

Citizen's Income: A solid foundation for tomorrow's society

A conference held at the British Library on Friday 6th June 2014

63 people attended the conference

Anne Miller, Chair of the trustees, welcomed everyone to the conference and offered a brief history of the recent Citizen's Income debate in the UK.

Jude England, Head of Research Engagement at the British Library, introduced the British Library and its many research and educational facilities.

Malcolm Torry, Director of the Citizen's Income Trust, explained a few terminological matters: that a Citizen's Income is an unconditional, nonwithdrawable income paid to every individual as a right of citizenship; that different rates can be paid for people of different ages; that a Basic Income is the same thing as a Citizen's Income (as is a Universal Benefit or a Social Dividend); and that in the UK the words 'minimum' and 'guarantee' are tainted by association with means-testing and so should be avoided. Child Benefit would be a Citizen's Income for children if it were paid at the same rate for every child.

Debate ensued on the definition of a Citizen's Income, and on the meaning of citizenship.

Main speakers (- introductions can be found at the end of the report)

Guy Standing (Professor of Development Studies, SOAS, University of London) spoke on 'Citizen's Income: an income floor for the Precariat, and the means of global development'.

We are in the midst of a painful transition. More flexible labour markets are leading to the breakdown of social insurance methods for sustaining income and to a resultant increase in means-testing, which in turn leads to categorising people as deserving and undeserving poor. Means-testing reduces incentives to seek employment so coercion, sanctions and 'workfare' are the result. The precarity trap (the fact that it is irrational to take short-term low-paid employment if that means frequent benefits applications) might now be as significant as the poverty trap.

The share of national income going to profits and rents (on residential and commercial property, intellectual property, etc.) is increasing, so the share going to earned income is declining. In this situation, if consumption is to be sustained then debt must rise. The combination of reduced incomes and more flexible labour markets has given birth to the Precariat: and here Guy referenced his previous book, *The Precariat*, and his new book, *The Precariat Charter*, which outlines the kinds of changes that we now need to make, and in particular 1. a Citizen's Income, and 2. 'voice'.

Guy offered four justifications for a Citizen's Income:

1. Justice: our wealth is due to the efforts of our forebears, so we all deserve a social dividend.
2. Rawlsian: a policy is only justifiable if it improves the position of the poorest member of society. A Citizen's Income can pass this test
3. A policy must pass the paternalism test: that is, no policy is just if it imposes tests on some groups that are not imposed on others. A Citizen's Income passes this test, too.
4. The 'rights not charity' principle. Due process was an important provision in the Magna Carta. Means-tested benefits allow discretion to State officials, thus bypassing due process.

How should we pay for a Citizen's Income? Guy would prefer to use dividends from sovereign wealth funds, as in Alaska and Norway. We are a rich country, and a Citizen's Income is affordable. An independent body should set the level of the Citizen's Income in order to insulate it from party politics.

Guy responded to arguments frequently advanced against a Citizen's Income. It need not be inflationary if it replaces existing provision. And it would not discourage people from working. The Indian pilot projects show that work effort increases when people have a Citizen's Income. Productivity rises, and effort shifts from labour to work, and often towards self-employment.

In the Indian pilot project villages, people pooled their Citizen's Incomes in order to buy individuals out of bonded labour. A Citizen's Income offers control and freedom; and because it is emancipatory it is transformative.

John McDonnell MP introduced Tony Benn's theory of political change: that new policies are thought 'bad' and then 'mad' before everyone claims to have thought of the idea. Thomas Kuhn's research on scientific change suggested that current theory becomes problematic, new possibilities emerge, and suddenly a paradigm shift occurs. Iain Duncan Smith's Universal Credit and other changes are revealing the problematic nature of the current benefits system, but there is a vacuum in terms of new ideas. A Citizen's Income brings together debates about citizenship and poverty, and provides the necessary new paradigm: but obtaining agreement on the implementation of a Citizen's Income won't be easy.

The economic crisis has revealed the economic system to be corrupt and inefficient, and the Government as incompetent in relation to the regulation of markets and financial institutions: but no revolution has occurred because in the midst of a crisis people expect the existing institutions to rescue society from its difficulties. Change will come as we climb out of the recession, because people will feel a bit more secure but will also know that they are not sharing in post-recession rewards. 90% of the benefits of coming out of recession are going to the 10% most wealthy.

