they create. But both costs, we have seen, can be the same under either scheme. In addition, there are administrative costs. But, as also pointed out earlier, assuming a computerized and efficient tax-collection and transfer-payment technology, these are likely to be lower under a universal, *ex ante* scheme, than under a means-tested, *ex post* one, at least for a given level of effectiveness at reaching the poor. Paradoxically, therefore, giving to all is not more expensive but cheaper than giving only to the poor.

#### More expensive because creates work incentives at the bottom?

*Marginal rates at the bottom and in the middle: The big trade off.* To be fair, however, the fact that the basic income is not means-tested naturally combines with the mild requirement that the explicit rate of tax should fall short of 100 percent. Which means that the sort of basic income proposal we should be looking at is not represented by Figure 1.2, but rather by Figure 1.4, or at least by Figure 1.6. Relative to the conventional guaranteed minimum scheme represented by Figure 1.1, it can then no longer be said that there is not genuinely higher cost. True, it does not uniquely stick to the universal nature of the benefit, since the corresponding means-tested negative-income-tax variants share exactly the same feature. In particular, a linear tax combined with a uniform refundable tax credit at the current level of the minimum guaranteed income (Figure 1.3) would be very expensive in this sense. But that the problem should be entirely shared with negative income schemes does not make it less of a problem, which needs to be faced squarely. The basic fact is that the more material incentives one wishes to provide (for a given minimum income) to people earning at the bottom of the earnings scale, the more one needs to decrease the material incentives higher up. There is a sharp trade-off here, which can be spelled out as follows.

*An example.* To keep the reform budget-neutral while remaining able to pay for everyone’s basic income, one must compensate the lowering of the rate at which the lowest layer of everyone’s income is taxed by raising the rate at which higher layers are taxed. But while every earner has income in the lowest layer, not everyone earns income in

higher layers, and the higher the layer, the fewer the tax payers involved. Suppose one starts from a basic income scheme of the sort depicted in Figure 1.2, i.e. with a tax rate of 100 percent on the lowest layer of income which mimics the effective rate of existing guaranteed minimum income schemes (Figure 1.1). Lowering by 20 percent the average rate of tax in the monthly income range comprising, say, between 0 and 500 euros will need to be offset by an increase in the rate of tax higher up. By how much? It depends on how many taxpayers have an income in the income bracket over which the tax increase is being considered. If it is in the 500–1,000 euros range, most incomes will still be affected by the rise, and budget neutrality may be achieved with, say, a 25 percent increase of the tax rate in that range. But if it is in the 2,000–2,500 range, a far smaller number of taxpayers will be affected, and the tax rate that balances the budget will need to rise by, say, over 50 percent. Once this is realized, the following conclusion is inescapable. If one is to finance a significant reduction of the effective marginal tax rate on the lowest earnings, one will have to significantly raise it on a broad range of rather modest earnings. Concentrating the increase on the higher brackets would quickly make them rocket towards 100 percent and make much of the corresponding incomes vanish (if only for domestic tax purposes).

*Better for the poor that the poor be taxed more?* This is not as terrible as it sounds. The modestly paid workers whose marginal tax rate would need to go up are also among the main beneficiaries of the introduction of a basic income, as the increased taxation of their wage falls short of the level of the basic income which they henceforth receive. The concern, therefore, need not be distributive. Even if one ends up, as in some proposals, with a linear income tax, i.e. if the lowest earnings are taxed at the same rate as the highest ones currently are, the reform would still redistribute downwards from the higher earners (whose tax increase on all income layers would exceed their basic income). However, there is some ground for a legitimate concern about the impact such a reform would have on incentives. As stressed by some opponents of basic income and negative income tax (e.g. the marginal rates would be lowered in a range in which there is a possibly growing, but still comparatively small proportion of the economy's marginal earnings, while being raised in a range in which far more workers would be affected. The incentive to work and train, to be conscientious and innovative would be increased in the very lowest range of incomes (say, between 0 and 500 euros per month), but it would be decreased upward of this threshold, where the bulk of society's work

force, and particularly of its most productive work force, is concentrated. We would therefore be well advised not to rush too quickly to a system in which the effective marginal tax rate on the lowest incomes would not be higher than those higher up (see Piketty 1997).

*Low earners' overcharge versus partial basic income.* There are two ways of accommodating this advice in a basic income proposal. One consists in correcting a linear, or even a progressive system with an "overcharge" for the net beneficiaries of the basic income (Figure 1.6), as suggested for example by James Meade (1989). Another is a "partial basic income," as proposed for example by the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR 1985) and explored at length since, both in the Netherlands (Dekkers and Noteboom 1988, de Beer 1993, van der Veen and Pels 1995, Groot 1999) and in other European countries (Atkinson 1989, Parker 1991, Lahtinen 1992, Brittan 1995, Gilain and Van Parijs 1995, Clark and Healy 1997). A partial basic income would fall short of the level of income currently guaranteed to a single person, but it may approach or even exceed half the level currently guaranteed to a couple, and it would go hand in hand with the maintenance of a residual means-tested guaranteed income scheme. It would therefore imply the preservation of a 100 percent effective tax rate on a shrunk lower range (Figure 1.7). Under either variant, the earlier paradox becomes sharper: It is not only better for the poor that the rich should receive the same as the poor. It is also better for them that they should be taxed more than the rich.

#### More expensive because strictly individual?

*The beauty of individualization.* Thus, it cannot be denied that the lifting of the means test raises a genuine cost problem, not as such by virtue of the fact that the basic income is given to the rich as well as to the poor, but because (part of) its point is to provide the poor with stronger material incentives. It is not the only genuine cost problem intrinsic to basic income proposals. Another directly stems from the fact that, unlike most existing guaranteed minimum income schemes, basic income is meant to be strictly individual. These schemes typically provide a lower level of income support to each of the two members of a couple than to a single person, especially when account is taken of the housing subsidy, sometimes administered as a separate benefit. Why? Obviously because it is cheaper per capita to share a house, durable goods (cooker, washing machine, car, bed) and some services (child care) with one or more other people than to shoulder the cost

individually. The cheapest way of covering a given definition of fundamental needs therefore involves tracking the household composition and modulating the per capita level of the income guarantee accordingly. Of course, the corollary of this household-conditionality is that economies of scale are discouraged, fake domiciles rewarded and hence checks on people's living arrangements required. One of the blatant advantages of basic income is precisely that it would do away with all that. People who put up with each other and thereby make society save on accommodation and consumer durables would be entitled to the benefits of the economies of scale they generate. There would therefore also be no bonus for those pretending to live apart when they do not, and no need to check who lives where and with whom.

