

Basic Income In The News



ENTERTAINMENT FEATURED

NEWS

By Alexander Baron



77
SHARES

September 14-20 is [International Basic Income Week](#). If you are not familiar with the concept you can read up on the history of it [here](#). It goes back a surprisingly long way, but has never been needed more than today. The reason for this is really rather simple. Unless you are dirty filthy, stinking, rotten rich, chances are you will have to earn a living. That means either starting your own business or more often working for someone else, be it a small business, a large corporation, the government, or whatever.

The goods and services society can deliver depend on human action, but advancing technology and investment has led to fewer and fewer people being needed to produce more and more. To take one prosaic example, when tinned food was first introduced around 200 years ago, a skilled craftsman could churn out perhaps six cans per hour. Two years ago, the Heinz company was selling a million and a half cans of baked beans in the UK [every single day](#). Automation and other aspects of technology allow us more leisure time; they also destroy jobs, particularly menial jobs. True, new technologies also create new jobs, mostly at the top end, but imagine a world in which machines did all the work. Okay, we are a long way off that yet, indeed even with the [RepRap](#) and

other wondrous devices, we may never reach that scenario, but do we want to create jobs for the sake of allowing people to continue to earn their living, or is there a better way? And what about the people at the bottom, like right at the bottom, those with no marketable skills, serious criminal records, and/or sundry disabilities?

The current financial system including our manufactured austerity focuses on the impossible task of making work pay for these people, and penalises them when they fall by the wayside.

Meanwhile, investment fund managers, speculators, and other financial parasites earn massive salaries, commissions and bonuses simply for **shuffling around bits of paper** without creating any real wealth at all. Basic income destroys the poverty trap into which most of the first group fall because of the means-tested benefit/welfare system. In effect, it makes work pay, something neither George Osborne nor any chancellor can do under the current system. Here is **a video** that explains how basic income will achieve this, if it is given a chance.

The first person to tackle basic income from an engineering perspective was the great Major Douglas. Douglas was a real engineer, and he saw the financial system as an engine whose purpose was to deliver the goods and services the community demands and creates. Clearly it doesn't do that at present, although people worldwide are waking up to the real problem, not just ordinary people, but those who matter, including especially politicians, men and women who are in positions to effect meaningful financial and social change.

Last month it was reported that a pilot scheme for basic income was being **considered by Finland**, while across the Atlantic, the Pirate Party of Canada **has adopted it** as part of its platform. In the UK, surprise Labour Party leadership contender Jeremy Corbyn is said to be **considering the idea**.

Basic income has its detractors, of course, but most of the objections to it tend to be at best moral and mostly pseudo-moral, usually along the lines of why should anyone get something for doing nothing while others work for a living? Again, not all work is productive, and indeed much of it is anything but. Leaving aside the aforementioned financial parasitism, consider all the time and effort the authorities in different countries spend tracking down, prosecuting and punishing the "perpetrators" of victimless crimes such as prostitution (in the US), drug taking and small time drug dealing (most places), hate speech (in the UK and many other places). Legislation of this nature creates work for police officers, prison staff, court staff, social workers...but does the time and effort wasted on these pursuits protect much less benefit society?

While this debate continues to rage, technology continues to advance, and more and more people will end up on the scrapheap, unless and until some national, local or regional government somewhere says enough is enough, and takes the plunge. In the meantime, be careful you don't lose your footing, because today when you fall off that ladder, it is difficult if not impossible to climb back on, much less reach the top.