

# There Has to be a Better Way than This?

A paper describing the problems of the current social security system, the limited solutions offered thus far, and the better way of the universal basic income.

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	Contents	Page
1	Front Page	1
2	Contents	2
3	Abstract	3
4	About the Author	4
5	Introduction	7
6	Narratives on the Issue of Sanctions	10
7	Narratives on the Issue of Work Capability Assessments	17
8	Available Quantitative Data on Sanctions	35
9	Available Quantitative Data on the Work Capability Assessments	41
10	Basic Income	52
11	Conclusion	70
12	References	72

### 3, Abstract

The current social security system is aimed at punishing the very poorest for something beyond their control.

Britain is also currently suffering a hidden disaster. On the last available figures 221 people were dying every week within six weeks of having their Employment and Support Allowance stopped

With very little loss to the richest citizens, who most certainly will not feel the loss, we can revitalise our economy, emancipate our workforce, encourage small and medium businesses, and most importantly end the stigma and suffering of those who for whatever reason are not in work.

The universal Basic Income can do all this, and in replacing the heavily bureaucratic system currently in place, will not cost the nation more; it is easily affordable. It is also the only sensible economic model for a future where technology is increasingly reducing the workforce.

It may even assist with the problem with overpopulation.

#### 4, About the author

It is generally appropriate when compiling or conducting any form of qualitative research to identify your own prejudices and position beforehand <sup>[1]</sup>. In doing so you may at least allow others to understand the position you may be taking, and in doing so they may have less room to criticise you for that stance and more ability to recognise why you have taken it; even if their backgrounds are very different and hence their appreciation of the evidence you have forwarded somewhat different.

I am a 44 year old man, who has been disabled since breaking his neck and back with the British Army in 1992. I have in that period had varying levels of disability, though as I write this I am not in good health. I grew up in a deprived area, in which I still live. My elder sister is learning disabled and I also grew up with a lot of contact with learning disabled people.

In the second half of my life, having been injured at age 22, I have done all I can to assist people in any way I am able. Partly because being disabled has given me a fuller appreciation of other's difficulties than I had as a child or a teenager, but also admittedly because I have sought purpose for my continued existence.

I have previously worked with the British Red Cross, the local hospice, and various charities in my area in both what are considered the lowest of positions as a dishwasher for an old folks home to those in a managerial role as Centre Organiser, Group Leader, and member of the Regional Council for the Red Cross. All of these tasks are to my mind important.

I managed to gain a Diploma in Nursing between 1997 and 2000, a Degree in Law

between 2000 and 2003, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Forensics between 2003 and 2004. Since 2003 I have worked to represent and assist people with their legal problems having had about a thousand clients; all of who could not get representation elsewhere, all of whom were in the right, and all of whom I assisted for free at my own expense.

Politically I was a member of the Labour party for a decade up until 2002, and the Liberal Democrats between 2007 and 2011. Leaving both because in government they had shown callous disregard for the needy,

I've seen the change in attitude towards society's disempowered in the last 30 years. The media attacks upon the poor whilst the rich grow richer, and the reduction in freedom and dignity among the disabled; especially among the learning disabled who are in no position to be able to understand the gradual yet escalating reductions in their standard of living. Let's face it, those who study the issue will never understand a society which has chosen to treat people in such an abhorrent manner.

It is perhaps the time I've spent assisting people with legal problems which has been the greatest influence on my opinions. I have, due to difficulties in legalities and ethics, chosen not to relate stories known privately by me in this paper. I do believe the stories I have related from newspapers and other published sources are both demonstrative of the current situation, and are merely to use a colloquialism, "The tip of the iceberg." In declaring my position I should normally set it aside in my analysis; that is unlikely to happen. I freely admit, this paper will argue for a solution I believe will end what I see as a series of tragedies.

It might be difficult to read through these stories, but it should be remembered that each one is a person in a vulnerable position needing the assistance of the country, who was let down. Each one is a human being with people who love them who are also affected by their mistreatment. Each one represents a huge number of untold stories of people suffering in a similar way. Each and every one of these stories, and the stories untold, matters.

## 5, Introduction

According to the Social Security Advisory Committee <sup>[2]</sup>, sanctions of some sort were exercisable as far back as 1911. However, post war the practice virtually disappeared.

Prior to 1986, monetary support for those who were unemployed, as contributed either by them when they had been working, or by others who were fortunate enough to have jobs, was very rarely withheld. It might be withheld for up to six weeks if somebody chose to leave employment voluntarily or were almost deliberately responsible for losing their job.

Since 1986 <sup>[3]</sup>, introduced by the then Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher and with Michael Portillo as a main driving force, the relevant government department ensuring the payment of social security for the unemployed (currently the Department of Work and Pensions) have been able to employ sanctions against the unemployed; reductions or removal of social security payments in order to encourage certain behaviours in unemployed people which are supposedly tailored to increase the likelihood that those who are able return to full employment.

Prior to 1995, a person was unfit for work if their General Practitioner, or other such similarly qualified doctor with a knowledge of their current state of health & medical history, decided they were unfit. The Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Act 1994, which came into force in 1995, was introduced by the Conservative government under John Major; Invalidity Benefit was replaced with Incapacity Benefit, indicating that rather than invalids the government wanted to

view those who couldn't work as temporarily incapable and supposedly again, in need of some support if they wished to work. The then Department for Social Security (DSS) now Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) began Personal Capability Assessments (PCA) on claimants who's doctors had already assessed as incapable of work.

The Welfare Reform Act 2007, was brought in by the Labour Government under Tony Blair, and Incapacity Benefit began to be phased out in preference to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The PCA was replaced by the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and Atos, who had previously been a donor to the Labour Party, and had been in line to be the main beneficiary of the Identity Card contract in 2005<sup>[4]</sup> until the choice to have I.D. cards was rejected with cross party opposition to the idea, was granted the contract in 2008. They had some experience in providing assessments for Disability Living Allowance and Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, contracts both granted by the Blair government, though the primary business of the French company was in information technology. The assessments may be carried out by medically qualified nurses and doctors, but the final decision is made by medically unqualified low level member of staff from the DWP.

The number of persons receiving sanctions, and the harsh reductionist nature of the Work Capability Assessment which is conducted by Atos, have both increased in severity under the current Conservative/ Liberal Democrats coalition government, led by David Cameron and Nick Clegg.

Those who are put on the lower level of Employment and Support Allowance, though disabled, are deemed fit for work, and the sanctions system applies equally

to this group as they do able bodied people.

Figures alone have no real ability to touch on the humanity of those involved. This paper, which is part of a number of documents supporting the idea of the Universal Basic Income, relates some the narrative and statistical evidence of the increasingly harsh treatment of vulnerable people in this, the sixth wealthiest nation on earth under the stewardship of the DWP Minister Ian Duncan-Smith.

## 6, Narratives on the Issue of Sanctions

We begin with three cases from a list on the Stupid Sanctions Tumbler page <sup>[59]</sup> which have also been published in the press.

Stephen Taylor <sup>[5]</sup>

Stephen, a 60 year old army veteran, with 16 years service which included active service where he lost comrades, had applied for dozens of jobs, including applying for jobs at the supermarket where he then volunteered to sell poppies for the Royal British Legion. When asked by the staff at Bury Job centre he told them honestly that in terms of unpaid work he'd volunteered to sell poppies for a total of 24 hours over the previous two weeks. The DWP decided that, since the period he was volunteering was he not actively seeking employment, he should be sanctioned and lose all benefits for four weeks.

Ceri Padley <sup>[6]</sup>

Ceri, a qualified teacher had a second stage job interview with a school on 5 June 2013; it was on the same day at the same time she was meant to attend for her regular appointment at the Job centre. She contacted the Job centre and arranged to attend there the day after instead. She subsequently received a letter saying she was sanctioned and must do without her social security payments for a month, because her reason for missing her appointment at the Job centre, attending a job interview, was not a, "Sufficiently," good reason for rearranging the appointment.

Sean Halkyard <sup>[7]</sup>

Sean had a requirement that he apply for three jobs a week for his benefits; no more and no less. He applied for three jobs on a Sunday, and three jobs on the

Monday believing he has fulfilled the requirements to the letter. The Job centre, however, begins it's week for the purposes of calculating jobs applied for on a Tuesday. It therefore decided that Sean had applied for six jobs in one week, and none at all in the second week. He was then sanctioned for thirteen weeks and left without social security for that period of time. A spokesman for the DWP when asked about the case said, "It's only right that people should do everything they can to find work if they want to claim job seekers allowance."

Kerry Oldfield <sup>[8]</sup>

On 15 January 2014 Kerry's ESA payments stopped and she was left without support for months. Kerry is partially sighted, a modern day term, almost a euphemism, for someone who with her degenerative eye condition has little or no eyesight and is going blind. She didn't return a completed form she was required to return; she informed the DWP that she was unable to read it and needed it in a different format. Her local authority were electronically informed of her ESA being stopped, and the assistance they gave with her rent was also stopped meaning she went into rent arrears and her landlord began steps to have her evicted.

Robert Powell <sup>[9]</sup>

Rob Powell, a 46 year old gentleman, had been blind since infancy. Having worked since leaving school he was made redundant in September 2011. He explained to the DWP that he was completely blind, however, they decided to send him letters in standard format on repeated occasions, and each time they chose to stop his benefits for failing to reply. Rob said, "I received formal letters that said my benefits had been suspended because I hadn't supplied medical certificates or attended Atos appointments. If that isn't a sanction it certainly felt like one."

Michael Droushiotis <sup>[10]</sup>

Michael's brother was dyslexic and Michael offered to read out some contracts to him so that he knew what he was signing before he signed them. He mentioned this in an interview at his local Job Centre and they decided that, since his brother was not a registered charity, what Michael had done for him constituted work despite it being done without any thought of restitution. He was told that was fine at the Job centre, but two days later found out his benefits would be cut to £9 per week as he was sanctioned for working. The Mansfield and Ashfield Chad contacted the DWP, and after initially saying they could not discuss the case, they told the reporter that Michael's benefits would be restored in full.

Ridiculous and arbitrary, these decisions are so poor that you might assume them to be written for a situation comedy. Each and every one of them, however, involved a real person, and genuine hardship caused without any blame whatsoever on the part of the victim. Though it has to be said that the cases where some small blame may be attributed to the victim are no less unfair in the harsh punishment given to the vulnerable.