Options are as follows:

- Remain as before (the coalition government and some in the Labour Party think this way)
- Despair and division (UKIP, which seeks scapegoats)
- A politics of hope and solidarity (emerging amongst some in the Labour Party, in the Green Party, amongst some Lib Dems, in social movements, and amongst elements of civil society)

We need to focus where solidarity and hope are emerging, and we need to build alliances.

When he was a member of the GLC it polled on a daily basis, not in order to learn what to think, but in order to test the ways in which it was saying what it thought. We should do the same. The 'theme' that we have to offer is a Citizen's Income. We now need to work on the 'scheme': that is, on how the theme is to be understood. By polling we should learn how to sell a CI to a coalition of parties and interests, and maybe to a new coalition government.

For the Labour Party: Ed Miliband will only move when it is safe to do so (as he has, for instance, over energy bills). When he does move he gathers support. We therefore need to make a Citizen's Income safe for politicians: we need to lead so that the leaders can follow. The Labour Party is bereft of policies designed to tackle poverty and precarity, so the Trust needs to work with think tanks to provide the required package.

The Lib Dems are facing a cataclysm, but some members want a new direction, and a Citizen's Income should be an attractive option.

If the next General Election was to result in a hung parliament then the Greens might be able to ensure that a Citizen's Income was on the agenda. A hung parliament would require post-election talks, and the Labour Party would be able to concede an inquiry into income maintenance.

The trades unions are supportive when they hear about a Citizen's Income. Unite is now recruiting community members, which could affect the union's position.

Social movements can have an affect (- for instance, the Disability Alliance and the disabled movement generally have campaigned against ATOS's involvement, and ATOS has now withdrawn from the work test contract for disablement benefits). The poverty lobby is still working hard, and the Jubilee Debt campaign brought religious and other organisations together. A similar coalition could spearhead a Citizen's Income campaign.

The situation demands of the Citizen's Income Trust:

- A seriousness of intent
- A professional approach
- Confidence
- Excitement and enthusiasm

We need a Citizen's Income because everything else has failed.

Natalie Bennett (Leader of the Green Party) suggested that the outcome of a successful campaign would be that she would be able to say 'Basic Income' on Newsnight and everybody would know what she meant. People do 'get it' when the idea is explained to them, because the welfare safety net has fallen apart and they want to be able to feed their children without going to food banks: so public education is essential. Basic Income represents a politics of hope to replace UKIP's politics of fear, and that ought to be attractive.

One problem that particularly threatens conventional economists is that it isn't easy to know how people would behave if they had a Citizen's Income. But we might find a lot more people doing things they want to do, whether it is running a community garden, writing poetry, or spending time with the grandkids. We are using the resources of three planets and we are going to have to take fewer resources out of the environment. A Citizen's Income would provide people with economic security so they would no longer need to amass property in order to feel secure. We need to give up stuff, and a Citizen's Income could help us to do that.

Differentials might change. We might pay sewer cleaners more than we pay bankers. Would people still work in call centres? Trades unions ought to be positively interested in the changes that a Citizen's Income would bring about.

A Citizen's Income is a human right (so refugees should receive it while their asylum claims are evaluated). At the moment an inadequate National Minimum Wage has to be topped up with Housing Benefit and Working Tax Credits. This is corporate welfare, because it's subsidising employers. A very low Citizen's Income might also be experienced as corporate welfare, so the amount of the Citizen's Income matters.

Biological evolution is punctuated evolution: that is, alternating periods of stability and change. A Citizen's Income constitutes the next major change because it would change

everything, and in particular would provide both economic security and ecological sustainability. The Trust's task is to educate people about a Citizen's Income and its effects.

Tony Fitzpatrick (Reader, University of Nottingham) titled his paper 'Schemes and Dreams'. The welfare state established after the Second World War was the closest that we've ever got to achieving both security and freedom. We must now ask how we should achieve that combination today.

We can study Citizen's Income in four moral contexts.