*Another dilemma: Inadequate or household-based?* Great, but at what level would the individual and unconditional basic income be pitched? If it is at the level of the guaranteed income currently enjoyed by each member of a couple, the amount is bound to fall far short of what is needed by someone who has no option but to live alone. If it is at the level currently awarded to a single person, the cost implications, in some countries at any rate, are phenomenal. This is again not just a matter of budgetary cost. There is an irreducible distributive cost in the sense of a dramatic shift of purchasing power from one-adult to bi- or multi-adult households. And there is also an irreducible economic cost, owing mainly to a substantial increase in the marginal rates required in order to fund the outlays for this enhanced basic income. There is therefore, in the short term at any rate, a dilemma between giving a fully individualized but inadequate basic income and giving a sufficient but household-modulated one (see Brittan and Webb 1991, Brittan 1995). Note, however, that this dilemma is not to be confused with a dilemma between making some households unacceptably poor (with too low an individual basic income) and subjecting all households for an indefinite period to a control of their living arrangements (with an adequate, but household-dependent basic income). Even under short-term cost constraints, the latter dilemma does not hold, for it is possible to conceive of a strictly individual but inadequate "partial" basic income for all, combined with a much shrunk residual means-tested household-tested social assistance for the reduced number of those who, despite the floor provided by the household's basic income(s), do not earn enough to reach the income threshold as from which means-tested assistance is switched off (see Figure 1.7). Providing it is not conceived as an immediate full substitute for existing social assistance, such a partial basic income thus provides an attrac-

tive way of handling both of the real cost problems – those stemming from incentives for low earners and individualization – which a full basic income would raise (see e.g. Gilain and Van Parijs 1995 for a microsimulation of the distributive impact of such a partial basic income in the case of Belgium).

#### WHICH WAY FORWARD?

*An eye in the distance and an eye on the ground.* For reasons explained at length elsewhere (Van Parijs 1995), a coherent and plausible conception of social justice requires us to aim, with some important qualifications, for an unconditional basic income at the highest level that is economically and ecologically sustainable, and on the highest scale that is politically imaginable. But while a defensible long-term vision is important, precise proposals for modest, immediately beneficial and politically feasible steps are no less essential. The sort of general but household-tested, means-tested and willingness-to-work-tested guaranteed minimum scheme that is now in place with many variants in most EU countries (including, most recently, Portugal) is a fundamental step in the right direction. But whatever the well-meaning "insertion" or "integration" conditions, it cannot avoid generating traps whose depth increases with the generosity of the scheme and whose threat increases as so-called "globalization" sharpens inequalities in market earning power. In countries in which guaranteed minimum schemes have been operating for a while, these traps and the dependency culture said to be associated with it risk triggering off a political backlash and the dismantling of what has been achieved. But they have also been prompting progressive moves in the form of basic income and related proposals. Like the fight for universal suffrage, the fight for basic income is not an all-or-nothing affair. This is no game for purists and fetishists, but for tinkerers and opportunists. Without going all the way to even a partial basic income, the following three types of proposals are plausible candidates – more or less plausible, depending on each country's institutions, and in particular its tax and social security context – as the most promising next step.

*An individual tax credit.* The Netherlands already have universal (i.e. non-means tested) systems of child benefits, of student grants and of non-contributory basic pensions, in addition to one of the world's most generous and comprehensive means-tested guaranteed income schemes. In January 2000, the Dutch Parliament approved the essentials of the government's plan for a comprehensive tax reform incorporating the

replacement of the exemption on the lower income layer by a strictly individual tax credit at a level of about 140 euros per month for all families with at least one worker (see Boerlage 1999). Gradually increased and made individually refundable (so that a worker's non-working partner, for example, would be entitled to a cash payment equivalent to the credit rather than have the working partner doubly credited), this "negative income tax" for working families would provide the last missing element for the provision of a universal income floor. It could then be painlessly integrated into a low, but strictly individual, universal and unconditional basic income. Of course, even at a significantly increased level, this would remain a partial basic income, which would need to keep being supplemented, at any rate for single-adult households, with residual means-tested assistance. Similar, though more modest, schemes have since been approved by the Belgian and by the French governments (see Cantillon et al. 2000, Cohen 2001, Piketty 2001, Chaidron 2001, Vanderborght 2001).

*A household-based regressive negative income tax.* Despite the forbidding label, this would definitely be a major change in the right direction. Under the more enticing name of "Bürgergeld", it has been advocated for many years in Germany by Joachim Mitschke (1985, 1995), professor of public finance at the University of Frankfurt. Ulrich Mückenberger, Claus Offe and Ilona Ostner (1989) argued for a less specific version of the same proposal, and Fritz Scharpf (1994, 2000), director of Cologne's Max Planck Institute, endorsed it as his preferred option. More recently, under the clumsier label "allocation compensatrice de revenu," a variant of it has been defended in France by Roger Godino (1999), former Dean of the management school INSEAD, and has been cautiously supported by sociologist Robert Castel (1999) and economists François Bourguignon (1999) and Laurent Caussat (2000). The idea is simply to take as given the household modulation of the current guaranteed minimum income and, instead of withdrawing the benefit at a 100 percent rate as earnings increase, to withdraw them at a somewhat lower rate, say 70 or even 50 percent, so as to create material incentives to work for any household, however low its earning power. In Godino's proposal for France, for example, the rate is calculated so that the benefit would be entirely phased out for single people as their earnings reached the level of the guaranteed minimum wage (seen Figure 1.3), as opposed to the much lower level of the guaranteed minimum income, as is currently the case (Figure 1.1). In the case of a larger household, the starting level is higher. If the same reduced rate of

benefit withdrawal applies, the benefit is completely phased out only at a level of earnings that exceeds the minimum wage. One major political advantage of this formula is that it can be presented as taking the current guaranteed minimum income as its point of departure and strengthening it by getting rid of the absurd penalization of any effort to get out of the trap by taking on some low-paid activity. One major administrative disadvantage is that it implies not just that a much expanded number of households will be on benefit (admittedly at a far lower average rate), but, more awkwardly, that how high a benefit the households are entitled to receive depends on their living arrangements, which the administration must therefore be allowed to control.

*A modest participation income.* Finally, it is possible to build upon existing parental, study or care leave schemes and integrate them, jointly with tax credits for the employed, into a universal basic income subjected to a very broad condition of social contribution, as proposed for example by Anthony Atkinson (1993a, 1993b, 1996, 1998) under the label "participation income." "In order to secure political support," Atkinson (1993a) argues, "it may be necessary for the proponents of basic income to compromise. To compromise not on the principle that there is no means test, nor on the principle of independence [i.e., the idea that no one should be directly dependent on any particular person or group], but on the unconditional payment." A participation income would be a non-means-tested allowance paid to every person who actively participates in economic activity, whether paid or unpaid. Persons who care for young or elderly persons, undertake approved voluntary work or training, or are disabled due to sickness or handicap, would also be eligible for it. After a while, one may well realize that paying controllers to try to catch the few really work-shy would cost more, and create more resentment all over than just giving this modest floor income to all, no questions asked. But in the meanwhile the participation income will have politically bootstrapped a universal basic income into position. Compared to the income-tax-reform approach and the social-assistance-reform approach, this third approach would be particularly appropriate if some specific funding were set aside for basic income: A tax on energy consumption, or a dividend on some public asset, or simply some broadly based levy on the national product. But it could also be combined with either of the first two approaches.