Katie Friend <sup>[11]</sup>

Katie, her husband Mal, and their infant Theo, were sanctioned in the run up to Christmas. Being a proud person she did all she could to keep up appearances but eventually other people realised she was having real difficulties and convinced her to attend a food bank. She managed by appeal to have her benefits reinstated after a Christmas period of the family being left without income. However, within a few months it was realised the calculations of her benefits had been incorrect, and just before Theo's second birthday her welfare was recalculated leaving her to rely

on the food bank again. Katie said, “I’m just a normal person and just one of many who got into this situation.”

Bonnie Bullen <sup>[12]</sup>

Bonnie who has three children to support was five minutes late for an appointment. She was sanctioned and her social security payments stopped for two months as punishment.

These cases caused suffering, but beyond that sanctions have led some to steal food. It should be remembered that not only are those driven to criminal behaviour the victims in this, but the shopkeepers who suffer losses from it also suffer the repercussions.

Lucy Hill <sup>[12]</sup>

The 35 year old mother of an 18 month old baby had her benefits stopped after missing an appointment at her local Job Centre. She was part of a group of ESA claimants; those who would previously have been on incapacity benefit before the recent changes. She was caught stealing food from her local Spar store to feed her family and now has a criminal record and a £200 fine.

Ian Mullholland <sup>[13]</sup>

Ian is a drug addict who’s rapidly deteriorating condition means he is likely soon to have a double amputation of his legs which are heavily ulcerated. He attempted to change his benefit status to reflect what he believed to be his new disabled status and had his benefits stopped for missing the appointment he was given to discuss his situation. He was on a methadone course, and found to be free of heroin. He stole to eat from his local Sainsbury’s and now faces 14 weeks in prison. Major

Colin Bradshaw of Darlington Salvation army said, “Sanctioning is not only forcing people into greater poverty, it is forcing people to take desperate action such as stealing food.”<sup>[13]</sup>

Beyond these case are stories of a truly tragic nature, where the victims of the current system are no longer able to explain the suffering caused.

David Clapson <sup>[14]</sup>

David had already served his country as a soldier. Many ex-soldiers find that the army asks them to retire well before the national retirement age, or makes them redundant due to cuts.

He missed an appointment in May. This left him without money for 18 days. His electricity meter had nothing on it, and he only had £3.44 in his bank account. The insulin he needed for his diabetes could not be kept in the chilled state necessary for it to be effective; his fridge wasn't working without electricity.

That was the situation when he was found dead in his flat on 20 July 2014; his stomach completely empty.

The DWP are quoted as saying in response to this tragedy involving someone who had given service to this nation and received contempt in response, “It's only right that people claiming benefits should do everything they can to find work if they are able.”

There is no evidence he was doing anything but that. His dead body was found surrounded by Curriculum Vitae and the letters he was writing for jobs.

Christelle Pardoe<sup>[15][16]</sup>

Christelle a 32 year old French lady, had a five month old son, Kayjah. She was a graduate of London Metropolitan University where she studied Philosophy. Foreign claimants need to provide a five year proof that they have either been in work or looking for work and Christelle had a period of around eight months in 2003 where she worked in a cafe but could trace no-one to provide the necessary evidence of this.

Her benefits were sanctioned and then stopped; then not being on benefits her child benefit was stopped. Then not being in receipt of anything, her housing benefit was stopped and the local authority demanded she repay £200 in overpaid benefits. Seeing no other way out, she leapt with her five month old son from a third floor balcony killing them both and her unborn child.

Kevin Bennett<sup>[15]</sup>

Kevin suffered from severe mental illness and schizophrenia. He was sanctioned and his Job Seekers Allowance was stopped. He became a recluse, and was found dead in his flat having starved aged 40.

Stuart Holley<sup>[15]</sup>

Aged just 23 Stuart was hounded and suffered repeated sanctions until he took his own life.

Carl Joseph Foster-Brown<sup>[15]</sup>

The wholly unjustified decisions regarding sanctions by the DWP led directly to Carl's decision to take his own life aged 58; the comments on his You Tube tribute video<sup>[17]</sup> describe him as a big man having a heart of gold.

As difficult as it has been, those who read these stories and recognise each and every one for being about a human being, every bit as valuable as the people they love on this earth, are thanked for doing so.

## 7, Narratives on the Issue of Work Capability Assessments

These stories relate to Work Capability Assessments which have for the past six years been carried out by the now notorious French Information Technology company, Atos. These tests are meant to give a full analysis of someone's ability to work, but are highly restrictive in their questions and often produce abhorrent results.

We begin with clearly unfair cases of arbitrary decision making with no real reference to people's medical condition, where it is incredible that people might be found fit for work.

Chris Haigh<sup>[18]</sup>

Chris Haigh, a 57 year old gentleman from Southport, and a sufferer from Parkinson's disease; a degenerative condition in which people slowly find themselves less able to use their motor skills, and with increased rigidity throughout their bodies. He'd been diagnosed for nearly a decade and had shown symptoms of the condition for longer than a decade. He couldn't grip things, couldn't walk, and suffered from both internal and external tremors throughout his body. Without a medical examination the DWP decided Chris was fit for work. The DWP claimed that he had been assessed by a nurse at Atos, which hadn't happened. The couple contacted their local MP after two weeks of arguing with the DWP the decision was overturned and they returned to benefits with him unfit for work. No explanation nor apology was ever given.

Colin Jones<sup>[19]</sup>

Colin Jones, a 59 year old steel worker who'd worked and paid into the system for

more than 25 years, had an injury which ended his career. He is in constant pain and unable to walk anything but very short distances. After an Atos assessment Colin was found fit for work. He survived for two weeks on food parcels from the Red Cross before it was decided that the decision had been incorrect and he was returned to full ESA.

Kevin Deegan-Hall <sup>[20]</sup>

Kevin had been forced to give up his work as a pottery labourer at the age of fifty. He is an epileptic and daily fits, being asthmatic, and also having severe mobility problems due to an injury to his arms when having a fit, meant he simply could work no longer. He was therefore surprised to find that, without any warning or assessment, Atos along with the DWP had decided he was suddenly fit for work again. After a lobby and protests his benefits were reinstated, without any explanation as to why they had been stopped originally.

Derek McNally <sup>[21]</sup>

Derek is suffering greatly from kidney disease, and has had to have more than one set of transplants; he needs dialysis three times a week. Yet despite this in December 2010 it was decided after an Atos assessment that he was fit for work. In January 2012 he eventually got his tribunal hearing where the judge said, "He's dying of kidney disease, how much more disabled do you want?" However, in December 2012, Derek, aged 48, was told to reapply for Disability Living Allowance. It was then decided he should lose that allowance in full. On the morning of 22 October 2013 Ros Wynne Jones, a reporter for the Daily Mirror, e-mailed the DWP to find out the reasoning behind their decision. By 1pm His benefit had been reinstated in full, with no explanation given.

Zulfiqar Shah <sup>[22]</sup>

A 50 year old man, who has worked for 30 years of his life in the Lancashire weaving and textile industry, but now has mental health problems, diabetes and is almost completely blind; he was diagnosed after severe problems with ulceration to his legs which cause him mobility problems. Zulfiqar was found to be fully fit. he appealed and with help from the Royal National Institute for the Blind and Action for Blind People he had all of his benefits reinstated. No proper explanation was ever given as to why someone so clearly disabled was found fit for work.

Danny Shurmer <sup>[23]</sup>

Danny lay in intensive care having just had heart bypass surgery when he received notice that he had been found fit for work. He told them his situation, and replied that given he was ill in hospital, he was unfit for work. They stopped his benefits. he had to wait nine months for a tribunal which reinstated his payments.

James Grindle <sup>[24]</sup>

Atos had conducted a medical on behalf of James previous employer, and on the basis of that medical assessment it was decided he was no longer fit for work in any capacity and he lost his job. He then attended an Atos assessment on behalf of the DWP where it was decided he was fit for work and despite decades of having paid into the system his social security was cut.

George Rolph <sup>[25]</sup>

George is a sixty year old survivor of domestic violence and abuse. He is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and can barely cope with everyday life; he rarely if ever leaves the house. He was found fit for work, and in his own words, "I knew I was going to end up homeless. And I'm 60. I'm not going to make it out

there.”

George decided there was very little he was going to be able to do, and went on hunger strike. After seven days, without explanation, his benefits, which he was told would take at least 8 months to reinstate, were reinstated. He then realised that people were simply having their benefits stopped, and sometimes taking their lives, in an entirely unjustified and almost random manner. He stayed on the hunger strike for a full 46 days in an effort to bring attention to a problem he believed was being ignored.

Lyn Bruce and Shelley Maxwell <sup>[26]</sup>

Fifty four year old Lyn Bruce had been found fit for work despite having four prolapsed spinal discs, a muscle wasting illness, depression and a hole in the heart. She decided to appeal, and asked for copies of the medical notes held by the DWP. She signed for the bundle of documents, and upon opening it, found that they were the notes of Shelley Maxwell, a fifty one year old lady with sleep disorders, diabetes, anxiety and depression.

Shelley herself had her benefits stopped and had been unable to pay her utility bills and found it necessary to live off food banks. At the time of the article going to press, some 28 weeks after her benefits were stopped, Lyn was still without her ESA, and still had not received the correct medical notes for her to lodge an appeal.

Mick Walsh <sup>[27]</sup>

Mick had severe heart problems requiring urgent surgery and told the assessor at Atos this. The day he had his surgery he received a letter saying he was fit for

work. In the fourteen days he spent in hospital he had then received a letter from A4E telling him he must attend the day after he arrived home for a meeting with them in relation to returning to work, or lose all his benefits; he couldn't walk and could barely talk so was not able to tell them he was unable to attend the next day. It seems the problem was eventually sorted out, but as always, it needs to be asked why someone in need of emergency surgery in the near future would be found fit for work?

Sheila Holt <sup>[28][29]</sup>

Sheila suffered from severe bipolar mental illness. She was initially decided fit for work despite not having been so for 27 years. Her level of anxiety increased, she was sectioned, then had a heart attack and slipped into a coma. She was in that coma when the DWP decided that fit to work they should send a letter demanding she begin searching. she was then repeatedly hounded by letters whilst in that state from December until February, despite her family making the situation clear to them. There family have indicated that there is, “a clear link between the extreme anxiety caused to her by having to attend numerous meetings with workplace advisers and the decline in her mental health.”