1. *Productivism*: Wage-earning employment was an emancipation from feudalism, and earning a wage is still experienced as having inherent dignity. The unconditionality of a Citizen's Income might appear inimical to productivism, but because a Citizen's Income, in the context of a National Minimum Wage, could make labour markets more efficient, and would also increase people's freedom by reducing their dependence on labour markets, its unconditionality might be a price worth paying. A Citizen's Income would also tackle productivism's disadvantages, such as the way that it squeezes the time of the least advantaged, and encourages unsustainable growth at the expense of distribution.
2. *Distributivism*: There are two versions: a) Consequentialist distributivism recommends redistributing resources until equality's advantages outweigh its disadvantages. People might live with unconditionality if it results in a better society. b) Kantianism grants to persons intrinsic value. Whilst a Citizen's Income might appear to compromise the individual's autonomy, it would also offer freedom from compulsion and so would result in work contracts being negotiated by free people.
3. *The deliberative*: Aristotle sought virtue, excellence of character, and participation in society, and thus created a relationship between being and doing. Good individual characters contribute to a good city, and vice versa. Whilst a Citizen's Income might grant to individuals the possibility of freedom from responsibility in society, it would also encourage diverse contributions to society.
4. *The regenerative*: Epicureans emphasised individual choice and action and therefore posed a challenge to Aristotelian ethics. Individual projects can have their own value, and, given the limited amount of time available to each of us before we die, we need to pursue our own projects and each of us needs discretionary time in order to do that. A Citizen's Income could provide us with more of that.

Neoliberals believe that inequality is a price worth paying for production. A post-productivist settlement is needed if we are to conserve the world's resources. A Citizen's Income could contribute to that happening, and, as we have seen, a Citizen's Income could conform to all four moral contexts.

During discussion the following questions were asked and responses offered:

Most families are two-worker or no-worker because benefits are withdrawn as earnings rise:

(Natalie) People keep working because we have no economic security. A Citizen's Income would mean that we could behave differently. The need to acquire would decline.

A Citizen's Income would be attractive to the CBI as well as to the trades unions:

(Tony) A Citizen's Income would offer both flexibility and efficiency, and because the forms of demand might change, forms of supply might change as well.

The Labour Party is clinging to a neoliberal model:

(John) It isn't working because most people are not sharing the benefits of coming out of recession. Existence is brutal for many families. Because politics is now all within the neoliberal framework, people have a problem with politicians.

(Guy) To replace the paradigm we need to have an alternative to offer. Milton Friedman said that people need security in order to be rational workers and consumers. There is a new global labour market and there are more singletons, and more people are suffering from precarity traps. A new paradigm is needed.

Charles Murray would like to pay a Citizen's Income and scrap other publicly funded services:

(Natalie) Citizen's Income belongs within a package of publicly funded provision, and the package needs to be designed for sustainability.

(Guy) If Citizen's Income isn't part of an overall strategy then it could be abused. It must be emancipatory and distributive. It would be a useful automatic stabiliser for the economy.

(John) Conservatism scapegoats welfare recipients, and UKIP scapegoats migrants. This is effective politics. We need to provide an alternative politics of hope. We need a rational debate about the kind of society we want and the way to support people within it.

(Anne) Scotland's current politics shows that if people have a chance to make a difference then they will respond.

The plenary session: brief reports from the working groups

1. *Funding options:* If the level of the Citizen's Income is too low then it might not be politically inspiring. A variety of funding methods had been discussed: Land Value Tax, seigniorage (State money creation): however, because policymakers are cautious, in the short term it might be important to concentrate attention on the Citizen's Income itself rather than on possible funding mechanisms, so initially a Citizen's Income would need to be funded by reducing existing tax allowances and benefits, with other mechanisms being considered later.
2. *Political feasibility:* We need to avoid current vocabulary so that we avoid stale current debates; we need to offer a clear message of hope through visual representations; we need both a core message and variants to appeal to different audiences; we need a group of sponsors to raise the debate's profile; and we need to relate to MPs, MEPs, NGOs, and other groups, so that they can promote the idea. A Citizen's Income is the route to emancipation and freedom, and to the exercise of a variety of rights, and rights language could be useful. A Citizen's Income enables people to care for others, so care language could also be helpful. Pilot projects will be important; and we should identify the current system as the enemy.
3. *The research required:* A Sheffield pilot project for an opinion poll showed that 80% of respondents were in favour of a Citizen's Income (although there was some scepticism expressed as to how clearly the respondents had understood a Citizen's Income). Qualitative research is needed to test the acceptability of different ways of expressing a Citizen's Income. The level at which a Citizen's Income would be paid would also affect the idea's acceptability. We need to show that people would wish to work in order to demolish the myth that there would be numerous free-riders. We need to show that a Citizen's Income would act as an economic stabiliser in the context of a gap between wages and productivity; and we need to show how a Citizen's Income would impact on health and other outcomes.

The panel discussion:

Natalie Bennett: The Citizen's Income Trust is 1. a think tank, and 2. a campaign. As a think tank it needs to provide a wide variety of material in multiple media and formats. As a campaign it needs to provide individuals and groups with something clear to sign up to in order to build a giant coalition.

