

Minimum Wages or Basic Incomes - or Both?

Most people - except the rich! - agree that our system of wage differentials is unfair.

The Left has traditionally demanded a system of Minimum Wages. The weakness of this idea is that it:

- a) can simply push up other wages to maintain differentials - and push up prices with them;
- b) can simply make some jobs "uneconomic" and so not on offer;
- c) does nothing to help the unemployed; and
- d) does nothing to strengthen the bargaining power of the workers.

In contrast, Basic Incomes, or Citizens' Incomes - "universal benefits" paid unconditionally to citizens of all ages, at a rate dependent only on age, and at a level sufficient adequately to *meet basic needs* of housing, food, clothing and heating - would:

- 1) remove the need for (nearly) all conditional welfare payments (which are often unclaimed despite need, because of ignorance, confusion, bureaucracy and/or the stigma involved);
- 2) benefit the unemployed, removing all the poverty traps and government harassment to find a non-existent "job";
- 3) by supplementing wages, allow the income gap between a mandatory "minimum wage" and unpaid "voluntary" work to be closed without loss of *income*;
- 4) in that way, make many more socially needed jobs "affordable" by society;
- 5) end wage slavery. People with independent incomes don't need to accept the unacceptable in pay, working conditions or type or purpose of the employment. The rich have never been expected to be wage-slaves! People will not need to prostitute themselves to the arms industry, advertising, or any of the con tricks now so prevalent in industry and commerce;
- 6) make the distinction between "full-time" and "part-time" meaningless - most "full-timers" would opt for shorter hours, and voluntary breaks in employment could become common for both sexes, for instance for child rearing;

and many more could choose not to work for an employer: co-operatives and self-employment would be much more likely to succeed;

7) give "wages for housework/childcare", and so economic independence for the "housewife" (male or female) from the "breadwinner";

8) allow the economy to shift from dependence on "growth" in the vain attempt to "maintain jobs" (in reality, to maintain profits for the rich controllers) to production-for-need, by removing the need to seek "full employment".

Other changes, too, would be needed to achieve this; but Basic Incomes are a necessary step; and this is an obvious reason for the Establishment to resist their introduction - but equally, for the rest of us to demand them!

We are often told that the country cannot afford Basic Incomes. *This is a blatant lie!* Machines have been replacing labour for the last 200 years, ever faster, and especially in the last 10 - 20 years of increasing automation. "Planned obsolescence" means that, to keep Capitalism going, we are producing more and more short-life, unrepairable junk as well as more and more expensive, deadly weaponry, to no-one's benefit except the profit mongers - laying waste our environment in the process, but justifying it all in the name of "jobs". *We do not need "jobs" to be "created" for us; we need freedom to choose our own way to fulfill our own needs.*

We cannot afford not to have Basic Incomes, as part of a package of reforms to save society, the economy *and* our environment.

Why not Minimum Wages and Basic Incomes?

- Points 3 and 4 answer this question, along with 5. If Minimum Wages are imposed, this interferes with the process of the re-negotiation of wage differentials that the end of wage-slavery would initiate, when Basic Incomes were introduced.

Still not convinced of the need for Basic Incomes? - Take the trend of automation to its ultimate extreme: all goods and services would be supplied entirely by machines. No wages or salaries would be distributed. Only shareholders and investors would have any income other than state benefits. *"The wages of the machine" would have to be distributed, for most people to be able to buy its products.* What better, more equitable way than through Basic Incomes?

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