Amy Jones <sup>[30]</sup>

Amy suffers from Cerebral Palsy, a degenerative condition, which according to the medical experts is becoming increasingly disabling. She requires constant assistance for all areas of living. She has been put in the work related activity group of the ESA classifications, and has been told by Atos & the DWP that she will now be expected to submit to assessment every six months because her condition is expected, by them obviously and not the actual experts, to improve. She explains in her blog page, In Bloom <sup>[31]</sup> how Atos are now miracle workers.

The cases involving those people who are decided as being fit for work with their deaths imminent.

Colin Traynor<sup>[15][32]</sup>

Suffered from epilepsy which was severe and life threatening. It was decided he was fit for work, and he chose to appeal. It was five weeks after his death aged 29 that it was accepted he wasn't fit for work and he was notified he had won his appeal. Speaking in the House of Commons about his death and the contact he received from Colin's family, Michael Meacher MP said, "Nothing is going to bring Colin Traynor back to life, but I believe that the Government owe it to his memory, and that of hundreds of others who have lost their lives in similar circumstances, to make fundamental changes to the work capability assessment procedures which are taking such a terrible administrative toll in fear, intimidation, distress and death."

Upon comments by Mark Hoban Minister of State for the DWP that Colin had not adequately communicated his distress to the DWP, Mr Meacher said further, "Irrespective of whether the distress, of which the parents were aware, was made known to the authorities, the crucial point in this case is: how can a 29-year-old who had been subject to grand mal seizures since he was 14 months old, and for whom Remploy had desperately tried for three years to get a job and could not do so, have been regarded as employable?" Mark Hoban avoided this question on more than one occasion saying parliament was not the right place to discuss the details of the case upon the basis of which the session had been called.

Linda Wootton <sup>[15][33]</sup>

Linda had her first double heart & lung transplant in 1985, at the age of 21; after which she bravely returned to work. Unfortunately, the transplant was rejected, and complications in a subsequent operation in 1989 left her an invalid and unable to work. She remained recognised as being unfit for work by all of the medical experts involved in her case; chronically disabled. “She would be listless, falling asleep, feeling faint... she had no stamina,” in the words of her husband; a man who continues to work as a refrigeration engineer and pay into the same system which exists to provide a safety net for those in need.

In 2012, new guidance from the DWP meant that it was decided that Linda had to prove she was still unfit to work and her ESA was withdrawn. She was forced to undertake an Atos assessment even though she was barely able to attend the appointment on 3 January 2013. She typed her appeal letter in a hospital bed on 13 February 2013. She was still in a hospital bed on 16 April 2013 when the DWP wrote to her to tell her the decision stood and she would no longer receive ESA as by the agreed standards of the Atos assessment she was fit for work.

On April 24 she died aged 49, again the words of her husband Peter, “Feeling useless like a scrounger.” The DWP showed their sensitivity through a spokesman who said, “A decision on whether someone is well enough to work is taken following a thorough assessment and after consideration of all supporting medical evidence.”

As her husband Peter said, “She paid her tax and national insurance, then she is treated like this. it is disgusting.”

David Groves <sup>[15][34]</sup>

David again had severe heart problems, though not suprisingly he was very worried that these would be immaterial to the assessment process used by Atos and the DWP. The night before his medical was due, he died of a heart attack his condition exacerbated by stress aged 56. His son Paul, 38, said, “He could hardly walk any distance without needing help from his angina spray. I don’t know why they could not ask the consultants who had told him his heart was too weak to have an elbow operation he needed. They would have made it clear how ill he was.”

Terry McGarvey <sup>[15][35]</sup>

Forty Eight year old Terry knew he wasn’t well enough to attend his WCA, but knew also of the threat to stop his benefits if he didn’t attend. He attended, but the strain was such that an ambulance needed to be called during the examination. Terry died the next day. Having told the Atos assessor that an immediate ambulance was needed, as his brother Charlie explained, “They put us into a room next door and lay him on a bed. We waited more than an hour for the ambulance without anyone coming in to even ask how he was.” Atos made the call, but in the words of a spokesman for Scottish Ambulance Service, “The call was clinically triaged as a non-emergency based on detailed information provided by the caller.” Obviously Atos had without any real medical knowledge decided it wasn’t that serious in what could only be described as an unnecessarily callous decision.

Robert Barlow <sup>[15][36]</sup>

Robert Barlow had worked as a government scientist, until at the age of 38 he was diagnosed with severe cardiomyopathy, a degenerative condition which causes failure of the heart muscle. He was awaiting a heart transplant, and also suffering from a brain tumour. he had been slowly growing more ill for nine years, and by

the age of 46 he couldn't walk, his eyesight was so poor he couldn't read, and he had a tendency for frequent falls. With 18 months to live, his ESA was stopped since he was deemed to be fit for work; despite having grown gradually less fit since having had to give up work eight years earlier. A once great servant to his country, died penniless, having spent more than his savings before he died without any state assistance.

David Coupe <sup>[15][37][38]</sup>

Suffering from cancer, yet still found fit for work by Atos, Farmer David lost his sight, his hearing, his mobility then his life aged 57. His widow Lyn said, "David got a very rare form of cancer, it took his sight and his hearing, then finally his life. But months before that Atos took his dignity. His doctors and specialist nurses wrote to the firm but never received a reply."

Paul Turner <sup>[15][39]</sup>

Despite suffering from Ischaemic Heart Disease, and having suffered heart attacks, 52 year old Paul was told in February 2014 that he was fit for work; by April he was dead. His devastated mum Sheila, 76, said: "We believe the claim he was fit to work brought on his death." A spokesman for the DWP said, "Job centre Plus decision makers look at all available information, including any medical evidence, to support their claim."

Stephen Hill <sup>[15][53]</sup>

Acutely ill, Stephen was waiting for major heart surgery. It was decided he was fit for work, and within a month he was dead aged 53. He died in December, and his brother Anthony said, "Stephen should have been enjoying time with his grandchildren. For this to happen was just terrible."

Larry Newman <sup>[15]</sup>

Larry had a degenerative chronic lung condition which had caused his weight to drop from 10 stones to 7 stones. It was decided after the Atos assessment that he was fit for work, and he was dead within three months.

Janet McCall <sup>[15]</sup>

Terminally ill and suffering from pulmonary fibrosis, a disease which causes hardening of the lungs, constant breathlessness and repeated coughing, she was found fit for work after an Atos assessment, and was dead within five months.

Brian McArdle <sup>[15]</sup>

Was passed as fit for work despite his heart condition. The day after his benefits stopped he died of a heart attack aged 57.

Jan Mandeville <sup>[15]</sup>

A sufferer from Fibromyalgia, which causes scarring to the lungs, had an ongoing battle with the DWP for ESA and Disability Living Allowance driving her to the point of mental & physical breakdown before being found dead aged 52.

Graham Shawcross <sup>[15]</sup>

Despite suffering from the debilitating Addison's disease, Graham was found fit for work. At age 63 and just short of pension age, he was under great stress and this resulted in a heart attack which caused his death.

Nathan Hartwell <sup>[15]</sup>

Had a serious heart condition, but was nevertheless found fit for work; battled for 18 months to have his benefits restored and died of a heart attack induced by stress

aged 36.

Cecilia Burns <sup>[15]</sup>

Was receiving treatment for aggressive breast cancer when found fit for work, managed to win her appeal, but died just a few weeks later aged 51.

Chris Smith <sup>[15]</sup>

Was declared fit for work by the DWP as he lay dying in a hospital bed.

Elenore Tatton <sup>[40]</sup>

Elenore was placed in the Work Related Activity group as someone who would return to full fitness in the future despite having an incurable brain tumour which she originally suffered from age 15, had received an operation for, but had returned. She also suffered from epilepsy. She died within three weeks aged 39 leaving her husband and three children. Raymond, her partner, suffers from gangrene of the appendix, diabetes, and has had to have part of his bowel removed, and is very unsteady on his feet, lacks any stamina and is prone to collapsing. Not long after Elenore's death Atos called him in for assessment, and he subsequently received notice from the DWP that his benefits would cease as he was fit for work.

People literally starved to death.

Mark Wood <sup>[15][41][42][43]</sup>

Mark was a 44 year old man, who weighed only 5 stones 8 pounds when found. Against his doctors assertion that he was not fit for work, it was decided after an Atos assessment that he was. He had complex mental health problems. His benefits were stopped, and he starved to death. His sister Cathie said of her,

“Gentle and sweet,” brother, “when the police found him, there was very little food in the house, just half a banana and a tin of tuna.”

Tim Salter<sup>[44]</sup>

Despite his failing eyesight and agoraphobia, 53 year old Tim was deemed fit for work after an Atos assessment. He went into rent arrears when his benefits were cut, and was about to be evicted when he chose to hang himself instead. His sister Linda said, "Tim ran out of money. He was a proud man and never let on to anybody. It's so sad. I want everyone to know what this government is doing to vulnerable people on benefits. He had a certificate to say he was blind. When we got into his house there was no food, he practically starved in the last weeks.”

Mark Scott<sup>[15]</sup>

Had his DLA and benefits stopped, sank into depression, and was found dead within six weeks of being assessed as fit for work.

Ian Caress<sup>[15]</sup>

Ian, aged 43, was found fit for work despite multiple health problems and deteriorating eyesight; he died 10 months later, emaciated and described by his family as looking like a concentration camp victim.

Finally the cases where the intervention of Atos, and the DWP through their Work Capability Assessments, have caused the death through suicide of vulnerable disabled people.

Jacqueline Harris<sup>[15][45]</sup>

Jacqueline was a former nurse with severe mobility problems; she could hardly

walk. She had typical conditions connected with a career in nursing, severe arthritis in her neck, and severe back problems; both almost certainly from years of assisting others who had mobility problems. Her sister Christine, also a nurse, recounted the medical, saying, "They asked her one question, 'Did you get here by bus?'" That was it, she was able to get on and off a bus so they decided she was fit enough to work; it mattered not how much effort had been involved in that one small action. She chose to take her own life the day after receiving notice that Atos had found her fit for work aged 53. As is standard a spokeswoman for the DWP said, "A decision on whether someone is well enough to work is taken following a thorough assessment and consideration of supporting medical evidence."