*Southern paths to basic income.* In those countries which already have some sort of guaranteed minimum, there is much work to be done along each of these paths, both intellectually and politically. In less

“advanced” countries, there is even more work to be done to build the first elements of a comprehensive scheme of social assistance (see Van Parijs 2002). However, two of these countries are particularly interesting in showing both how the basic income project can build on important existing achievements, and how it can mobilize and guide further progress on this basis. One is South Africa, which, since the final years of the apartheid regime, has a comprehensive non-contributory old-age pension scheme which distributes benefits to the overwhelming majority of black South African people in the relevant age category and no doubt constitutes the most powerful redistributive scheme in the whole of the African continent (see Case and Deaton 2000). On this background, a surprisingly vigorous campaign for a universal basic income has arisen, with support from the trade union movement, churches, and many other organizations (see Matisonn and Seekings 2002). The other country is Brazil, where Eduardo Suplicy, the Working Party’s (PT) first senator, has been campaigning since the early 1990s for the introduction of a comprehensive negative-income-tax-type guaranteed minimum income (see Suplicy 1992), where countless schemes of family income support, coupled with compulsory school attendance have been introduced at the municipal level, after a while with federal support (see e.g. Suplicy and Buarque 1996; Sposati 1997), and where a number of people, not least Suplicy himself, have increasingly put present-day experiments and demands within the framework of a struggle for the eventual implementation of an unconditional basic income for all Brazilians (Suplicy 2002). In January 2004, President Lula promulgated a law previously adopted on Suplicy’s initiative, by Brazil’s federal congress, to the effect that a universal basic income for all Brazilians will be introduced gradually, as from 2005, starting with the most needy.

Fighting along these or other paths towards greater income security should of course not make one neglect the prior importance of providing every child with quality basic education and every person with quality basic health care. More important still, for the model advocated here ever to become a widespread reality, the most difficult and crucial struggles may well need to be fought on apparently very remote subjects: To ensure the efficiency and accountability of public administration, to regulate migration, to design appropriate electoral institutions, and to restructure the powers of supranational organizations. But these many struggles can gain direction and strength if they are guided by a clear and coherent picture of the core distributive institutions of a just, liberating society.

## APPENDIX:

### A stylised Presentation of Basic Income and Related Schemes

In order to get the concepts straight and to think clearly about the pros and cons of competing proposals, it is indispensable to keep in mind a stylized representation of the way in which each proposes to convert gross income – i.e. the income earned by people through their work or savings, prior to paying any taxes or social security contributions and to receiving any benefits – into net income – i.e. their disposable income taking taxes, contributions and benefits into account. In each of the following graphs, the horizontal and vertical axes correspond to gross and net income, respectively. Hence the dotted 45° line, which matches to each level of gross income an equal level of net income, represents what the net income would be if there were no redistribution whatever, while the bold curve indicates how a person’s net income changes as her gross income increases when the tax-and-transfer scheme represented by the graph is in place.

To isolate the essential features of each scheme, it is convenient to abstract from any public expenditure other than the redistribution scheme under consideration and from the corresponding taxation. For the same reason, it is also useful to focus first on the case in which all households consist in one single adult.

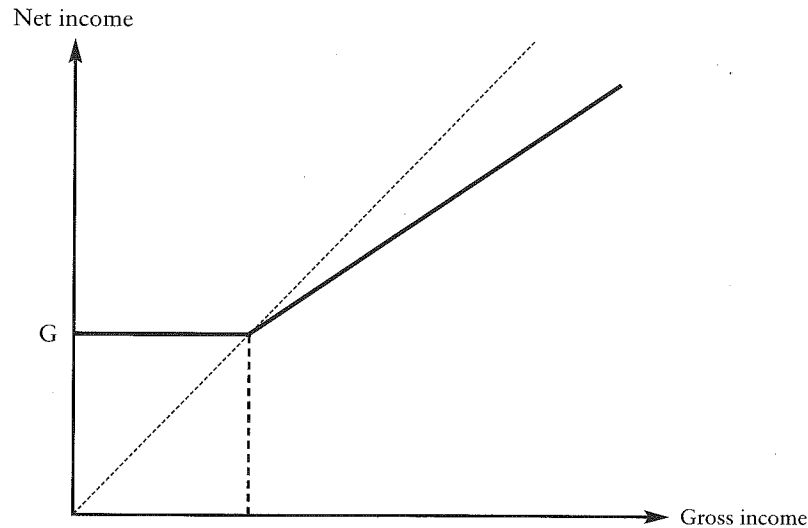


Figure 1.1. *Conventional minimum guaranteed income.*

Conventional minimum income schemes pick a particular level of income which they aim to secure for every household ( $G$ ). They identify the households whose gross income is smaller than  $G$  and transfer to them a benefit equal to the difference between their gross income and  $G$ . Such schemes can therefore be said to be “income-tested” or “means-tested,” in the sense that the size of the benefit they provide to a person is sensitive to some assessment of that person’s income. The level of the benefit paid obviously reaches zero when the household’s gross income reaches  $G$ . The benefits paid to households with a gross income lower than  $G$  are being funded by a tax on those with a gross income higher than  $G$ . This tax is here supposed to be linear, i.e. at the same rate on any gross income above  $G$ . How high this rate needs to be – and hence how depressed the slope of the right-hand portion of the bold line on the graph – depends on how many households have a gross income lower than  $G$  and on how much short of  $G$  their gross incomes fall. One feature of such a scheme – as represented by the flatness of the left-hand portion of the bold line – is that the effective marginal tax rate on all gross incomes below  $G$  is 100 percent. The effective marginal tax rate can be understood as 100 percent minus the rate of increase of net income relative to gross income. This rate of increase is here zero as any increase in gross income is exactly offset by a shrinking of the benefit. This feature of a guaranteed minimum scheme is often said to create an “unemployment trap” for people with a low earning power, as it kills any financial incentive to earn a gross income lower than  $G$  (or even somewhat higher, as being employed is likely to generate some costs), rather than nothing at all.

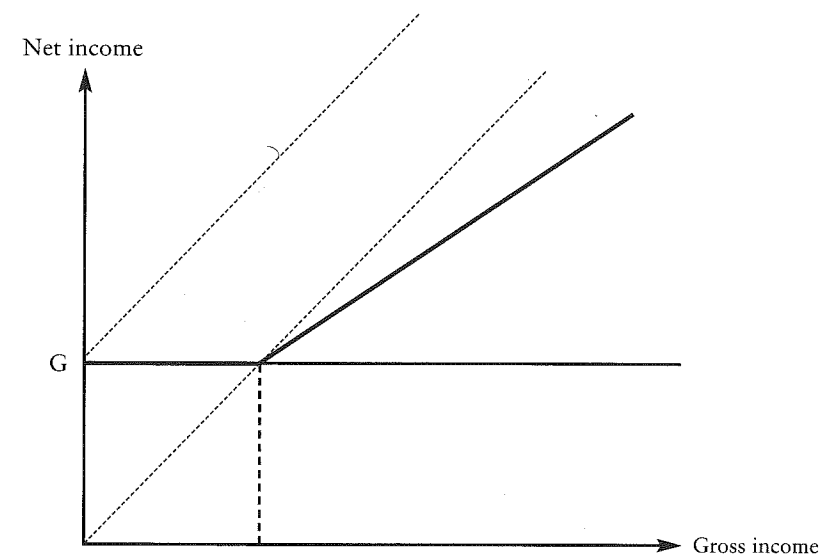


Figure 1.2. *Basic income with trap (e.g. Salverda 1984).*

Contrary to conventional schemes, a basic income is paid to all households, irrespective of their gross income. A basic income paid to all at level  $G$  lifts the initial 45° curve by a distance equal to  $G$ , which yields the higher dotted 45° line. A basic income at level  $G$  obviously involves an aggregate volume of benefits far larger than is the case with means-tested benefits paid only to households with gross incomes lower than  $G$ . One way – imaginable, though never actually proposed – of funding this larger volume consists in taxing all gross incomes below  $G$  at a 100 percent rate, and all gross incomes above  $G$  at whatever marginal rate is required to cover the costs of all benefits. What we end up with is a relationship between gross and net income (as represented by the bold line) identical, in both its flat left-hand portion and its sloping right-hand portion, to the one we had in the means-tested case (Figure 1.1). The slope needs to be the same as in the means-tested case because the net benefits paid to people with a gross income below  $G$  is the same in both cases, and hence also the tax revenue and tax rate needed to fund them. Considering this far-fetched case is important to clarify the conceptual distinction between means-tested schemes versus basic income on the one hand, and the presence versus the absence of an unemployment trap (or a 100 percent effective marginal tax rate on the lowest incomes) on the other.

