

Foreword

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When Malcolm Torry published *Money for Everyone* in 2013, I welcomed it with enthusiasm. I welcome *Why we need a Citizen's Basic Income* with even greater enthusiasm.

Whether this book is a second edition of *Money for Everyone* or a new book is a significant question: significant, because the fact that so much of the book has had to be newly written shows just how far the Basic Income debate has moved on in just five years. *Money for Everyone* was mainly arguments for the desirability of Basic Income, with the occasional mention of feasibility and implementation. Now public and policymaker debate is far more about both the feasibility of Basic Income and options for its implementation, so it has been essential to include substantial chapters on those subjects, and also a fully evaluated illustrative Basic Income scheme – lacking in *Money for Everyone*. The new book also contains a chapter on objections to Basic Income: an essential addition that I also included in my own book on the subject seen from an international perspective.

But however different parts of it might be, this is still in many ways the original book. It is written by someone with a sense of compassion, by a ‘man of the cloth’, as British people used to say with a sense of respect. One does not need to be a Christian or to belong to any religion to recognise the value and appeal of real compassion. And we should remember the difference between compassion and pity, just as we should that between rights and charity. Compassion derives from treating people as equals; pity derives from treating people as inferior, as fallen. Social policy should be about strengthening compassion and rights, leaving pity and charity to individual consciences.

Compassion emphasises our commonality, our human similarity, recognition that while today we may need help and may be in a position to help others, tomorrow it might be the other way round. Pity, by contrast, as David Hume taught us, is akin to contempt. At best it is paternalistic and patronising. Worse, it easily leads lazy minds to think they are superior and are being magnanimous in giving a little to help the ‘deserving poor’. That is not a worthy sentiment, because it does not exercise our will to do something to change the situation that produces wretchedness among affluence. It is compassion that reinforces our sense of social solidarity, so that we see ourselves in each other.

This book is about an idea that has a long heritage. Some of the greatest minds through history have supported it. Today, there are reasons to believe that its time is coming. Across the world, suddenly we find numerous thoughtful people responding to the call for a Basic Income with a 'Why not?' retort, when only a few years ago we heard 'What utopian folly!'

The international network we established in 1986, named BIEN (Basic Income Earth Network), has drawn thousands of members from across the world, so that there are now national networks in countries as different as Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Brazil, Argentina, the US and the Netherlands. The UK has its network member in the Citizens' Basic Income Trust, which has been ably led by Malcolm Torry. I urge readers to join BIEN and the Citizen's Basic Income Trust. The BIEN Congress is held every year, when dozens of papers are presented and discussed avidly, as they were in the Lisbon Congress in September 2017. The 2018 Congress will be held in Tampere, Finland, and the 2019 Congress will be held in New Delhi.

The growing interest in an unconditional Basic Income as a right for all stems from many ethical and social rationales. It is also a pragmatic reaction to the reality that during three decades of economic growth inequalities have grown remorselessly, while millions of people in the UK have wallowed in impoverishment. Governments have tinkered, but have found all sorts of excuses for leaving inequality to grow to historically unprecedented levels. We have had a steady drift to political utilitarianism that does nobody any credit. Make the 'middle class' happy. That is where the votes are! Give the deserving poor conditional benefits, in pity. Give all those undeserving 'scroungers' some harsh medicine, to be kind to them in the longer term. How smug and prejudiced.

Those who claim there are numerous 'scroungers' across the country – some alien breed who are 'not like You and Me' – and that swathes of people are 'dependent' should be confronted by a simple question: how do you know? And are we not all dependent on others, just as some are dependent on us? Anecdotal evidence of a few people makes for prejudicial and moralistic policy, which is invariably bad policy.

Recently, a much-cited opinion poll found that a majority of British people agreed with the proposition that benefits should be cut. This has been the claim made by newspapers and mainstream politicians, none of them relying on benefits for subsistence. Now, suppose those polled had been asked first, 'What is the weekly amount an unemployed person receives? What is the average amount someone with disability receives?' How many of them would have known the correct answers, or the

conditions in which the vast majority seeking benefits have to live? And yet those who responded to the poll had been persuaded that the level should be cut. It is a mentality that stems from decades of moving away from solidaristic systems based on principles of compassion to one based on targeting, probing and stigmatising, through means tests and behaviour tests.

There is something else happening that may turn the tide in favour of a Basic Income. Today, millions of people, in Britain and globally, are entering the precariat, which I have depicted in my books as the new dangerous class because they see their need for basic security wilfully ignored by the mainstream political parties described as ‘centre right’ and ‘centre left’. Most of those in the precariat are just trying to create a meaningful life for themselves. And yet so far they have been factored out of political calculations. It would be dishonest of politicians to pretend that a combination of means tests and behaviour tests could overcome the poverty traps – whereby the precariat often pay a marginal tax rate of over 80 per cent, twice what the ‘middle class’ is expected to pay – let alone what I have called the precarity traps, which make it the fact that many end up paying more than 100 per cent ‘tax’ on income gained in some precarious short-term job.

Those in the precariat know that, and are beginning to growl about the inequity and inequality in which they have to live. Their anger is justifiable, and it will not go away. The anger and hurt will grow much worse if Universal Credit is rolled out across the country. It is a mean-spirited policy coloured by arbitrary sanctions and stigmatisation.

Malcolm Torry is a voice of reasonableness. He can see that providing every one of us – sinners as well as saints – with a Basic Income is affordable and would actually help make people more productive, not lazier, and make more people more likely to be responsible citizens, with a greater sense of altruism and tolerance.

Like most of us who support moving towards a Basic Income – and it is the direction that counts – he is realistic enough to know that it will only come about when those who believe in it have the courage and energy to struggle for its realisation.