Elaine Lowe<sup>[15]</sup>

Elaine was a 53 year old lady who suffered from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD); a disease which affect breathing and thus affect the ability to do most things. Chronic means permanent and incurable. Her benefits were threatened and she knew she was incapable of working due to her severe and chronic illness. Not knowing how she would survive and believing she would suffer a slow death by starvation, she instead chose to commit suicide.

Paul Reekie<sup>[15][46]</sup>

A sufferer of severe depression, it was decided after an Atos assessment that he was fit for work and despite previous diagnosis by his doctor did not have a sufficient level of depression to affect his ability to work. He then killed himself. The founder of Rebel Inc publishing, who knew the author Reekie, sent the following to George Osborne, "It has come to my attention that while many of my friends and I were at the funeral of our good friend Paul Reekie, aged 48, it would

appear that you were giving a speech in Parliament announcing your intentions to slash the benefits paid to the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.”

Leanne Chambers <sup>[15][47]</sup>

A sufferer of depression for many years who had in that time been accepted as unable to work. Was called in for an Atos assessment, and killed herself soon after. Her body was not found immediately, her mother Val explains the emotions of a family who believe they have lost someone, “Ever since she went missing we have lived with the agony of wondering what had happened to her, reacting to every knock on the door, every phone call or every car which pulled up outside.

Elaine Christian <sup>[15][48]</sup>

Elaine was a fifty seven year old lady with mental health problems who had been told she must attend a Work Capability Assessment and that her benefits were at risk. She was found with multiple self inflicted wrist wounds at Holderness Drain, Hull. Her husband said, "She was worried about the assessment, but was never one to complain." Katrina Dennis, who managed the local Cooplands said, "She was one of the nicest people I knew and had a heart of gold.”

Sandra Louise Moon <sup>[15][49]</sup>

Sandra a 57 year old mother, had a degenerative back condition, though worries about losing her Incapacity Benefit and the prospect of a Work Capability Assessment had also done much to exacerbate the depression she also suffered from. She took an overdose and died. Blackpool coroner Anne hind put it quite succinctly when she said, “We can only feel so sad for what must have been going through her mind.”

Edward Jacques <sup>[15]</sup>

A 47 year old man who suffered from HIV and Hepatitis, was known to have a history of severe depression and self harm. After an Atos assessment it was decided he was fit for work, then being unable to attend the necessary interviews his benefits were stopped. He chose to commit suicide.

Peter Hodgson <sup>[15]</sup>

Despite having suffered a stroke, a brain haemorrhage, and having a fused leg, the DWP decided to call him in to see if he might be suitable for unpaid work. The actual appointment date arrived after he'd took his own life aged 49.

David Barr <sup>[15]</sup>

David was known to suffer from severe mental problems, though Atos decided he was fit for work nonetheless. He appealed, and upon his appeal failing, threw himself from a bridge to his death aged just 28.

Iain Hodge <sup>[15]</sup>

Iain suffered from antiphospholipid syndrome; a disease where white blood cells mistakenly attack the hosts body and the risk of blood clots in arteries and veins. People with this condition are at constant risk of things like heart attacks and strokes. Iain was, nevertheless, passed as fit for work and had his benefits stopped. he chose to end his life aged just 30.

Shaun Pilkington <sup>[15][50]</sup>

A father and grandfather, had been suffering from depression when the DWP decided to stop his ESA. Could cope no longer and shot himself. As one of his neighbour's explained, "He was pretty down about it and said he was finding it

hard to cope with the decision. He was a lovely man. It is not fair what the Government is doing.”

Craig Monk<sup>[51]</sup>

Craig had lost his job when an accident at work led to a partial amputation of one of his legs. He had been in a vulnerable state, depressed because of his situation, and to add to that state his social security had been cut. He had previously attempted suicide by overdose, and was in dire need of support. He was found hanged. his neighbour Kevin Martin said he had spoken about his worry that his benefits had been cut.

Chris McGuire<sup>[15]</sup>

A deeply depressed man, so much so that the judge in his appeal against being fit for work told the DWP and Atos to leave him alone for at least a year. They chose to ignore the judges direction, and Chris responded to their continued harassment by killing himself.

Annette Francis<sup>[15]</sup>

A thirty year old mother with sever mental illness, Annette decided to commit suicide after her disability benefits were ceased.

Michael McNicholas<sup>[15]</sup>

Suffering from severe depression Michael, aged 34, was called in for a Work Capability Assessment by Atos and chose instead to take his own life.

Michael Connolly<sup>[15]</sup>

A father who, on 30th October, his sixtieth birthday, decided to take a massive

overdose, after his benefits had been cut, and died.

Carl Paine <sup>[15]</sup>

Father of two Carl, aged 42, was demonstrably fearful of losing his benefits before he chose to commit suicide.

Victor Cuff <sup>[15]</sup>

The DWP stopped Victor's benefits despite him suffering from severe depression; he chose to hang himself aged 59.

Nicholas Peter Barker <sup>[15]</sup>

Nicholas had suffered a brain haemorrhage which left him paralysed down one side. It was decided he was fit for work and his benefits were stopped; he shot himself aged 51.

Steven Cawthra <sup>[15]</sup>

Steven had his social security payments stopped despite rising debts, and chose to take his own life as a way out aged 55.

Chris Cann <sup>[15]</sup>

Found dead in his home after being told he needed to undergo a Work Capability Assessment.

Paul Willcoxsin <sup>[15]</sup>

Paul had suffered for years with mental health problems. His concerns about being tested by Atos led him to take his own life aged 33.

Trevor Drakard <sup>[15]</sup>

Trevor had always suffered from epilepsy, with frequent and severe fits. The DWP made repeated attempts to stop his benefits until he chose to commit suicide aged 50.

Martin Rust <sup>[52]</sup>

Aged 36 was found fit for work despite serious mental health problem, schizophrenia with auditory hallucinations. He left a note saying,

**“To those I love, I’m sorry, goodbye.”**

## 8, Available Quantitative Data on Sanctions

The maximum length of sanctions is three years <sup>[54]</sup> and any sanction which is for a period of more than 3 months is considered an adverse sanction.

Apart from the narrative evidence the differing figures for differing job centres provide clear evidence of the arbitrary nature of sanctions. In Merseyside, more 1,300 disabled people were sanctioned between late 2012 and September 2014, nationally there has been a 700% rise in sanctions against sick & disabled people.

[8]

Central Street Job centre in St Helens suspended payments for 4,500 people between October 2012 and March 2014 while nearby Old Swan Job centre sanctioned just 5 people and one in Cressington stopped nobodies benefits. <sup>[8]</sup>

Manchester has the highest rate for sanctioning in Britain, with 7.6% of all claimants being sanctioned in December 2013 (as opposed to a British average of 5.6%). 4,500 people received sanctions, stoppages of social security payments, for more than three months in the period between October 2012 and December 2013.

[54]

Table of the highest sanctioning Job centres in Manchester <sup>[54]</sup>

Greater Manchester JCP	Adverse sanctions > 3 months
Oldham - Tweedale House	6,605
Bolton - Blackhorse Street	5,651
Rochdale - Fleece Street	4,078
Stockport - Wellington Street	3,985
Wigan - Brocol House	3,299

Salford - Browncross Street	3,208
Ashton-Under-Lyne - Old Street	3,011
Manchester - Newton Heath	2,659
Manchester - Cornwall Street	2,637
Manchester – Longsight	2,618

Sanctioning was shown to increase rapidly since 2008, with them increasing at to their highest average level in the last year records are available for, 2013.<sup>[54]</sup> The only period where there has been a slight drop was in 2012, after there was a temporary embargo on new sanctions whilst new regulations were drafted following a legal challenge.<sup>[55]</sup> The increase also varies with area. In the Kidderminster district for example, between October 2013 and October 2014 there was a 30% increase in the number of sanctions, across the country there has been a 64% increase in the same period.<sup>[12]</sup>

“The top five reasons for receiving a sanction are:

1. Failure to participate in a scheme to obtain employment without good reason – Work Programme (35% of all sanctions nationally in December 2013);
2. Not actively seeking employment (31%);
3. Failure to attend or failure to participate in an adviser interview without good reason (14%);
4. Left employment voluntarily without good reason (4.3%);
5. Refusal or failure to apply for, or accept if offered, a job which an employment officer has informed him/her is vacant or about to become vacant without good reason (2.7%).”<sup>[54]</sup>

20% of sanctions between October 2012 and December 2013 were against disabled people, in that same period 2% of sanctions were against people aged over 60, being sanctioned for not finding work as they approached retirement age.”<sup>[54]</sup>

At the same time when sanctions are being harshly imposed, or imposed without any reason at all on vulnerable people, Ian Duncan Smith introduced a system of bonuses for DWP staff which exceeded £44 million in 2012.<sup>[57]</sup>

With the increase in sanctions, and what evidently involves many cases of harsh treatment and unnecessary stoppages of social security payments, it has obviously been questioned as to whether they are being used as a method of saving moneys, or of influencing the unemployment figures.