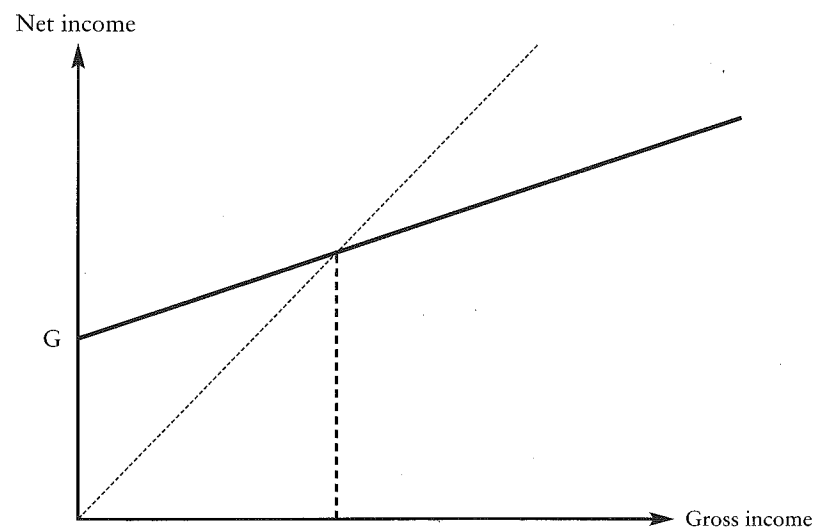


Figure 1.3. *Linear negative income tax (e.g. Friedman 1962).*

A means-tested guaranteed minimum scheme can avoid creating an unemployment trap by maintaining the sensitiveness of the size of the benefit to a person's level of gross income, but by making the former fall less fast than the latter grows. When this is the case, the bold line that represents net income as a function of gross income no longer has a flat left-hand portion at level  $G$ , while the level of gross income from which people stop receiving benefits (called the "break-even point") rises. If we keep assuming (as in Figure 1.1) that all households who do not receive benefits pay tax at a uniform rate to finance the benefit, this rate obviously has to increase (relative to the situation of Figure 1.1) to fund the increase in the numbers and sizes of the benefits paid. With an unchanged minimum income fixed at  $G$ , the rate at which the benefit is withdrawn can be lowered below 100 percent (as it was in Figure 1.1) and the required rate of tax on higher incomes correspondingly adjusted upwards, until the rate of withdrawal of the benefit (below the break-even point) is equal to the positive rate of taxation (above that point). This case corresponds to the linear negative income tax, which associates levels of negative tax (or benefit) and positive tax to gross income in such a way that net income increases at a same rate, relative to gross income, whatever a household's level of income.

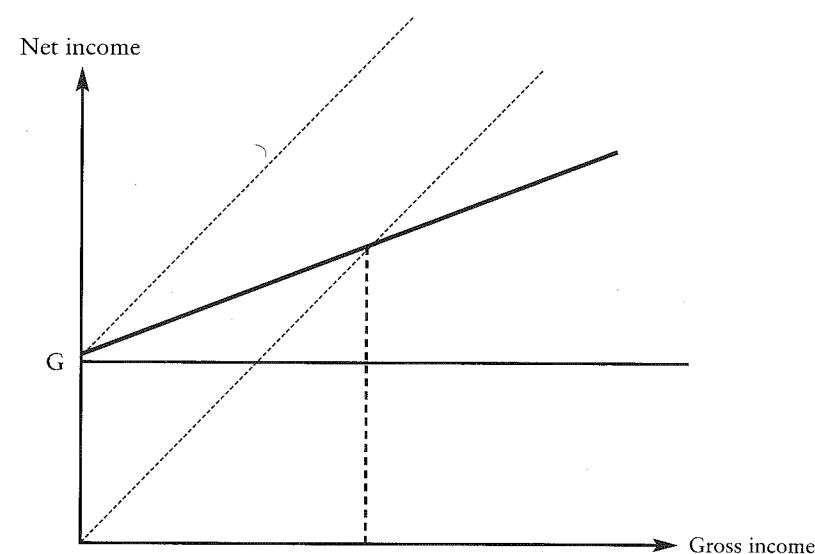


Figure 1.4. *Basic income combined with flat tax (e.g. Atkinson 1995).*

A basic income given to all at level  $G$  can conceivably be funded by a linear tax on all gross income, from 0 onwards. After people receive their basic income, their gross income, as represented by the 45° dotted line, shifts upward parallel to itself. The large amount of tax revenue required to fund this (tax-exempt) basic income determines the uniform rate at which all gross income in excess of the basic income needs to be taxed, and hence the slope of the bold line representing net income. The intersection between this bold line and the original 45° line determines the point below which people pay less in taxes than they receive as a basic income, and beyond which they pay more in taxes than they receive as a basic income. It is easy to understand that this point and the bold line that determines it must coincide with the break-even point and the corresponding bold line in Figure 1.3. For the slope of Figure 1.3 has been drawn so that the negative taxes collected by the relatively poor would exactly match the positive taxes paid by the relatively rich. Hence, if the slope in Figure 1.4 were flatter or steeper than the slope in Figure 1.3, the relatively poor would receive less or more net benefits (basic income minus tax) and hence fail to exhaust or overstretch the net contributions (tax minus basic income) of the relatively rich. In this sense, a basic income scheme funded by a flat tax can be said to be "equivalent" to a linear income tax with the same level of minimum income. And similar equivalences can be asserted for any matching pair of non-linear schemes.

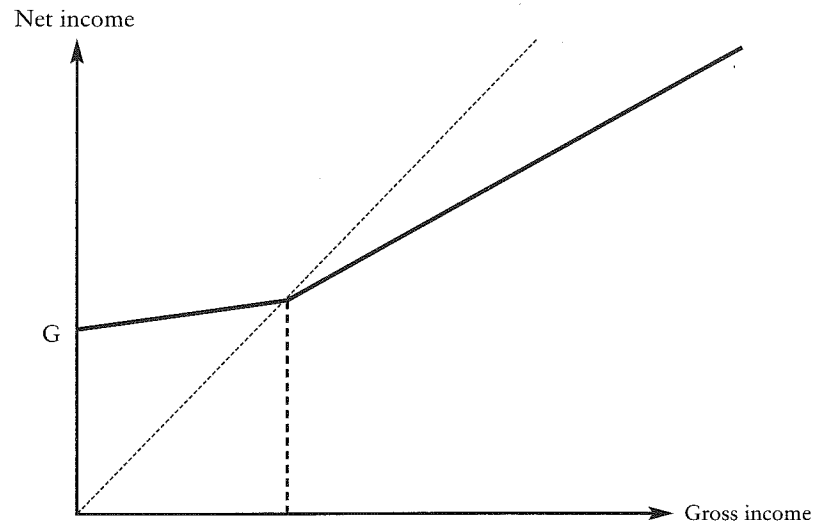


Figure 1.5. *Non-linear negative income tax* (e.g. Mitschke 1985, Godino 1999).