Malcolm Torry’s is one of our best voices: rational and persuasive, and persuasive because rational. His book makes an important contribution to a debate that is becoming livelier by the day.

Preface

A Citizen's Basic Income is an unconditional and nonwithdrawable income paid to every individual: that is, the same amount of money, every week or every month, for each person (with higher amounts paid to older people, and smaller amounts for children). It is a remarkably simple idea, with the potential to make our economy and our employment market more efficient, make work pay, encourage training and enterprise, make our society more cohesive, reduce poverty and inequality, and set people free from bureaucratic intrusion.

Discussion of the desirability, feasibility and implementation of Citizen's Basic Income will often be context specific because it is in relation to a particular tax and benefits system that many of the arguments will have to be formulated. The context envisaged in this book is the UK's tax and benefits system, and readers in other countries will need to ask how those arguments might need to be adapted for their own situations.

This book is a second edition of *Money for Everyone*, published in 2013. The reasons for publishing *Money for Everyone* were that it was then more than 10 years since the previous general treatment in English of arguments for a Citizen's Basic Income;¹ following the urban unrest of August 2011 there was considerable concern about growing inequality, and, although the suggestion was often made that a Citizen's Basic Income might be able to help, little detailed exploration of the idea had been offered;² whatever solutions to the problems facing our benefits system were tried, the problems only seemed to get worse; and a Citizen's Basic Income was being actively debated and occasionally piloted in other parts of the world.³ *Money for Everyone* filled a gap, and might have been one of the reasons for the increasing level of debate on Citizen's Basic Income in the UK from 2013 onwards.⁴

We had expected *Money for Everyone* to serve as a general introduction to the topic for a number of years, and we placed details of illustrative Citizen's Basic Income schemes on the Citizen's Income Trust's website because we believed that the figures would go out of date more quickly than the book. In fact, the Citizen's Basic Income debate has evolved so quickly during the past five years that it is now the book that is seriously out of date: hence this new edition – or rather, this new book. So much of *Money for Everyone* has had to be rewritten and reorganized that the publisher has decided that a new title and a new cover would be appropriate.

There is now a vast literature on Citizen's Basic Income. When I wrote *Money for Everyone* I could legitimately claim to have kept up to date with all of the relevant literature in English, and with some of it in other languages. I can no longer make that claim, and neither can anyone else. There are now several introductory books and reports on the market, each from its own point of view, along with a plethora of books, reports and articles tackling aspects of the debate.⁵ *Money for Everyone* aimed to provide a carefully evidenced general introduction to Citizen's Basic Income, and its approach might best be described as 'social administration'. In this it remains distinctive. During the past five years political and public interest in Citizen's Basic Income has increased considerably, and important symptoms of the seriousness with which the issue is now taken are the abuse and purposeful selection of evidence.⁶ It is therefore even more important that an up-to-date and thoroughly evidenced introduction to the desirability, feasibility and implementation of Citizen's Basic Income should be available. This new edition intends to provide that.

A reader who has read *Money for Everyone* will notice some significant differences between the two editions. *Money for Everyone* was largely about why it would be a good idea to implement a Citizen's Basic Income. *Why We Need a Citizen's Basic Income* is still about that, as the title suggests: but there is now more emphasis on feasibility and implementation, as those are the issues in which the public debate is increasingly interested. The increasing attention being paid to Citizen's Basic Income has of course generated vigorous objections to the proposal, so this new edition pays careful attention to several of those. So that new material could be included, the reader will find less attention being paid to the history of the benefits system, and to such broad issues as citizenship and social justice: in the case of citizenship, because readers can refer to *Money for Everyone* for such a discussion; and, in relation to social justice, because there are already excellent recent treatments of social justice arguments for Citizen's Basic Income.⁷

One thing that has not changed since *Money for Everyone* was published in 2013 is the fact of social and economic change. The world continues to change, and to suppose that our benefits system can simply go on as before, with the occasional tinkering at the edges, will be to consign our society, our economy and our employment market to entirely unnecessary rigidities. We can do better than that. There was a time when the UK's Welfare State led the world, as did much else about this country. We are still capable of innovation. Now is the time to show how to create a tax and benefits system fit for this still

new millennium. If the UK does not do it then someone else will, and the UK will again be playing catch-up.

In 2013, Citizen's Basic Income was a minority interest, whereas now it is not. I hope that this new book will be as useful a resource for those involved in the current debate as *Money for Everyone* was for those involved in it five years ago.

Notes

- ¹ Parker, 1989; Walter, 1989; Fitzpatrick, 1999.
- ² Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009; Dorling, 2010.
- ³ Werner and Goehler, 2010. See Chapter 10 of this book for material on pilot projects.
- ⁴ This suggestion was made by Professor David Piachaud at a seminar at the London School of Economics on 9 November 2016.
- ⁵ Painter and Thoung, 2015; Torry, 2015b; Reed and Lansley, 2016; Standing, 2017; Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Walker, 2016; Miller, forthcoming; Martinelli, 2017a, 2017b. Examples of literature on the debate in particular countries are Mays, Marston and Tomlinson, 2016; Vanderborght and Yamamori, 2014; Walker, 2016.
- ⁶ <http://citizensincome.org/news/members-of-parliament-debate-citizens-income/>; <http://citizensincome.org/news/new-royal-society-of-arts-podcast-and-a-report-from-the-work-and-pensions-committee/>, 02/11/2017.
- ⁷ Van Parijs and Vanderborght, 2017; Standing, 2017: 25–45; Widerquist, Noguera, Vanderborght and De Wispelaere, 2013: 39–77.