Kat Wall: The New Economics Foundation is writing a paper on social security. It will mention a Citizen's Income, but some NEF staff are sceptical. How can the Trust persuade the doubters? Not if the idea is presented as a silver bullet, which it isn't. For instance, it wouldn't solve the housing crisis; and it would need to be clear how work and social participation would be affected. The connections with other issues need to be well mapped, and the Trust ought to work with other organisations on systemic change.

Neal Lawson: If the time is right for a Citizen's Income then we need to grasp the opportunity. This is a networked world, and Citizen's Income speaks to that. We need to tell a story about the future and tell a story about where in the past the idea comes from. A *moral* argument is required, and not just the figures. We need the courage to be utopian. This is why devolution happened; but why didn't proportional representation happen as well? Whilst a Citizen's Income isn't about everything, it is about security. Such central connections need to be clearly represented in new ways.

Bert Schouwenburg: No trade union has a position on Citizen's Income, and that needs to change. Trades unions are wage brokers, and it needs to be made clear that a Citizen's Income would complement that activity. Mortgage payments are high, and might go higher, and there isn't enough employment available, so people are afraid to take industrial action in pursuit of better conditions. A Citizen's Income would give to workers the security to take that action. The Trust must get information out to the trades unions, and this must start with the branches. Resources need to be available to enable a Citizen's Income to be explained to the 7m trade union members.

Chris Goulden: Researchers are meant to be sceptical. A Citizen's Income is dignified and simple and it avoids stigma, but such questions as who gains and who loses are important. Do people at the lower end of the income range benefit? The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's work on minimum income standards shows that people on means-tested benefits are currently well below those standards. Housing, child care and disability costs are not problems solved by Citizen's Income. Currently economies of scale mean that two people living together receive less than twice the individual rate. This would change with a Citizen's Income, and if the scheme was revenue neutral then people living alone would be disadvantaged. 'Something for something' remains a significant public attitude, and lifecycle redistribution is acceptable, but not redistribution across income groups. A Citizen's Income campaign needs to take account of these attitudes. Would there still be personal allowances in the tax system?

A second round of comments then followed:

Natalie: Housing Benefit would still be needed. And if there is a London Living Wage, then why not a London Citizen's Income? As migrants would receive a Citizen's Income, we should argue for a European Citizen's Income.

Kat: A larger Citizen's Income would give to people a dignified life, and a small one would provide a safety net. We need to be clear what a Citizen's Income was trying to do and how it would fit in with other policies.

Neal: We need a 'with the times' campaign. There are times when the world changes, and now is such a time. A Citizen's Income is about the kind of world that we want. We could suggest introducing a Citizen's Income at a low level and then growing it. 90% of the work needs to be on the big picture, and 10% on the detail.

Bert: We need to seize the moment. The Government's first priority must be the wellbeing of people, and not business.

Chris: No party is putting forward a vision for a UK without poverty. There is no political direction.

Discussion followed: The following points were made:

There is lively debate about Citizen's Income in other countries, and we could get left behind.

It's the idea that matters. We must not get trapped in the mechanisms.

We need to aim to get rid of poverty. Is a Citizen's Income the right mechanism?

A Citizen's Income establishes a right to a livelihood. The levels matter, but the important thing is to offer hope for a better world.

A Citizen's Income would not solve all of the problems, but that's no reason for not having one.

Citizen's Income should be included in a list of desirable policies. The details do matter.

There is an economic imperative for a Citizen's Income as there is a deficiency of demand caused by a greater share of productivity going to capital than to labour and the gap being funded by consumer credit. Further automation will exacerbate this trend. We need a Citizen's Income to fill the gap. Output GDP will pay for it.

People don't identify their suffering with other people's suffering and therefore feel isolated. We need a grass roots movement.

Education is needed about what would become possible if there was a Citizen's Income.

Work should be because people want to do it, not because they have to.

We can't keep using resources at the rate that we are, so things will have to change.

Education needs to be for a fulfilling life, and not just for labour.

The National Union of Students needs to be involved.

A Citizen's Income would get rid of menial low paid jobs and increase the number of higher paid jobs.

A Citizen's Income needs both campaigning and research, and scepticism needs to be tackled. We need a theory of change.

We need a political force behind Citizen's Income. A Living Wage is happening because people are making it happen. We built the NHS, and when that happened they didn't worry about immigrants making use of it. The Right didn't tear apart their own arguments, and we mustn't either. They set the agenda, and we must do that too. We have a moral argument and we need to express it.