In order to abolish the unemployment trap without dropping the minimum income level nor raising too much the marginal rate of tax on the earnings of the bulk of the work force, various non-linear negative income tax proposals have been made. The rate of benefit withdrawal is then higher than the rate of positive tax, and the negative income tax scheme as a whole can be called regressive, in the sense that the effective marginal rate of tax is higher for the poor than for the rich. Such a scheme is of course nonetheless less regressive and more redistributive than conventional guaranteed minimum schemes of the type depicted in Figure 1.1.

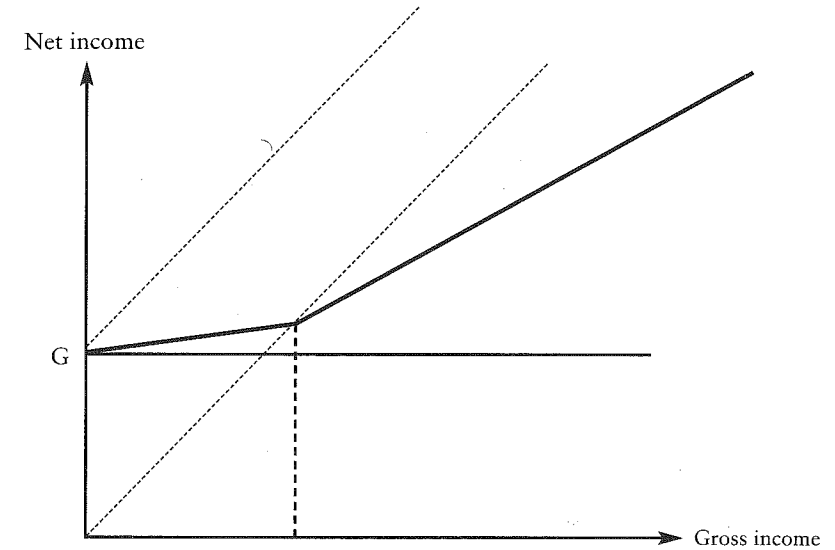


Figure 1.6. *Basic income with low earners' overcharge* (e.g. Meade 1989).

Just as some negative income tax proponents have proposed negative tax rates higher than positive tax rates (see Figure 1.5), some basic income advocates have recommended regressive taxation, for example in the form a "low earners' overcharge" on top of the standard rate of tax, as the best way of sustainably funding a relatively high basic income. The unemployment trap is abolished less vigorously than in the linear case, but the material incentives for skilled workers to supply labor, make efforts and improve their skills are eroded to a lesser extent. Even with this "tax on the poor," this sort of scheme is of course again less regressive and more redistributive towards the poor, than existing guaranteed income systems with the same level of minimum income (as in Figure 1.1). And this can remain the case even when the latter are funded by progressive positive taxation.



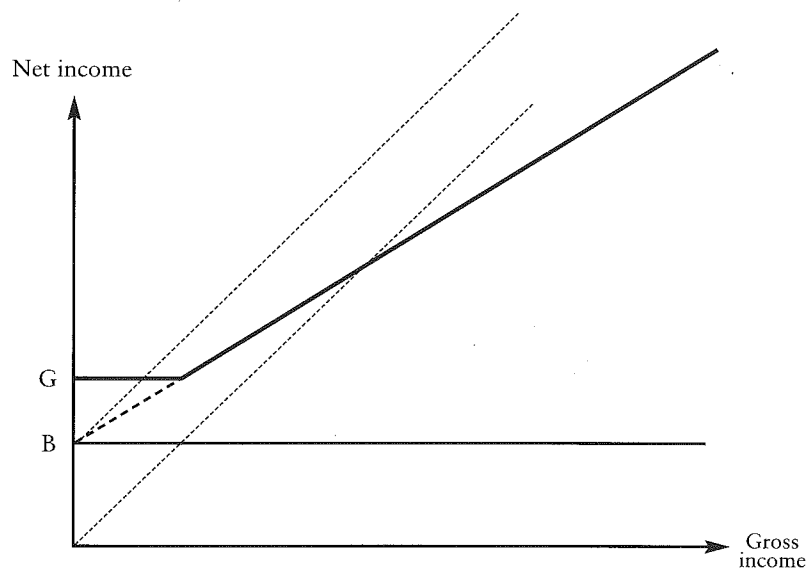


Figure 1.7. *Partial basic income* (e.g. WRR 1985, Dekkers & Nootboom 1988).

Instead of funding a “full” basic income with a regressive income tax (as in Figure 1.6), one can try to combine a high minimum income, an improvement of the unemployment trap and a protection of incentives for the bulk of the work force by settling for a “partial” basic income combined with a partial preservation of a means-tested guaranteed minimum scheme. In this case, a universal basic income is introduced at level B, significantly less than the minimum income that needs to be guaranteed to a person living alone. This shifts the dotted 45° line upwards, parallel to itself at a distance of B. Any extra gross income is taxed at a uniform rate (which determines the flatter slope of the other discontinuous line starting from B), but supplemented in such a way that any post-tax income inferior to G is brought up to G thanks to a means-tested benefit. In this case, there remains a range of low earnings over which the effective marginal tax rate is 100 percent (the left-hand flat part of the bold line). But this range is significantly shortened relative to the conventional scheme depicted in Figure 1.1 (how significantly depends on how close B is to G). If most of the people stuck in the unemployment trap created by conventional schemes have potential earnings reasonably close to the minimum income, this low or “partial” but unconditional basic income, which people can combine at will with their earnings, will be enough to empty most of the trap. At the same time, maintaining a 100 percent rate on the first layer of everyone’s income is precisely what makes it possible to tax higher layers at a far lower level than under the linear schemes of Figures 1.3 and 1.4.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- <http://www.basicincome.org> contains a downloadable version of all contributions to the most recent congresses of the Basic Income European Network (BIEN), since 2004, Basic Income Earth Network, as well as comprehensive annotated bibliography of many publications in several languages.
- BIEN’s electronic newsletter can be obtained free of charge by sending name and address + “subscribe BIEN” to [bien@basicincome.org](mailto:bien@basicincome.org).
- <http://www.usbig.net/>, the web site of the US basic income guarantee network, contains a series of downloadable working papers.
- English-language book-length discussions of basic income include: van der Veen/Van Parijs et al. (1986), Walter (1989), Van Parijs (1992), Clark and Healy (1997), Fitzpatrick (1999), Lerner, Clark and Needham (1999), Van Parijs et al. (2001), Blais (2002).
- On the prehistory of the contemporary basic income discussion, see esp. Vanderborcht and Van Parijs (2005, ch. 1), Cunliffe and Erreygers (2001, 2003), Van Trier (1995), Moynihan (1973), and the short history of basic income on <http://www.basicincome.org>.