The response to a freedom of information request from the DWP states, “The LFS [Labour Force Survey] and ILO [International Labour Organisation] defines an individual as unemployed if they are without work, available for work and seeking work... If an individual who is in the Work Related Activity Group of Employment and Support Allowance is meeting the above criteria they would also be counted as unemployed irrespective of whether they are being sanctioned or not... However, if they choose not to sign-on during their sanction period, their claim will be closed,” which on first reading seems to indicate that sanctions don’t affect unemployment counts. That is, until you realise that people aren’t monitored with regard to the jobs they seek whilst on sanctions, and once they cease to be monitored they cease to be counted. It has also been found that many people, on advice, end their claims and make a fresh claim at the end of the sanction period.<sup>[56]</sup>

Sanctioning may affect unemployment data. Whereas it is true that sanctioning

does not remove people from the unemployment statistics, for people to count on statistics they need to show they are actively seeking employment. Monitoring of whether people are actively seeking employment for the purposes of statistics is unlikely to occur when people are on sanctions; they effectively disappear from the statistics for that period before making a fresh claim. <sup>[54]</sup>

Sanctions are noticed quite clearly by those who are most likely to make contact with the victims. Major Colin Bradshaw of Darlington Salvation army said, “Around 70 per cent of the .. people we help at our Friday night emergency food bank have been sanctioned .. many of them over 50 years of age and all of them desperate.”<sup>[13]</sup>

“They miss an appointment so their benefits are sanctioned [docked or stopped altogether], so they have no money, so they steal,” says solicitor John Rogers who represented Lucy Hill, he estimates that he handles, “at least half a dozen,” cases a month of this type, when he handled none this time last year.<sup>[58]</sup>

As Adyta Chakraborty writes in the Guardian, when speaking of those convicted and often imprisoned for stealing food, “When you read of such sentences, remember that this is the same country in which – just a few years ago – over 300 parliamentarians were found to have claimed expenses to which they weren’t entitled; hundreds of thousands handed over to some of the richest people in the country for duck houses, moat repairs and heating their stables. A mere handful were sent to prison. For others, the punishment was just a career break.”<sup>[58]</sup>

Mark Frankland, who runs a food bank in Dumfries which has increased it’s output from 100 parcels a month a year ago to 500 parcels a month now, speaks of those

who deliberately commit the most serious crimes they can to get time in prison, “For them, it’s ten times better than spending winter in a cold flat.”<sup>[58]</sup>

The argument of course is that there are plenty of employment opportunities and that people should be encouraged to take them. As far back as April 2010 it was recognised that the number of unemployed people who simply couldn’t find a job was huge, at around 2.5 million.<sup>[60]</sup> This figure remains relatively stable, despite numerous efforts to fraudulently reduce it.

In fact the Office of National Statistics<sup>[61]</sup> with little real variance shows unemployment at around two and a half million, with around half a million available job opportunities; this of course pays no real attention to the quality of jobs available and many are offers of work with zero hours contracts (in essence no promise of any work). With this type of work, extremely poorly paid self employment, or starvation as a choice, the market for jobs obviously favours employers. This is reflected in the experiences of those who do work; who can always be replaced if they complain.

Perhaps it is because of the distrust in government figures, or more likely the large wave of propaganda blaming the poor for the lack of money in the economy. In either event we as a nation seem to be inaccurate in our approximation of how many people are on Job Seekers Allowance or similar, “Britons believe 24% of people are unemployed, an estimate over three times higher than the actual rate.”<sup>[66]</sup>

Angela Warren works on the checkout and can’t afford to buy the food in the shops she works in because her pay is so low. She has to rely on food banks, and says, “What have I ever done apart from work hard and I’m hungry?”<sup>[62]</sup> She is one of

6.7 Million working people in the UK living on wages below the poverty line. Workers are already an average of £2,000 a year worse off in real terms than they were in 2010, and if the conference pledges made by David Cameron are kept, they will be another £320 a year worse off. <sup>[62]</sup>

As Ros Wynne Jones of the Mirror rightly puts it, “British workers are facing the biggest drop in living standards since Victorian times.” <sup>[22]</sup>

## 9, Available Quantitative Data on the Work Capability Assessments

“Thousands of those with diseases that only worsen with time - and who have become too ill to work - are being denied full Employment Support Allowance. Instead they are assessed as suitable for work-related activity which is designed for people likely to recover to the point where they can seek employment,” Emily Dugan of the Independent explains, “Almost 8,000 people suffering from Multiple Sclerosis, Spinal Muscular Atrophy, Parkinson’s Disease, Cystic Fibrosis and Rheumatoid Arthritis have been put on this third, lesser benefit.”<sup>[18]</sup>

The Royal National Institute for the Blind have identified a recurring problem with claimants not being sent letters in Braille or any form of genuine attempt to communicate the information with blind people; a problem which has only become prevalent in recent years.<sup>[9]</sup> DWP figures show that 56% of blind or partially sighted people won appeals against fit for work decisions between October 2008 and May 2012.<sup>[22]</sup>

Only 25% of ESA claim are being processed within the government’s thirteen week target.<sup>[63]</sup> and it emerged in June of 2014 that Atos had a backlog of 700,000 cases. Though it has been promised that moneys will be backdated the vast number of claimants having to wait without the money they need is further evidence of a system which is neither working, nor intended to work, for the vulnerable of society.

It is estimated that Atos earn around £113 a year from their contract with the DWP.<sup>[64]</sup> Though a freedom of information request on precisely how much money Atos are getting deliberately excluded the data as being of a commercially sensitive

nature. <sup>[65]</sup>

By April 2012 it was discovered that 32 people were dying every week after being found fit for work. 21% of all claimants who were considered disabled were also being put into the Work Related Activity Group and thus subject to sanctions and forced to begin the process of returning to work on ESA which would only last a year, and 22% of all claimants considered disabled were in the support group and not found unfit for work.<sup>[67]</sup> The figures for those who were found fit for work, and considered to have no disability, were not available, though since there are only three options it isn't difficult to work out that 57% of people whose own doctors had decided they were disabled and unfit for work, were being declared fit by the DWP after Atos assessment and forced to find work (or more recently work for free on workfare).

First published in July 2012, the DWP provided evidence of the actual death toll from those who had been subjected to Atos examinations, in a paper called, "Incapacity Benefits: Deaths of Recipients." <sup>[68]</sup> This document, a response to a request for information about deaths of people who had been assessed by Atos and who died subsequent to being moved from the stable position of incapacity benefit to the regime of the ESA with its six monthly reviews and work related activity groups, was the last occasion when any reasonable response was given to Freedom of Information requests on the subject. The results given showed that in 2012, when the testing centres were less prevalent and the number of tests less frequent than in 2014, some 10,600 people died within six weeks of an Atos assessment and their claim being reduced. That amounts to 221 per week, a culling of the vulnerable. The figures were not counted for those who died after their claims were ended, the DWP does not compile such data.

## 10, Discussion

Reverend Townsend wrote in 1786, “Legal constraint [to labour] . . . is attended with too much trouble, violence, and noise, . . . whereas hunger is not only a peaceable, silent, unremitted pressure, but as the most natural motive to industry, it calls forth the most powerful exertions. . . . Hunger will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and civility, obedience and subjugation to the most brutish, the most obstinate, and the most perverse.” [70]

Some would be shocked as this and describe the idea that you would control human beings in the same way you would train dogs as a Victorian Attitude. They’d be wrong to say this. Firstly 1786 was the reign of George III not Victoria, secondly this attitude that some humans are worth less than others continues to this day, and has often occurred through history.

A minister for the DWP, Baron Freud, has recently expressed just this opinion. Stating openly that disabled people are not worth as much when employed as other human beings; presumably working for less because despite being classed as disabled they are also decided as being fit for work. in fact he has fixed an amount, £2 per hour, less than a third of the minimum wage, is thought sufficient for such people by Baron Freud. [71] This is not the only time he has spoken of disabled people in a manner which diminishes their humanity. In a DWP session in Parliament he described such people as a, “bulge of, effectively, stock;” this was later changed to the nonsensical word stop instead of stock, but the word was what it was originally and is unmistakable. [72]

Recent research from the University of Sheffield, [73] has shown the return of such

Victorian values, and a great deal of disdain for the most vulnerable in society. Much of the same type of press coverage has occurred. As Gertrude Himmelfarb explains in her book, “The idea of Poverty,”<sup>[74]</sup> much of the discord even among relatively progressive philosophers like John Stuart Mills at that time, was apt to a language and attitudes which saw the lower orders, or lower classes, as different from those born to better circumstances or who had better fortunes in life.

There are often descriptions, as shown in the previous chapter, of just how far of the mark people are in terms of estimating both what people get on benefits, and how many people are on benefits. The best assessment however, must come from the words of people themselves. From the comments on one You Tube video, “Benefits Street resident says tv show has ruined peoples lives,”<sup>[75]</sup> in which a resident of James Turner Street, where the show Benefits Street was filmed, explains how their less than pleasurable lives had been misrepresented and made worse by participation in a television documentary. We have examples of the opinions among the general public of those who are unfortunate to be without work.

supersesqui - All these filthy ill educated cross-bred, generally fat, scumbags ... They are filth and should be exterminated to stop them breeding or infecting human beings.?

Smalls-Big Ballsby - We should take a look at the animal kingdom and follow suit; survival of the fittest... people who have no intention to ever work, who breed with no job and are payed to pass on their inadequate genes...

Blobby Blob - Low life's. They had no lives to ruin?

jesus shaves - it is a true depiction of english people on benefits today and its not where the houses are located its the scum that live within them,why should most people work hard so people like this lot can get drunk each weekend?

davina davis - the benefit cuts are a good thing if these people want something work for it don't expect the hard working taxpayer to pay for you. What i saw watching this programme last nite was a bunch of theives and spongers who expect something for nothing.?

This sort of attitude, of course, both dehumanises, and in doing so offers some support the measures the government puts in place to deal with things identified as problems. Ministers consider ESA to be one of the largest fiscal risks currently facing the government, and intend to provide a solution. Currently those who are on ESA and or in the Work Related Activity Group get £28.75 more per week than those who receive Job Seekers Allowance at a rate of £72.40 per week.<sup>[76]</sup> This extra money is meant to assist the disabled who are considered to have increased costs in trying to obtain work; many of those found fit for work example, are simultaneously recognised as being unable to travel on public transport. The government is considering reducing the extra money paid to assist those with greater expenses due to their disability, to an extra 50p per week.

Of course not everyone has suffered in the same way as the working poor and the unemployed have since the credit crunch. There is more than enough evidence to show that disabled people are not the major drain on this countries resources; especially since disabled people tend to spend their money back into the economy.

The number of billionaires in Britain has risen from 25 in 2009, to 47 this year, and their combined wealth is now around £95 billion. The number of billionaires worldwide in that period more than doubled to 1,645, with a worldwide increase in wealth for the world's billionaires of £150 billion in the past year. At the same time living standards for workers have fallen massively. <sup>[77]</sup>

The level of wealth and the gap between rich and poor is obscene. According to Oxfam, as reported in the Guardian data blog, if the world's richest man decided to splash out and spend a million dollars every day, it would take him 220 years to spend it all. In fact, this is only true if he doesn't continue to have the massive income he has, and if he doesn't continue to earn the huge sums of interest his money earns. <sup>[78]</sup>

Kevin Farnsworth, senior lecturer in social policy, University of York, has spent the last decade studying corporate welfare. His comprehensive audit estimates, as a conservative minimum, the amount of money paid each year to private companies as government assistance, that is not to fulfil contracts, as about £85 billion. The figure does not include subsidies to the banks, or the around £25 billion paid in tax credits to support employees who are paid too little to survive, and housing benefits & council tax benefits to those in work. <sup>[79]</sup>

In 2012 the gap between the taxes which should have been collected, and those actually collected, that is the amount of tax avoided that year by major companies, was estimated by Richard Murphy of Tax research UK at £120 billion per year. <sup>[80]</sup>

It's also true that we also have money for any war which is needed, and that those wars mean someone somewhere is making a profit. <sup>[81]</sup>

It should be obvious to all but the most Conservative of readers that it is not the unemployed and disabled who are extracting money from the economy; as previously said, they tend to spend money back into the economy. If we remember the tales of individual suffering and the number of deaths from earlier in this paper we might ask how this is happening.