New Economics Foundation scepticism is changing. The 'Great Transition' is a NEF strategy. If governments were to create money then a Citizen's Income would be more practical. Citizen's Income and monetary reform need to be integrated, and bad things, such as carbon use, need to be taxed, and not good things, such as work. A package is needed.

We should be sceptical of economists. The Right didn't do the detail. Citizen's Income is the right thing to do. The Trust needs to carry forward the idea.

The Occupy London economics working group studied Land Value Tax and Citizen's Income together.

We need to map the progressive movement. Who are our allies? What would work for them? The movement needs to include lots of groups' concerns, and we need to work together on a broad agenda. The Trust needs to discuss with others how the tasks should be allocated. The website needs to bring together work on Citizen's Income done by the New Economics Foundation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, etc. An open source blog might also be useful.

BIEN disseminates information to national networks in different countries, and there is a community of individuals and organisations involved. Both the Trust and BIEN are stores of information. We need coalitions.

Twitter and other media are where campaigns now happen.

Human rights language is relevant in the UK as well as elsewhere. Rights are abused here.

In 1947 39 people met to plan neoliberalism. We should plan a new paradigm. Twitter and research will be both be needed.

Hartley Dean's closing address:

Citizen's Income is a technology, or policy mechanism, which can serve a variety of ends. We must ensure that it serves social justice. We need to say how it would work, and the detail matters. Such issues as housing and wage levels are brought into new focus by Citizen's Income. What difference would a Citizen's Income make to them?

Citizen's Income is also a philosophical proposition. It is elegant, and it challenges prevailing understandings, for instance, of work, of human livelihood, of relationships of care, and of rights.

'Unconditional' is a stumbling block when applied to people of working age: but 'working age' is socially constructed. Work is diverse, and not just what happens within a wage relationship. A Citizen's Income would support a variety of forms of work.

Social insurance is risk-sharing, and a Citizen's Income would also constitute risk-sharing. It deals with risk now in ways that social insurance did then.

A global Citizen's Income is a distant prospect, but borders are breaking down and citizenship is changing. We need to keep alive a big vision for a global Citizen's Income.

We need to keep debate alive. It is possible that culture will shift in such a way as to make a Citizen's Income meaningful.

Anne Miller thanked the day's speakers and all of the participants.

Introductions to speakers:

Jude England is Head of Research Engagement at the British Library.

Guy Standing is a Professor at SOAS in the University of London, a trustee of the Citizen's Income Trust, and a co-Chair of BIEN, the Basic Income Earth Network. Since his time at the International Labour Organization, Guy has been closely involved with research and debate on Citizen's Income. More recently he has been the driving force behind some highly

significant Citizen's Income pilot projects in Namibia and India; and he has written both *The Precariat* and *The Precariat Charter*

John McDonnell: Since 1997 John has been Member of Parliament for Hayes and Harlington in West London. Before that he was a member of the Greater London Council, Head of the Policy Unit at Camden Borough Council, Chief Executive of the Association of London Authorities, and Chief Executive of the Association of London Government. Throughout his working life he has been a committed trade unionist. A significant recent initiative has been the People's Parliament, through which John has invited the general public and a wide range of speakers to the House of Commons to debate the kinds of policy that we're going to need in the future. In March, the Citizen's Income Trust was pleased to be able to participate in a People's Parliament event on Citizen's Income.

Natalie Bennett was a journalist in Australia before coming to the UK in 1999 to work at a variety of British newspapers, and from 2007 to 2012 she was Editor of the Guardian Weekly. In 2006 she joined the Green Party, and in 2012 she was elected its leader. Natalie founded the Green Party Women's Group and is a trustee of the Fawcett Society. In March of this year the Green Party's Spring conference reaffirmed the party's commitment to a Citizen's Income.

Tony Fitzpatrick is Reader in the Social Policy Department at the University of Nottingham. His doctoral thesis on Citizen's Income was published as *Freedom and Security* in 1999, and since then he has written numerous books and articles in the fields of social policy and political economy, and particularly on Citizen's Income and on the environment as a policy issue. He has been principal editor of the International Encyclopaedia of Social Policy. Later this month Edward Elgar will publish his *International Handbook on Social Policy & the Environment*, and in September the Policy Press will publish his *Climate Change & Poverty*.