## REFERENCES

- Ackerman, Bruce and Alstott, Anne. 1999. *The Stakeholder Society*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Arneson, Richard, Fleurbaey, Marc, Melnyk, Andrew and Selznick, Philip. 1997. “A Symposium on Philippe Van Parijs’ *Real Freedom for All*,” *PEGS Bulletin* (Political Economy of the Good Society, University of Maryland), 38–51.
- Atkinson, Anthony B. 1989. “Analysis of partial basic income schemes,” in A.B. Atkinson, *Poverty and Social Security*. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- 1993a. *Beveridge, the National Minimum, and its future in a European context*. STICERD Working Paper WSP/85, January 1993.
- 1993b. “Participation Income,” *Citizen’s Income Bulletin* 16, 7–11.
- 1995. *Public Economics in Action. The Basic Income/ Flat Tax Proposal*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 1996. “The Case for a Participation Income,” *Political Quarterly* (Oxford) 67 (1), January–March, 67–70.
- 1998. *Poverty in Europe*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Barrez, Dirk. 1999. “Tien frank per dag voor iedereen,” *De Morgen* 22 December.

- Barry, Brian. 2003. "Real Freedom and Basic Income," in *Real Libertarianism Assessed. Political Theory after Van Parijs* (Reeve, Andrew and Williams, Andrew, eds). Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, pp. 53–79.
- BEIGEWUM ed. 1991. *Grundeinkommen: Zwischen Gesellschaftsveränderung, sozialpolitischer Resignation und Verteilungskonflikt*, special issue of *Kurswechsel* 1.
- Blais, François 2002. *Ending Poverty. A Basic Income for All Canadians*. Halifax (Canada): Lorimer Paperback.
- Boerlage, Saar. 1999. "Reactie op het belastingplan 2001," *Nieuwsbrief Basisinkomen* 29, December, 5–8.
- Boulanger, Paul-Marie, Defeyt, Philippe and Van Parijs, Philippe, eds. 1985. *L'Allocation universelle. Une idée pour vivre autrement*, special issue of *La Revue nouvelle* (Brussels) 81 (4), April.
- Bourguignon, François and Bureau, Dominique. 1999. *L'Architecture des prélèvements en France: Etat des lieux et voies de réforme*. Paris: La Documentation française.
- Bovenberg, A.L. and van der Ploeg, F. 1995. "Het basisinkomen is een utopie," *Economisch-Statistische Berichten* 3995, 100–104.
- Bresson, Yoland and Guilhaume, Philippe. 1986. *Le participat: réconcilier l'économique et le social*. Paris: Chotard et associés éditeurs.
- Bresson, Yoland. 1994. *Le Partage du temps et des revenus*. Paris: Economica.
- 1999. "Il faut libérer le travail du carcan de l'emploi," *Le Monde* 16 March.
- Brittan, Samuel and Webb, Steven. 1991. *Beyond the Welfare State. An examination of basic incomes in a market economy*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.
- Brittan, Samuel. 1995. *Capitalism with a Human Face*. Aldershot: Edward Elgar.
- Büchtele, Herwig and Wohlgenannt, Lieselotte. 1985. *Grundeinkommen ohne Arbeit: Auf dem Weg zu einer kommunikativen Gesellschaft*, Vienna and Zürich: Europaverlag.
- Caillé, Alain ed. 1987. *Du Revenu social: au-delà de l'aide, la citoyenneté?*, special issue of *Bulletin du M.A.U.S.S.* 23 September.
- 1996. *Vers un revenu minimum inconditionnel?* Paris: La Découverte.
- Cantillon, Bea et al. 2000. "De verdelingseffecten van het ontwerp van fiscale hervorming. Microsimulatieresultaten." Antwen: UFSIA, Centrum voor sociaal beleid.
- Case, Anne and Angus Deaton. 2000. "Large cash transfers to the elderly in South Africa," *Economic Journal* 108, 1330–61
- Castel, Robert. 1999. "Minima sociaux, allocation compensatrice de revenu et RMI", in Castel, Robert, Godino, Roger, Jalmain, Michel and Piketty, Thomas. *Pour une réforme du RMI*, Paris: Notes de la Fondation Saint

- Simon 104, February, pp. 39–48.
- Caussat, Laurent. 2000. "Minima sociaux différentiels, allocation universelle, workfare: quels compromis dans la politique française de lutte contre la pauvreté?" Communication à la journée d'études "Quelle réforme des minima sociaux?," Marseille, 14 January.
- Chaidron, Nicolas. 2001. *Les Réformes fiscales néerlandaise, française et belge au regard de l'équité*. Université catholique de Louvain, mémoire de licence en sciences économiques.
- Charlier, Joseph. 1848. *Solution du problème social ou constitution humanitaire. Basée sur la loi naturelle, et précédée de l'exposé de motifs*. Brussels: "Chez tous les libraires du Royaume."
- Charlier, Joseph. 1894. *La Question sociale résolue, précédée du testament philosophique d'un penseur*. Bruxelles: Weissenbruch.
- Clark, Charles M.A. and Healy, John. 1997. *Pathways to a Basic Income*. The Justice Commission, Conference of Religious of Ireland.
- Cohen, Daniel. 2001. "Impôt négatif: le mot et la chose," *Le Monde* 6 February.
- Cournot, Augustin. 1838. *Recherches sur les principes mathématiques de la théorie des richesses*. Paris: Librairie Hachette (new edition Paris: Marcel Rivière, 1938).
- Crotty, Raymond. 1986. *Ireland in Crisis. A study in capitalist colonial development*. Dingle (Ireland): Brandon.
- Cunliffe John and Erreygers, Guido. 2001. "The Enigmatic Legacy of Charles Fourier: Joseph Charlier and Basic Income", *History of Political Economy* 33(3), 459–484.
- 2003. "Basic Income? Basic capital. Origins and issues of a debate," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 11 (1), 89–110.
- Davidson, Marc. 1995. "Liberale grondrechten en milieu. Het recht op milieugebruiksruimte als grondslag van een basisinkomen", *Milieu* 5, 246–249.
- de Beer, Paul. 1993. *Het verdiende inkomen*. Houten/ Zaventem: Bohn Stafleu Van Loghum and Amsterdam: Wiardi Beckman Stichting.
- Dekkers, Jos M. and Nooteboom, Bart. 1988. *Het gedeeltelijk basisinkomen, de hervorming van de jaren negentig*. The Hague: Stichting Maatschappij en Onderneming.
- den Hoed, P., ed. 1986. *Het gedeeltelijk basisinkomen*, special issue of *Bedrijf en Maatschappij*, 13 (5), September–October.
- Duboin, Jacques. 1932. *La Grande relève des hommes par la machine*. Paris: Fustier.
- 1945. *L'Economie distributive de l'abondance*. Paris: OCIA.
- Duboin, Marie-Louise. 1985. *L'économie libérée*. Paris: Syros.
- 1988. "Guaranteed income as an inheritance," *Proceedings of the First*