Dr Greg Wood who has carried out Work Capability Assessments for Atos, described his experiences following a medical in which he completed a report about a claimant with serious psychotic mental problems saying they were unfit for work. “I was told to amend the report,” said Dr Wood, “the claimant was in and out of psychiatric hospital, she was completely distracted in our interview. I could see she was not fit for work.”<sup>[57]</sup>

Dr Wood further described how the process was changed in Spring 2011, “The computer templates changed and made the process unduly harsh. The language among assessors would be ‘I had to score him’ as if that was a bad thing, or they had done something wrong. No one ever said that you mustn’t award points, but I felt the training and the atmosphere led you that way. Some are sat on a computer filling in answers. Instead, they should be looking at the patient and saying, ‘there’s a problem here, they haven’t got any hands’.” Further to that, Dr Wood said specific questions were chosen to appear friendly and catch patients off key, like, “Did you make yourself a cup of tea this morning?” <sup>[57]</sup> which then led to assessors scoring people as having full use of their hands.

Schneiderman, Ironson, & Siegel, in their paper, Stress and Health: Psychological, Behavioural, and Biological Determinants, state, “If the threat is unremitting, particularly in older or unhealthy individuals, the long-term effects of stressors can

damage health. The relationship between psychosocial stressors and disease is affected by the nature, number, and persistence of the stressors as well as by the individual's biological vulnerability.”<sup>[82]</sup> In layman’s terms, if the person is vulnerable and has health problems, placing them under undue stress is very damaging. Those with heart conditions are especially susceptible to serious harm from stress. In the simplest of terms, stress kills the disabled.

Of course the trickery employed in the assessment process, as well as the assessment of people who are clearly never going to be fit for work all simply exacerbates the problems they already have. “There was a man with motor neurone disease they wanted me to bring in for a face-to-face assessment,” explained Dr Wood, “It was just cruel. He should have just been declared terminally ill based on documents we had seen. All that extra stress and worry of an appeal, and who knows how long he has left?”<sup>[57]</sup>

For those who think that an announcement by Atos that they will not be renewing the contract means they will now be left to die without their deaths being hastened by stress they are mistaken. Disabilities Minister Mike Penning confirmed that any new firm will be brought in to apply the very same failed tests which have been used by Atos.<sup>[64]</sup>

Atos have decided they’ve had enough, or made enough, of this toxic system in which they play the part of executioner to the government’s, ‘Hanging judge.’ In 2015 a new provider is being sought, though despite the faults there is no clear indication that the system itself will be changed. The Liberal Democrats have

suggested the NHS as the new service provider for this very toxic service.<sup>[69]</sup> Given the almost constant attempts to undermine the NHS by the coalition government, it is difficult to see this meaning a fairer system, but rather a different target for the public's animosity; moving it from the private company Atos to the NHS to discredit the service they are attempting to run down and privatise.

Speaking of the growing problems of mentally ill people, and in relation to the case of Mark Wood, who starved to death, Tom Pollard of Mind said, “Unfortunately this tragic case is not an isolated incident. We hear too often how changes to benefits are negatively impacting vulnerable individuals, who struggle to navigate a complex, and increasingly punitive, system. We know the assessment process for those applying for Employment and Support Allowance is very stressful, and too crude to accurately assess the impact a mental health problem has on someone's ability to work. This leads to people not getting the right support and being put under excessive pressure which can make their health worse and push them further from the workplace. We urgently need to see a complete overhaul of the system.”

[43]

Writing on the issue of Christelle Pardo, who tragically jumped to her death whilst pregnant and holding her infant child in her arms, Jenni Russell of the Guardian rightly questions the society we have created for ourselves and future generations, “Once she was dead, officialdom showed a little concern... The trap in which Christelle found herself is not unique... These cases raise hard questions about who should be supported by our collective generosity... I don't believe this is a stance a civilised society can justify. It pitches foreign-born mothers back into a Victorian-style existence in which pregnancy may mean destitution and disgrace. But my reaction may be a minority one. On websites there is a striking lack of sympathy

for the Christelles of this world, and a marked resentment about the number of people demanding our collective help.”<sup>[16]</sup>

Britain will soon be the first country to be investigated by the United Nations over its Human Rights violations of the disabled, “This comes after a report last month by the Just Fair coalition suggested that the UK had descended from being an international leader in disability rights to being in danger of becoming a "systematic violator of these same rights.”<sup>[83]</sup>

Rightly so, though do we all actually care? Do some people still have a slight feeling they are in the right in supporting this treatment of the most vulnerable in society?

Judgment at Nuremberg was a 1951 film about the war trials which I would recommend to anyone; even though I'm about to give away major plot elements. Burt Lancaster plays the part of a senior member of the German judiciary called Ernst Janning. The film depicts the trial and the horrendous crimes against humanity of those who were meant to serve justice. Lancaster, as Janning, eventually explains in to the court how a madness had took over the German people and expresses regret.

The person his character was based upon, Reich Minister of Justice Franz Shlegelberger was tried at the Nurembourg trials. Shlegelberger, however, never showed an ounce of remorse for the torture, sterilisation, and execution of innocent Jews, Poles, Communists, Gypsies, and Homosexuals. He was sentenced to life imprisonment for his atrocities, but released in 1951 due to severe ill health. He then lived out the remaining years of his life in comfort, on a pension five times the

average German salary, before his death in 1970. He never showed remorse and continued to believe he was right.

Both of his sons did well in the new German government, one as an MP, the other a diplomat.

I wonder, as I look at the figures for the huge number of people tortured until death by ATOS and the DWP, how many of the doctors, the judges in the tribunals, those decision makers in the DWP, or indeed those within the Parliament, who know what they do to people, will feel remorse; or will they also live without conscience, seeing the victims of this current process as unworthy of pity, or of common humanity?

To want a better world, we must first recognise what is wrong, and then choose what is right.

## 10, Basic Income

The official definition states, “The Unconditional Basic Income is a periodic cash transfer granted to all members of a political community, without work requirement nor means-testing, and high enough to ensure an existence in dignity and participation in society.”<sup>[84]</sup>

Universal Basic Income is precisely what it says it is. It is universal, paid individually to each recipient, and provides enough for people to both survive and be an active participant in society.

It’s universality is important. At the moment, as I think shown in the comments on the You Tube page with a person from James Turner street, there is a lot of genuine hatred for those who have to claim social security to survive. It is perhaps understandable if we also have a situation where people can work long hours at work and still need to resort to using food banks. A universal income means those who work begin contracting for wages from their employer from a position of already having enough to live on. Already knowing they will survive if they don’t work, but knowing that if they work they need very little more than the cost of working (bus fares etc) before they will be earning enough to be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour.

There are immediate issues people will raise with regard to such a situation. Fortunately Thomas G. Clark, better known by his onscreen persona, Another Angry Voice, who writes on political economic issues online, has recently published a piece with arguments for and against the Basic Income. I here reproduce his work.<sup>[91]</sup>

“Arguments in favour

**Technology and automation:** As technology and automation improve, the requirement for labour in the economy falls. However, the pace of technological advancement is retarded if the public cannot afford the outputs of advanced technology and automation. If the public have their basic human needs met, then they have more wealth to invest in consumption of the outputs, further driving technological advancement.

**Wealth Redistribution:** Wealth redistribution is economically beneficial because of the Marginal Propensity to Consume (poor & ordinary people spend more of their income than the wealthy). The more wealth that is spent, rather than hoarded, the faster the economy will develop.

**Efficiency:** Universal Basic Income is the most efficient form of wealth redistribution because there is no need for a massive and expensive bureaucracy to means-test recipients. The only checks would be whether the recipient is a citizen of the state, and whether they are classified as an adult, which would massively reduce the bureaucratic cost overheads of the welfare system.

**Smaller government:** The introduction of Universal Basic Income would reduce the economic burden of the welfare system through the elimination of almost all means tested benefits and associated bureaucracies.

**Reduced crime:** Crime rates will be reduced because the Universal Basic Income would effectively eliminate absolute poverty, and massively reduce the economic

desperation that motivates a large proportion of criminal behaviour such as theft (a Basic Income trial project in Namibia recorded a remarkable 42% reduction in crime).

**Balanced Labour Market:** The labour market has become ever more imbalanced ever since the rise of neoclassical pseudo-economic dogma, and the attacks on trade unions and labour rights. Workers would no longer be compelled to work in order to meet their basic human needs, so employers would have to offer high wages and good terms and conditions in order to attract workers. Exploitative employment practices would be curtailed and the worker would have greater freedom to pursue the employment that they choose, rather than doing awful jobs for crap wages in order to stave off absolute destitution.

**Innovation and small businesses:** If citizens are guaranteed a basic income to meet their basic human needs, the investment of time and wealth into the establishment of new businesses would be significantly more attractive and carry significantly less risk. The evidence from trials supports the conclusion that the introduction of such a system would increase the number of business start-ups.

**Better capitalism:** The resulting boom in small businesses would improve capitalism by increasing the diversity of the capitalist economy, and by increasing competition within existing markets. Increased diversity would lead to a more robust economy capable of withstanding exogenous shocks, and more competitive markets would result in greater competition and efficiency.

**Social justice:** If the basic human needs of all citizens are met automatically, then the requirement on charity and state administered welfare is dramatically reduced,

meaning that those with charitable intentions can assist the needy elsewhere in the world, rather than fighting to combat poverty in their own developed nations.