Introductions to panel members

Natalie Bennett (introduction above)

Kat Wall, from the New Economics Foundation: The New Economics Foundation is a think tank that promotes social, economic and environmental justice. Its purpose is to bring about a 'Great Transition' – a transformation of the economy so that it works for people and the planet. Kat Wall works on social policy research for the Foundation.

Neal Lawson is Chair of Compass: Compass describes itself as a home for those who want to build and be a part of a Good Society: one where equality, sustainability and democracy are not mere aspirations, but a living reality. Compass is founded on the belief that no single issue, organisation or political party can make a Good Society a reality by themselves so we have to work together to make it happen. Compass is a place where people come together to create the visions, alliances and actions to be the change we wish to see in the world.

Bert Schouwenburg is the International Officer of GMB, which some of us of a certain age still remember as the General, Municipal and Boilermakers' Union. The GMB has no stated position on Citizen's Income, so Bert was speaking in a personal capacity.

Chris Goulden is head of the poverty team in the research department at the Joseph Rowntree Foundation: The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an endowed foundation funding a UK-wide research and development programme, and its current priority is to provide evidence, ideas and solutions which show how as a society we can combat inequality and promote the common good.

Report of working group on CI funding options

The session was a little less well attended than others, but engendered a broad and technical discussion.

1. Reallocation of existing revenues and spending

The core options discussed related to the existing CIT model approaches: namely, the reallocation of existing benefits and tax reliefs and allowances (CIT's 'entry-level' illustrative scheme); and funding from restructured income taxation (e.g. Anne Miller's 'rule of thumb' CI). There was little resistance to these as a base for CI, but attention focused on the potential for additional revenue.

2. Additional and innovative revenue sources

The discussion was especially energised around a number of innovative options:

- shutting down tax loopholes;
- land value taxation;
- seigniorage; and
- financial transactions tax

There was particular support for land value taxation on the grounds of political consistency as much as financial potential. In particular, LVT is based on the view that rises in land value stem from such a wide range of reasons that the value can't be allocated and should therefore be used (at least in part) for universal benefit. There is some growth in interest in seigniorage revenues, without mainstream political support yet, so there may be potential here. FTTs are seen as problematic to the extent that international coordination may be needed and unlikely (although UK stamp duty provides a counter-example). Estimates vary of the revenues available from limiting profit-shifting of transnational corporations, or by requiring greater transparency from 'tax havens' (secrecy jurisdictions).

In addition, options were discussed relating to the building of sovereign wealth funds from natural resource wealth (a long-term funding option only); and the potential of sin taxes (although concerns were raised about fixing a CI to a tax designed to shrink its own base). General concerns were expressed about the danger of regressive revenue-raising from consumption taxes including VAT.

One overarching concern applicable to all the innovative revenue sources is that any campaign for CI – itself still seen as innovative, even radical – could become enmeshed with a further innovative or radical idea, reducing rather than enhancing the prospects of broad political acceptability.

3. Appropriate level of CI

The major, remaining aspect of the discussion related to the appropriate level of CI – and the resulting implications for the type of funding required. There was a broad sense among discussants that the pragmatic approach of CIT in setting out options roughly equivalent to the status quo might be a mistake; and that only a substantially more ambitious level of CI would be politically motivating in the necessary way. This may point towards the value of developing options along the lines of 'base funding plus innovation' (e.g. the entry-level scheme bolstered by the proceeds of some feasible level of Land Value Tax, to propose a higher level of CI. Such a funding combination would perhaps also mitigate the risk of enmeshing CI with a single innovative source.

Alex Cobham

Report of working group on political feasibility

The session was well attended with about 25 people in total.

1. The discussion focused on the need to have a clear set of messages and the need to pre-empt the standard reactions, as in TV interviews where interviewers resort to sarcasm about ‘giving people money’.

Delegates called for clarity in the message being delivered but diversity in the means of delivery and to the audiences being targeted. Mixed messages should be avoided and a vocabulary of rights, freedom, security and social assets should be employed.

The message should be straightforward and unambiguous in terms of terminology and rationale. This meant language which maximized impact, including visual representations. There was a feeling that the sums should be worked out, i.e. economic costings, but that the principle of Basic Income was also essential and not necessarily locked into any one scheme or proposal.

The means of delivery involved the usual appeal to blogs, tweets and all forms of online, social media. This means distilling the message into Soundbites (or the equivalent of) without dumbing down.

The diverse audiences and constituencies invoked included political parties, NGOs, the mainstream media, advocacy and lobbying groups.