- International Conference on Basic Income* (A.G. Miller, ed.). London: BIRG and Antwerp: BIEN, 134–45.
- Duchatelet, Roland. 1994. "An economic model for Europe based on consumption financing on the tax side and the basic income principle on the redistribution side," paper presented at the 5th BIEN Congress. London, September 8–10.
- 1998. *N.V. België. Verslag aan de aandeelhouders*. Gent: Globe.
- Ferry, Jean-Marc. 1995. *L'Allocation universelle. Pour un revenu de citoyen-neté*. Paris: Cerf.
- 2000. *La Question de l'Etat européen*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Fitzpatrick, Tony. 1999. *Freedom and Security. An Introduction to the Basic Income Debate*. London: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Frankman, Myron. 2001. "From the Common Heritage of Mankind to a Planet-Wide Citizen's Income: Establishing the Basis for Solidarity," Montreal: McGill University, Department of Economics, May.
- Friedman, Milton. 1962. *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 1966. "The case for the negative income tax: a view from the right," *Issues of American Public Policy* (J.H. Bunzel, ed.), Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice-Hall, 1968, pp. 111–120.
- Fumagalli, Andrea and Lazzarotto, Maurizio eds. 1999. *Tutte bianche. Disoccupazione di massa e reddito di cittadinanza*. Roma: Derive Approdi.
- Genet, Michel and Van Parijs, Philippe. 1992. "Eurogrant," in *BIRG Bulletin* 15, 4–7.
- Gilain, Bruno and Van Parijs, Philippe. 1995. "L'allocation universelle: un scénario de court terme et de son impact distributif," *Revue belge de sécurité sociale* 38 (1), 5–80.
- Godino, Roger. 1999. "Pour la création d'une allocation compensatrice de revenu," in Castel, Robert, Godino, Roger, Jalmain, Michel and Piketty, Thomas. *Pour une réforme du RMI*. Paris: Notes de la Fondation Saint Simon 104, February 1999, pp. 7–20.
- Goodin, Robert E. 1992. "Toward a Minimally Presumptuous Social Policy," in *Arguing for Basic Income. Ethical foundations for a radical reform* (P. Van Parijs, ed.). London and New York: Verso, 195–214.
- Groot, Loek F.M. 1999. *Basic Income and Unemployment*. Amsterdam: Netherlands School for Social and Economic Policy Research.
- Heidsieck, Emmanuelle and Bresson, Yoland. *Bonne année! Manifeste pour un revenu d'existence*. Editions du Toit, 1999.
- Huber, Joseph. 1998. *Vollgeld. Beschäftigung, Grundsicherung und weniger Staatsquote durch eine modernisierte Geldordnung*. Berlin: Duncker & Humboldt.

- 1999. *Plain Money. A Proposal for Supplying the Nations with the Necessary Means in a Modern Monetary System*. Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg: Forschungsberichte des Instituts für Soziologie.
- Huber, Joseph and Robertson, James. 2000. *Creating New Money. A Monetary Reform of the Information Age*. London: New Economics Foundation.
- Jordan, Bill, James, Simon, Kay, Helen and Redley, Marcus. 1992. *Trapped in Poverty? Labour-Market Decisions in Low-Income Households*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kooistra, Pieter. 1994. *Het ideale eigenbelang*. Kampen: Kok Agora.
- Krause-Junk, Gerold. 1996. "Probleme einer Integration von Einkommensbesteuerung und steuerfinanzierten Sozialleistungen. Anmerkungen zum Gutachten der Experten-Kommission," *Wirtschaftsdienst* 7, 345–349.
- Krebs, Angelika, ed. 2000. *Basic Income? A Symposium on Van Parijs*, special issue of *Analyse und Kritik* (Berlin) 22 (2).
- Lahtinen, Ilpo. 1992. *Perustulo, kansalaisen palkka (Basic Income, the Citizen's Wage)*. Helsinki: Hanki ja Jaae.
- Leleux, Claudine. 1998. *Travail ou revenu? Pour un revenu inconditionnel*. Paris: Cerf.
- Lerner, Sally, Clark, Charles M.A. and Needham, W. Robert. 1999. *Basic Income: Economic Security for all Canadians*. Toronto: Between the Lines Press, 112 p.
- Matisonn, Heidi and Seekings, Jeremy. 2002. "Welfare in Wonderland? The politics of the basic income grant in South Africa," paper presented at the IXth Congress of the Basic Income European Network. Geneva, ILO, September (available on <http://www.basicincome.org>).
- Meade, James E. 1989. *Agathotopia: The Economics of Partnership*. Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.
- 1993. *Liberty, Equality and Efficiency*. London: Macmillan.
- 1994. *Full Employment Without Inflation*. London: The Employment Policy Institute.
- 1995. *Full Employment Regained? An Agathotopian Dream*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Miller, Anne. 1983. *In praise of social dividends*. Edinburgh: Heriot-Watt University, Department of Economics, Working Paper 1, December.
- Mirabile, Maria Luisa, ed. 1991. *Il reddito minimo garantito. Il welfare tra nuovi e vecchi diritti*. Roma: Ediesse.
- Mitschke, Joachim. 1985. *Steuer- und Transferordnung aus einem Guß*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- 1995. "Jenseits der Armenfürsorge," *Die Zeit* 50, 8 December, 30–31.
- Moynihan, Daniel Patrick. 1973. *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income. The*

- Nixon Administration and the Family Assistance Plan*. New York: Random House.
- Mückenberger, Ulrich, Offe, Claus and Ostner, Ilona. 1989. "Das staatlich garantierte Grundeinkommen – ein politisches Gebot der Stunde," in *Wege ins Reich der Freiheit. André Gorz zum 65. Geburtstag* (Hans Leo Krämer and Claus Leggewie, eds). Berlin: Rotbuch.
- Murray, Michael L. 1997. ... *And Economic Justice for All: Welfare Reform for the 21st Century*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe Publisher.
- O'Brien, Patrick and Olson, Dennis O. 1990. "The Alaska permanent fund and dividend distribution program," *Public Finance Quarterly* 18(2), April, 139–156.
- Opielka, Michael and Vobruba, Georg, eds. 1986. *Das garantierte Grundeinkommen: Entwicklung und Perspektiven einer Forderung*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag.
- Paine, Thomas. 1796. "Agrarian justice," in *The Life and Major Writings of Thomas Paine* (P.F. Foner, ed.). Secaucus (New Jersey): Citadel Press, 1974, pp. 605–623.
- Palmer, Jim, ed. 1997. *Alaska's Permanent Fund. Remarkable Success at Age 20 ... but what now?*, special issue of *The Juneau Report*, Summer 1997.
- Parker, Hermione. 1991. *Basic Income and the Labour Market*. London: Basic Income Research Group.
- Pelzer, Helmut, ed. 1998. *Bürgergeld nach dem Ulmer Modell*. Ulm: RV-Verlag microedition, Reihe Wissenschaft, August 1998, 62p.
- Pelzer, Helmut. 1999. *Finanzierung eines allgemeinen Basiseinkommens. Ansätze zu einer kombinierten Sozial- und Steuerreform*. Aachen: Shaker Verlag.
- Piketty, Thomas. 1997. "La redistribution fiscale face au chômage," *Revue française d'économie* 12 (1), 157–201.
- 2001. "L'impôt négatif est né," *Libération* 29 January, 8.
- Raventos, Daniel. 1999. *El derecho a la existencia*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Raventos, Daniel, ed. 2001. *La renta básica*. Barcelona: Ariel.
- Reeve, Andrew and Williams, Andrew, eds. 2003. *Real Libertarianism Assessed. Political Theory after Van Parijs*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Robertson, James. 1999. *The New Economics of Sustainable Development. A Briefing for Policy Makers*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities and London: Kogan.
- Roebroek, Joop and Hogenboom, Erik. 1990. *Basisinkomen: Alternatieve uitkering of nieuw paradigma?*, The Hague: Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (VUGA Uitgeverij), Report no. 24, May.
- Salverda, Wim. 1984. "Basisinkomen en inkomensverdeling. De financiële uitvoerbaarheid van het basisinkomen," *Tijdschrift voor Politieke Economie* 8, 9–41.