### Arguments against

Loss of work incentive: Opponents argue that the incentive to work would be destroyed, and that capitalism would grind to a halt without the fear of destitution driving workers to continue working. This objection is not supported by the experimental data, which shows that the vast majority of people continue to work, even if their basic human needs are met. Trials in North America showed that the only demographics to significantly reduce their working hours were new mothers (to spend time with their babies) and teenagers/young adults (who spent additional time in education). The trial in Namibia actually showed a significant increase in economic activity, due to the increase in economic demand and the establishment of new businesses.

Idleness: One of the most commonly wielded criticisms is that if a guarantee that the individual's basic human needs are met is given, then the individual will be inclined towards idleness. Not only is this concern disproved by the trials that have been carried out, it is also disproved by an appeal to "common sense". If having sufficient wealth that our basic human needs are met causes idleness, how is it possible to explain the fact that multi-billionaires like Warren Buffet or George Soros carry on working, when they have accumulated enough wealth to provide their basic human needs for ten thousand lifetimes or more? Why do actors like Keanu Reeves carry on working, when they have made more than enough money to live in comfort for the rest of their lives? Why do sportsmen carry on working

even after they have become multi-millionaires? How is it possible to explain the fact that the current UK government is absolutely stuffed full of multi-millionaires? If having "enough to survive" was a disincentive to work, then all of these people would surely have retired to a life of idle luxury. The only way that this objection makes any kind of sense is if you accept the ludicrous right-wing stance that the rich are best motivated by more money, and the poor are best motivated by the threat of absolute destitution.

Something for nothing: Another one of the most common objections is the "why should people get something for nothing" argument. This kind of attitude lies behind the irrational British obsession with welfare spending. It is estimated that the UK economy loses £120 billion a year to tax-dodging, however this issue is completely dwarfed (in terms of column inches and public opinion) when it comes to the cost of welfare, of which only £1.2 billion is claimed fraudulently. The British public are easily riled with the sense of injustice that they must work hard, whilst others have a roof over their head and food in their belly despite not having a job. The sense of injustice is a powerful emotion, and the right-wing press deliberately weave it into their anti-welfare narratives, but in economic terms it is a meaningless objection to Universal Basic Income, because if everyone is entitled to an income that guarantees them a basic standard of living, whether they work or not, the objection that the unemployed are getting something that the employed don't no longer carries any weight at all.

Reciprocity: Another objection is that the guaranteed income is basically unconditional, and that means that there is no conditionality that the recipient must put anything back into the economy. This objection demonstrates a basic lack of economic literacy because the recipient will either spend it (creating economic

demand) or save it (creating the capital reserves that the capitalist system requires in order to fund the credit economy). The only way that it would be possible for the individual to extract the wealth from the economy entirely would be through offshoring it, but that is a problem of capital flight and tax-dodging, not a problem with the principle of unconditional income.

Welfare for the rich: Another objection is that the Universal Basic Income would result in payments to citizens that are already wealthy, and have no trouble meeting their basic human needs. In my view, this is a particularly short-sighted objection for two reasons. Firstly, because making the payment conditional on wealth and income would necessitate a large bureaucracy in order to means test everyone, which would undermine one of the main benefits (efficiency); and secondly, because if the wealthy and powerful (generally high-tax payers) are excluded, they are likely to oppose the scheme because they are paying for it, but getting nothing back. If guaranteeing the basic human needs of the majority in the most efficient way possible must come at the price of giving the already wealthy "a bit extra" too, then so be it. To hopelessly compromise the whole concept of a universal benefit out of a desire to make sure that the rich don't get a share of it would be to throw the baby out with the bathwater so to speak.

Inflation: Of all of the regularly stated objections, the only one that carries any significant economic weight is the threat of inflation. It should be fairly easy to understand how this might happen. Take rent for example: If the idle rentier class is aware that their tenants are in receipt of a monthly payment designed to meet their basic human needs, it is clearly in their financial self-interest to then massively increase the rental charge so that it takes the entire amount (and probably a bit more for good measure). An example of this kind of rent seeking

behaviour can be seen in the UK childcare sector after the introduction of Child Tax Credits. The childcare providers knew that working families were getting a payment from the government to cover the cost of childcare, so they raised the cost of childcare so much that the UK now has the most expensive childcare in the developed world (33% of family income, as compared to the OECD average of just 13%) meaning that the Child Tax Credit allowance is nowhere near enough to cover the inflated cost of childcare. If Universal Basic Income is introduced, then it must be done with a package of anti-inflationary measures (such as rent caps) or the value of the payment will soon be eroded away through the rent seeking behaviour of the idle rentier class.

Another solution to the rent seeking behaviour of the idle rentier class could be to ensure that the UBI payment is linked to the cost of living, so that if the cost of rent, energy rates and water bills go up 10% in a year, the UBI payment would rise proportionately. This would of course result in inflation, but the inflation wouldn't end up driving ordinary people into poverty because they would be getting an inflation adjusted UBI payment to meet their basic needs.

## Disclaimer

I've outlined some of the arguments for and against Universal Basic Income. The problem is that most of the arguments in favour are backed by empirical evidence and sound economic reasoning, but most of the commonly raised arguments against don't make any sense at all from an economic perspective, are contradicted by the evidence, and amount to little more than opinion. This means that it is absolutely impossible to construct a "balanced" article without giving the completely false impression that the arguments against are somehow equal to the

arguments in favour, when aside from the valid concerns over inflation, they are transparently not.”<sup>[91]</sup>

There has also been a very interesting article on a site called Simulacrom, which focuses on developments in Technology, Economics and Anthropology. I again reproduce this work for people to read through.<sup>[86]</sup>

“THREE TRENDS THAT WILL CREATE DEMAND FOR AN UNCONDITIONAL BASIC INCOME

2013-07-10 · by Lui · in Blog. ·

The digitization of our economy will bring with it a new generation of radical economic ideologies, of which Bitcoin is arguably the first. For those with assets, technological savvy, and a sense of adventure, the state is the enemy and a cryptographic currency is the solution. But for those more focused on the decline of the middle classes, the collapse of the entry-level jobs market, and the rise of free culture, the state is an ally, and the solution might look something like an unconditional basic income. Before I explain why this concept is going to be creeping into the political debate across the developed world, let me spell out how a system like this would look:

Every single adult member receives a weekly payment from the state, which is enough to live comfortably on. The only condition is citizenship and/or residency.

You get the basic income whether or not you’re employed, any wages you earn are additional.

The welfare bureaucracy is largely dismantled. No means testing, no signing on, no bullying young people into stacking shelves for free, no separate state pension.

Employment law is liberalised, as workers no longer need to fear dismissal.

People work for jobs that are available in order to increase their disposable income.

Large swathes of the economy are replaced by volunteerism, a continuation of the current trend.

The system would be harder to cheat when there's only a single category of claimant, with no extraordinary allowances.

This may sound off-the-charts radical, but here's why you're going to be hearing a lot more about it:

## 1 – The Middle Classes Are In Freefall

As Jaron Lanier points out, Kodak once provided 140,000 middle class jobs, and in the smouldering ruins of that company's bankruptcy we have Instagram, with 13 employees. It's an extreme example, in most cases the economic misery is largely confined to young people, with entry-level workers trapped in a cycle of internships, ever-lengthening education, and debt. The result is that young people are not being allowed to grow up. In the 1960s the average first-time house buyer was 24 years old, and as late as 2002 it was 28. The average is now 37. The path to economic selfhood is being stretched by market forces, too many people chasing too few jobs, and a continuation of the status quo is likely to push that lifeboat out even further.

In stripping out inefficiencies and pushing digital goods to near-free prices, the Internet kills middle-class jobs. Digitization has already largely de-monetized academia, film, music, journalism, and lots more besides. More industries will feel the pain, including the legal professions, real estate, insurance, accounting, and the civil service, all of which are built on inefficiency, and all of which will be stripped of jobs in the years to come. As it becomes clear to those with established positions that there are no jobs for their children, they'll push for a more radical solution.

To put this in econometric terms, wages as a share of the economy have been in long term decline and recently hit a new low in the United States. Meanwhile corporate profit margins have hit an all time high. The last few years of economic turmoil has allowed industry to reduce staff numbers and reduce entry-level pay, without reducing capacity. If that trend continues, wealth creation will increasingly be confined to those with capital, and things start to follow a Marxist logic. The middle classes (and their elected representatives) will not let that happen.

## 2 – Demand For Human Labour Is In Long Term Decline

Imagine a point in the future when robots do more of our physical labour, computers do more of our mental labour, and our mechanized-digitized economy is ten times more efficient. We don't need to agree on a date, this could be 2050 or it could be 2500, all we need to agree on is that current trends are likely to continue in the same direction. Between now and then two things can happen, either we do 90% less work, or we demand ten times more goods and services, or a bit of both. The first option requires that we drastically revise downwards our expectations of

how much work people do, the second requires that we drastically redistribute purchasing power to consumers.

We've redefined work in the past, so there's no reason we can't do it again. The concept of "a job" as something that happens outside the home and for someone else is a largely Victorian creation. Even after it was formalized into an obligation to the market economy, we always accepted that certain people do not have to work. We do not expect infants, the elderly, or the disabled to work, and these categories are relatively fluid. The expectation that children work inside and outside the home has been in steady decline ever since the industrial revolution, while the default retirement age has crept ever later, pushed by governments avoiding a pension crisis and senior employees hanging on to their established social roles. While men were forced out of the home to do paid work, women were kept in the family home to do unpaid work. During the world wars, everyone was expected to work. During a world cup final, almost nobody is expected to work. We regularly change our expectations of who works and how. Forcing the unemployed onto a jobless market on the basis that "everybody has to work" is at best misguided and at worst cruel.

In 2012 the average working year in South Korea was 2,226 hours, and in the Netherlands it was 1,381 hours, 38% less. You can have a rich, developed economy on relatively little work. If we stop stigmatizing the non-employed, we can stop pushing people into jobs that offer little collective benefit. From telemarketers to chuggers to sign holders to beggars, huge numbers of people are forced to eek out an existence on the fringes of the economy in roles that have almost no marginal economic output.

### 3 – Cultural Production Is Detaching From The Market

We already have a society of volunteers and creators, and that's a good thing. That Wikipedia article you just read, the parkour YouTube video you just watched, that Russian electronica you're listening to, the code that powers your browser, all were probably given away for free. Everyone expected an information economy, and instead we got an information culture.