2. The greatest blockage on progress was identified as the current domination of political and policy discourse by a neoliberal discourse of scapegoating, division, inequality and othering. The need to reframe debate was recognised, along with recognition of the difficulty of doing so except in coalition with others. In short, the policy context needs addressing and so the potential relationship of Basic Income reform to other key policy domains, particularly (but not restricted to) the following: housing, disability, women and carers. More philosophically, a politics of hope was recommended.

It was appreciated that appealing to ‘policy friendly’ groups was tempting, e.g. those typically considered ‘deserving’, like older people and children; especially in ‘selling’ the notion of Basic Income and discussing how we could move from here to there. However, there is also a need not to indulge in the game of insider/outsider since this potentially buys into the neoliberal discourse mentioned above.

Having a ‘good enemy’ is essential and the current and expected future debacle surrounding Universal Credit may provide an opportunity. In short, given the failings of social insurance systems, means-tested benefits and tax credits, isn’t the time now right for a more comprehensive and secure approach?

There was therefore a general feeling that John McDonnell had been correct that morning: that radical and sustained change means ‘leading the leaders’ since there is a general timidity in parliamentary politics at present.

3. The most practical recommendation was designed to raise the profile of Basic Income ideas. This means finding sponsors who will (a) put their names to some kind of statement, and (b) agree to some kind of coordinated campaign. The sponsors forming this kind of coalition would include respected celebrities, MPs, MEPs, local councillors, journalists, academic and non-academic researchers and NGOs. The immediate aim should be to raise the profile of Basic Income, so that it achieves public recognition that it presently lacks, and to work towards some concrete

outcome, such as a UK pilot scheme. The role of the Citizen's Income Trust was seen as kick-starting and facilitating – but not necessarily leading – that coalition.

4. There was some discussion on the desirability of preparing for a campaign after the May 2015 General Election, particularly reaching out to minority parties to help refine their appeal in subsequent political campaigns.

Tony Fitzpatrick

Report of the working group on the research required

The research needed: Information lacking? How to fill the gaps? And how to disseminate research?

Interests of attendees

20 people attended (I have emails for them) and as they introduced themselves outlined their interest in CI.

Some were students or academics, with projects including: on public attitudes to CI, on psychological aspects of attitudes, on welfare generally, on monetary system/LETS/community currencies, on inequality, on health impact of CI (x2) on political theory/social movements and how to create solidarity. Others were interested in CI in relation to full reserve banking (Positive Money), in winners and losers under CI and in how CI could remedy the growing mismatch between wages and productivity.

Research ideas

These were categorised by Hartley Dean as

1. Evaluation through modelling CI's impact on household types, using different formulations in terms of amount, method of dealing with housing costs and wider policy context
2. Pilot studies through introducing CI in limited areas
3. Qualitative work exploring CI attitudes and knowledge among the public and experts/policymakers: in-depth interviews to understand people's thinking and 'moral repertoires'.

The results from 3 could inform the construction of questions in a module on CI in British Social Attitudes Survey (but expensive). Qualitative work could be done by interested PG students; pictorial or textual vignettes could be used to elicit reactions.

A small (N=45) pilot study through on-street interviews had been conducted in Sheffield (Jason Lemon). 80% approved of CI as briefly outlined on a single page, but when asked about unconditionality, 42% thought recipients would 'do nothing' [presumably meaning not seek employment JG]. Is it meaningful to ask about CI in principle, without the context of amount? It was argued that the amount should be varied to see the effect on responses.

We discussed how to deal with myths of free riders and scroungers. We should avoid using 'framing' and language of welfare dependency when refuting such myths and instead draw attention to rich parasites (tax avoidance etc and the fact that many/most rich people had not earned their money). Or it may be more effective to ignore the myths put forward and move on to stress the positives of CI. Hartley pointed to the evidence that most people want to work if there are jobs available; but it is hard to change mindsets and people draw on competing

conceptions and stories within an interview, so in disseminating information about CI, we have to find out how to make favourable ideas/stories dominant . CI can attract people from across the political spectrum [which should warn us that it can be manipulated in ways that would defeat our aim of promoting social justice JG].

J. Skinner (NEF) thought CI research should be embedded in a comprehensive research scheme that also took account of tax changes needed and measures to stabilise the economy. CI needs a supportive policy context to make sense; it cannot be isolated. But S. Jones thought CI (research formulation?) could be discrete, merely replacing existing benefits.