- Scharpf, Fritz W. 1994. "Negative Einkommensteuer – ein Programm gegen Ausgrenzung," *Die Mitbestimmung* 40 (3), 27–32.
- 2000. "Basic Income and Social Europe", in *Basic Income on the Agenda. Policies and Politics* (Loek Groot and Robert J. van der Veen, eds). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, forthcoming.
- Schmid, Thomas ed. 1984. *Befreiung von falscher Arbeit: Thesen zum garantierten Mindesteinkommen*. Berlin: Wagenbachs Taschenbücherei.
- Soete, Luc and Kamp, Karin. 1996. "The Bit Tax: Agenda for Further Research," Maastricht: MERIT, August.
- Sposati, Aldaiza, ed. 1997. *Renda Mínima e Crise Mundial. Saída ou agravamento?*. São Paulo: Cortez editora.
- Standing, Guy. 1999. *Global Labour Flexibility: Seeking Distributive Justice*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Suplicy, Eduardo ed. 1992. *Programa de garantia de renda mínima*. Brasília: Senado Federal.
- Suplicy, Eduardo M. and Buarque, Christovam. 1996. "A Guaranteed Minimum Income to eradicate poverty and help poor children go to school instead of being forced to work. The Brazilian debate and experience," paper presented at BIEN's 6th Congress, Vienna, 12–14 September.
- Suplicy, Eduardo. 2002. *Renda de Cidadania: A saída é pela porta*. São Paulo: Cortez Editora.
- Tobin, James. 1965. "On the Economic Status of the Negro," *Daedalus* 94 (4), Fall, 878–98.
- 1966. "The Case for an Income Guarantee," *The Public Interest* 4, 31–41.
- 1967. "It Can Be Done," *The New Republic* 3 June, 14–18.
- Tobin, James, Pechman, Joseph A. and Mieszkowski, Peter M. 1967. "Is a Negative Income Tax Practical?," *Yale Law Journal* 77 (1), 1–27.
- Tobin, James. 1968. "Raising the Incomes of the Poor," in *Agenda for the Nation* (Kermit Gordon, ed.), Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 77–116.
- Vanderborght, Yannick. 2001. "La France sur la voie d'un 'revenu minimum inconditionnel'?", *Mouvements* (Paris) 15–16, 157–165.
- Vanderborght, Yannick and Van Parijs, Philippe. 2001. "Assurance participation et revenu de participation. Deux manières d'élargir l'Etat social actif," *Reflets et perspectives de la vie économique* 40 (1–2), 183–96.
- Vanderborght, Yannick. 2002. "Basic income in Belgium and the Netherlands. Implementation through the back door?," paper presented at the IXth Congress of the Basic Income European Network, Geneva: ILO, September (available on <http://www.basicincome.org>).
- Vanderborght, Yannick and Van Parijs, Philippe. 2005. *L'Allocation universelle*. Paris: La Découverte.

- van der Veen, Robert J. and Van Parijs, Philippe et al. 1986. *A Symposium on "A Capitalist Road to Communism,"* special issue of *Theory and Society* 15 (5). (Spanish translation as a special issue of *Zona Abierta*, (Madrid) 46–47, January–June 1988.)
- van der Veen, Robert J. and Pels, Dick, eds. 1995. *Het basisinkomen. Sluitstuk van de verzorgingstaat?* Amsterdam: Van Gennep.
- Van Parijs, Philippe ed. 1992. *Arguing for Basic Income: Ethical Foundations for a Radical Reform.* London: Verso.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 1995. *Real Freedom for All. What (if Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?* Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Spanish translation: *Libertad real para todos.* Barcelona: Paidós, 1996.)
- Van Parijs, Philippe, Jacquet, Laurence and Salinas, Claudio. 2000. "Basic Income and its Cognates," in *Basic Income on the Agenda. Policies and Politics* (Loek Gröot and Robert J. van der Veen, eds). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 53–84.
- Van Parijs, Philippe et al. 2001. *What's Wrong with a Free Lunch?* Boston: Beacon Press.
- Van Parijs, Philippe and Vanderborght, Yannick. 2001. "From Euro-stipendium to Euro-dividend. A Comment on Schmitter and Bauer," *Journal of European Social Policy* 11, 342–46.
- Van Parijs, Philippe. 2002. "Does Basic Income Make Sense as a Worldwide Project?," paper presented at the IXth Congress of the Basic Income European Network, Geneva, ILO, September (available on <http://www.basicincome.org>).
- Van Trier, Walter. 1995. *Everyone a King. An Investigation into the Meaning and Significance of the Debate on Basic Incomes with Special Reference to Three Episodes from the British Inter-War Experience.* Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: Fakulteit politieke en sociale wetenschappen, PhD thesis.
- Vives, Juan Luis. 1526. *De Subventione Pauperum.* French translation: *De l'Assistance aux pauvres*, Brussels: Valero & fils, 1943. English translation: *On the Assistance to the Poor.* Toronto and London: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid (WRR). 1985. *Waarborgen voor Zekerheid. Een nieuw stelsel van sociale zekerheid in hoofdlijnen.* Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij, Rapport 26. (English summary: WRR. 1985. *Safeguarding Social Security.* The Hague: Netherlands Scientific Council for Government Policy.)
- Walter, Tony. 1989. *Basic Income. Freedom from Poverty, Freedom to Work.* London and New York: Marion Boyars.
- Wohlgenannt, Lieselotte and Büchele, Herwig. 1990. *Den öko-sozialen Umbau beginnen: Grundeinkommen.* Vienna and Zürich: Europaverlag.

---



---

## Why Stakeholding?

Bruce Ackerman and Anne Alstott

---



---

It is easy to view "liberty" and "equality" as if they were inexorably at war with one another. Easy, but a mistake. The great project of liberal political philosophy, over the last generation, has been to reject the false dichotomy between "leveling" equality and "free" markets that has had such a baleful influence over the modern mind.

The challenge has been to reconstruct the tradition of the liberal Enlightenment to achieve a deep reconciliation of these superficially competing ideals.<sup>1</sup> Modern liberalism is grounded in two affirmations. On the one hand, it affirms equality by insisting that each citizen has a fundamental right to a fair share of resources as he sets out in life. On the other hand, it affirms freedom by recognizing that different people will use their initial resources differently. The liberal state expects these differences to arise and refuses to suppress them. To the contrary, it systematically respects and facilitates individual choices – so long as they proceed from a background of fair initial entitlements.

The distribution of material resources crucially shapes this background. If citizens are to begin adult life under fair conditions, it is wrong to deprive them of their just share of the wealth created by prior generations. In a liberal society, this commitment should be cashed out in terms of private property – since property provides an essential tool for effective self-definition.

It follows that a grant of private property should be recognized as the birthright of every liberal citizen – not a scarce commodity to be doled out by the community as a reward for proper behavior.

Stakeholding and basic income both express this commitment – albeit in different ways. These differences are significant, but they should not conceal a common ambition. Both initiatives seek to use