When people are locked out of the jobs market, some may sit at home all day on the couch, but many will go out into the world and produce cultural goods that they then give them away for free. I don't buy into the myth that unemployed people are lazy. I've lived in a country that had a period of "full employment" and now has 14% unemployment, and I don't see how anyone can be so misanthropic to claim that those 14% of people just got lazier. Employment doesn't just give people an income, it also gives them an identity, status, confidence, a sense of mission, and a network of peers. Anyone given access to those rewards will work for them. As the fantastic talk by Dan Pink puts it, we are motivated by autonomy, mastery, and purpose, but not money. As machines take over more of our work, we are going to have to find other ways of letting people fulfil these human needs. Forcing them to send 500 CVs out every week is not a good start.

Stakhanovite

Don't dismiss this as socialism, it involves a complete rejection of the Stakhanovite work ethic and a full-throttle embrace of consumer culture.

How would we pay for it?

We could start by getting corporations to pay their taxes. As I mentioned above, corporate profit margins have hit an all time high, and that money will circulate far faster if it's placed in the hands of consumers. For salaried workers a basic income would likely be a repackaging of tax free allowances, although they would likely need a net gain to buy into it. The scheme would also yield savings elsewhere in the public sector, from a reduction in the size of the bureaucracy, to an increasing role for volunteers and charities. The scheme would also stimulate economic activity, as shown by the PPI scandal in Britain which forced the transfer of £10 billion from banks to customers, and led to a GDP growth boost of 0.1% because consumers were so much quicker to spend it.

Frankly, in an era when communities can create their own currencies, capital can sneak across digital borders despite being legally frozen, and economic production is increasingly decentralized, finding ways of fairly collecting revenue for the public good is going to be one of the big questions of the century, regardless of whether or not we have an unconditional basic income. Under the current set of rules, most developed world governments are bankrupt, but as the bank bailouts proved, the rules can be rewritten when needs be. Money is a device we use to help us allocate resources, it is a symbol and an understanding, seemingly solid in the short term, but flexible and evolutionary in the long term. If you burn all the notes in your wallet right now, you haven't made the world any poorer, you've simply reduced your personal claim to available resources. There is always more money.

As has become increasingly clear, austerity is not working, and should never have been expected to work. An unconditional basic income would be the Keynesian response that should have been launched as soon as it became clear the financial

sector had a rotten core. In other words, it would be a bailout for consumers.”<sup>[86]</sup>

Of course both the two former pieces rely much on theoretical, though very much evidence based, support for the idea. The best evidence is from the work of Guy Standing of Universal Basic Income Earth network in India.<sup>[85]</sup>

That research, carried out in a real community and running the scheme, produced eleven key findings:

“1. Many used money to improve their housing, latrines, walls and roofs, and to take precautions against malaria.

2. Nutrition was improved, particularly in scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) households. Perhaps the most important finding was the significant improvement in the average weight-for-age of young children (World Health Organization z-score), and more so among girls.

3. There was a shift from ration shops to markets, made possible by increased financial liquidity. This improved diets, with more fresh vegetables and fruit, rather than the narrow staple of stale subsidized grains, often mixed with stones in the bags acquired through the shops of the Public Distribution System (PDS), the government-regulated food security system. Better diets helped to account for improved health and energy of children, linked to a reduced incidence of seasonal illness and more regular taking of medicines, as well as greater use of private healthcare. Public services must improve!

4. Better health helped to explain the improved school attendance and performance, which was also the result of families being able to buy things like shoes and pay for transport to school. It is important that families were taking action themselves. There was no need for expensive conditionality. People treated

as adults learn to be adults; people treated as children remain childlike. No conditionality is morally acceptable unless you would willingly have it applied to yourself.

5. The scheme had positive equity outcomes. In most respects, there was a bigger positive effect for disadvantaged groups – lower-caste families, women, and those with disabilities. Suddenly, they had their own money, which gave them a stronger bargaining position in the household. Empowering the disabled is a sadly neglected aspect of social policy.

6. The basic income grants led to small-scale investments – more and better seeds, sewing machines, establishment of little shops, repairs to equipment, and so on. This was associated with more production, and thus higher incomes. The positive effect on production and growth means that the elasticity of supply would offset inflationary pressure due to any increased demand for basic food and goods. It was encouraging to see the revival of local strains of grain that had been wiped out by the PDS.

7. Contrary to the skeptics, the grants led to more labor and work. But the story is nuanced. There was a shift from casual wage labor to more own-account (self-employed) farming and business activity, with less distress-driven out-migration. Women gained more than men.

8. There was an unanticipated reduction in bonded labor (naukar, gwala). This has huge positive implications for local development and equity.

9. Those with basic income were more likely to reduce debt and less likely to go into greater debt. One reason was that they had less need to borrow for short-term purposes, at exorbitant interest rates of 5% a month. Indeed, the only locals to complain about the pilots were moneylenders.

10. One cannot overestimate the importance of financial liquidity in low-income communities. Money is a scarce and monopolized commodity, giving

moneylenders and officials enormous power. Bypassing them can help combat corruption. Even though families were desperately poor, many managed to put money aside, and thus avoid going into deeper debt when financial crises hit due to illness or bereavements.

11. The policy has transformative potential for both families and village communities. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Unlike food subsidy schemes that lock economic and power structures in place, entrenching corrupt dispensers of BPL (Below Poverty Line) cards, rations, and the numerous government schemes that supposedly exist, basic income grants gave villagers more control of their lives, and had beneficial equity and growth effects.”<sup>[85]</sup>

It is not only that it will end the tragedies we currently suffer from the system of social security we have, but it is the ideal political economic model for the technological future we face. It is in political economic terms, an egalitarian policy, and one which ensures the security and well being of future generations whilst they handle the other issues to improve the world they will live in.

Perhaps a real world example is given. There are very few, if any, areas of employment in which people can't be easily replaced. Some areas, like customer contact and service industries are claimed as the future, and indeed our own Chancellor, George Osborne, has spoken this year of the value of such job creation.<sup>[87]</sup> Some people are indeed attempting to build careers in one of the few forms of employment available; though those jobs don't have a long term future, and the news that McDonald's have introduced their first computerised tellers<sup>[88]</sup> must lead to the presumption that that particular role in McDonald's will disappear. There are already machines which can cook the hamburgers<sup>[89]</sup> and it won't be long before McDonald's cut the expense of having low grade staff altogether. Not good

news under the current system given that even people with degrees are seeing McDonald's as a step on the ladder in terms of work. A step which is soon to disappear.

The final and important question which is bound to be raised by opponents is whether we can afford the Basic Income. Though we say again it is a question never raised in relation to subsidising the rich, or beginning unnecessary wars. The answer is yes we can afford it, and in fact the hidden costs in private contracts to people like Atos who pay their taxes abroad, or the increasing costs of trials and imprisonment of people stealing to eat, or even the cost to businesses when the shoplifters are not captured, means there will likely be a big saving for society; financially as well as the saving in terms of human losses.

The latest calculations from the Green Party <sup>[90]</sup> are based upon a basic income of £80 for every adult (currently job seekers allowance is £71.70), the income for pensioners being brought above the poverty line at £150 per week each for couples (that's £300 for the couple), and £180 per week for the subsidised single pensioner rate.

With those rates, an increase on the current rates, the estimated annual cost of running the system is £310 billion per year. The cost of the highly bureaucratic system being replaced, is £310. The only real change will be the removal of the National Insurance payment threshold for higher earners, though unless the person in question is an extremely high earner, the basic income will offset this loss.

As explained, it is more than likely it will be better than drawing even. Entrepreneurial activity has been shown to grow rapidly, and people who are

currently in the benefit trap will be in a situation where they are able to start their own businesses without worrying whether they will be able to make a living.

Finally, what is often not considered is its probable effects on one of the major issues for mankind; population growth. One of the world's leading experts on this issue is Hans Rosling. He has been explaining for many years how rates of child birth reduce with decreased child mortality, and better social safety nets for the elderly.<sup>[92]</sup> The stability of basic income and allowance of people to participate in more vocational types of work, like care, means that the increases in population which have occurred in the last couple of centuries are likely to be slowly reversed.

## 11, Conclusion

The tragic loss of any person is a disaster. Oddly enough the huge loss of many people is often reduced to a statistic. Two hundred and twenty one people a week dying within six week of having their benefits ended, is a tragedy worthy of investigation by the United Nations, and similarly worthy of the outrage of the citizens of the country it happens in. This paper hopefully demonstrated how every single death will impact and matter and that the current system must end.

The system in place is not only likely to hasten death, but will be genuinely detrimental to people with illnesses and disabilities who might otherwise have some part in society; they will weaken those who are ill. They also cause suffering to able bodied people in a situation where there are simply not enough jobs for the number of unemployed people. In fact it adversely affects people who are working hard, in that the threat of unemployment is being used to force down wages to the extent that people cannot afford to live.

Lower wages and lower money among the those in the lower levels of society, who are more likely to spend the money they get, is positive for small and medium business owners who need customers. A system which prefers to give the money to our own citizens, to spend in our economy, will be better for the economy in this country.

Artisans may spring up. At the moment if you have, for example, a talent for carving deadwood found on the shore, you could never expect to earn a living doing so. If you already have a guarantee of a living, you might be able to spend

time doing these things, and creating a whole new artistic movement and a new economic opportunity.

The Basic Income is emancipatory. Being paid individually it means that people no longer need to be reliant on a breadwinner, and people will instead have more equal partnerships in a more equal society.

It benefits the country, and will revitalise the economy. It will cease many of the pointless areas of employment which do nothing in real terms; like schemes to tell people how to write Curriculum Vitae for application to jobs they have little chance of finding. This problem being one which will undoubtedly increase in future the need to switch to this system as soon as we're able to regulate a new kind of economic model, and a new type of society is urgent.

There will be small costs to some groups, but those costs are unlikely to make such groups losers unless they are very wealthy. The very wealthy in this country hardly need more than they already have. They have more than they could ever need, and some have much more than they could ever spend.

It is also likely to lower the birth rate among the population, and lead to a slow decline in population due to more stability and a better structure of care for the elderly.

It has been costed conservatively at £310 billion, and is paid for with savings in the current system. It will almost certainly provide much more to the economy, as well as to the society we hope to live in.

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