Proposals for research

C. Goulden (JRF) suggested research on attitudes and communication (market research)

G. Crocker said we should research the divergence between wages and productivity and how CI could remedy this – desk research on official data.

AN Other (M Chita?) suggested finding out what is needed to accompany CI to make it work

Jay Ginn

Anne Miller's opening address

Good morning, everyone. My name is Annie Miller, and I am Chair of The Citizen's Income Trust. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all here today to our first Citizen's Income Trust conference for some time.

As we all know, the UK Social Security system is complex, unwieldy, unjust, inefficient and does not meet the present day needs of our society. It is a Gordian Knot, that cannot be unravelled or reformed. It needs to be cut through and replaced by a radical alternative, designed for the 21st century, and flexible enough to meet future needs. A CI scheme is just such an alternative. It implies a different approach to social security, and also a different relationship between society and its citizens.

By any measure, The Citizen's Income Trust is a small charity. We survive on a shoe-string budget of approximately £3,000 per year. We have no paid employees, no premises - and no debt. We have a dozen committed trustees, and a very efficient part-time Director. It has been said in the past, that governments are more concerned by the influence of small organisations with a few dedicated members, than that of larger more diffuse ones. In that case, they should be apprehensive of the influence of CIT.

In the last decade or so, we have been laying the groundwork for the reform that we think could transform our society for the better. Not only do we produce three copies of the *CI Newsletter* each year, but we maintain our website, which contains our archive of excellent articles and book reviews, contributed by a host of people. We are aware that the website receives about 300 hits per day on average, from a variety of interested followers. We also respond to queries from academics, civil servants, the media and the general public. We submit evidence to government consultations. Our trustees give talks to groups around this country, and give presentations at conferences both here in the UK and abroad. We have organised Questionnaire Projects in both the House of Commons, and the House of Lords, with encouraging results. We held an essay competition. In just this last year, CIT updated its introductory yellow booklet, *Citizen's Income: A Brief Introduction*, updated its A3 two-sided, yellow, poster-style leaflet with 'Landmarks in Social Welfare since 1900' on one-side

and ‘An Introduction to a CI scheme’ on the other. In addition, our Director, Malcolm Torry, published his excellent book, *Money for Everyone*. We have laid the foundations for this reform. We have devised illustrative schemes, and we have demonstrated that even reasonably generous Citizen’s Income schemes are economically feasible.

Now we are entering a new era. Its time is now drawing near for this idea, about which it has always been claimed, that it has been *before* its time. The parlous state of the UK social security system means that the need for reform is now urgent, which, coupled with wide-spread interest as a result of the European Citizen’s Initiative on Unconditional Basic Income, (which did not reach its target of a million signatures across the 27 countries of the EU, but nevertheless obtained nearly 300,000), has led to more awareness of what is possible. Already this year, CIT has organised seminars and round-table discussions in both the Scottish Parliament in January, and in the House of Commons in March, the latter event hosted by John McDonnell, MP, for which we are most grateful. These have helped to raise the profile of a CI.

Economic conditions are changing fast. The light touch regulation of financial institutions led to the Credit Crunch of 2008, provoking the response of austerity. Poverty in our wealthy country is now widespread and food banks are becoming a familiar feature of our cities. The UK government and the media delight in dividing society into stigmatised benefit-recipients and resentful tax-payers. Inequalities of both income and wealth are reaching levels last experienced in the nineteenth century. Society has become debt-ridden, in the banking, personal and public sectors. Automation is replacing many jobs, both skilled and unskilled, and the unskilled worker, in particular, is finding herself squeezed out of the workplace.

Things could be so much better. A Citizen’s Income is desirable and feasible, but it is not a panacea for all ills. It is, however, a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for a better society, and it could provide a circular flow of income that could revolutionise our world.

One of the purposes of this conference is to involve you in helping to point us in the right direction for this next phase – to get some feedback, and ideas about where next to direct our limited resources, with whom should we work most co-operatively, for what should we aim to achieve, how should we progress in this next stage? We have arranged what I think is an interesting program of talks and discussions throughout the day, giving information and background material, and enabling responses to come from you, the participants. We finish with a specific aim: to establish a strategy for The Citizen’s Income Trust and those organisations and individuals with whom it might work during the next five years.

We are most grateful to the British Library for inviting The Citizen’s Income Trust to hold this conference in their wonderful conference centre. I would now like to welcome Jude England, who is Head of Research Engagement at the British Library, to speak to us about the British Library’s social sciences programme. ...