

IDENTIFYING AND OVERCOMING POLITICAL BARRIERS TO A FULL-BLOWN BASIC INCOME PROGRAM

RON HIKEL, MAY 24, 2018

I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE SEVERAL POINTS UNDER THE HEADING OF GAINING AND THEN KEEPING GOVERNMENT EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BODY APPROVALS FOR A UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME PROGRAM. THESE ARE SPECIFICALLY RELEVANT TO CANADA AND ITS PROVINCES BUT CAN, WITH A BIT OF ADJUSTMENT, BE APPLIED IN MOST CASES TO THE UNITED STATES AS WELL.

PLEASE ALSO NOTE THAT DEVELOPING SUPPORT FROM EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE BODIES CALL FOR DIFFERING STRATEGIES OF PERSUASION.

FIRST YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT I HAVE SUPPORTED BASIC GUARANTEED INCOME PROGRAMMING FOR CANADA AND THE US EVER SINCE THAT DAY ALMOST FIFTY YEARS AGO WHEN MANITOBA PREMIER ED SCHREYER ASKED ME TO LEAVE THE POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG AND ON TAKE THE TASKS OF NEGOTIATING A COST-SHARING AGREEMENT WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, SETTING UP A PUBLIC-SECTOR RESEARCH AGENCY, DEVISING A RESEARCH PLAN AND THEN MANAGING WHAT SHORTLY BECAME THE MINCOME EXPERIMENT.

LOOKING BACK OVER ALMOST HALF A CENTURY, THERE HAS BEEN A GREAT DEAL OF ENTHUSIASTIC TALK ABOUT BI, COUNTLESS BOOKS AND ARTICLES, SEVERAL EXPERIMENTS AND PILOTS AND SUBSTANTIAL DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS. YET TODAY NO WESTERN DEMOCRACY HAS A FULL BASIC INCOME PROGRAM IN PLACE AND OPERATING SUCCESSFULLY.

PLEASE TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT THE BRITISH ATTEMPT TO CONVERT SIX SEPARATE INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMS INTO ONE SUPERIOR SYSTEM. AS JUST REPORTED BY THE NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE, IT HAS BEEN A MASSIVE FAILURE. THIS AMPLY ILLUSTRATES THE VAST GULF BETWEEN THE ATTRACTIVE CONCEPT OF BI AND THE HIGHLY CHALLENGING REALITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION.

THE REASONS FOR FAILURE TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS ARE, IN MY VIEW, LARGELY POLITICAL. SO AS A POLITICAL SCIENTIST WHO FOR FIVE YEARS WORKED ON ONE OF THOSE UNREALIZED PROJECTS, I HAVE SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT WHY THAT IS AND WHAT MIGHT BE DONE TO AT LONG LAST ACHIEVE VICTORY.

THESE VIEWS ARE ALSO ROOTED IN HAVING WORKED ON MORE THAN 30 POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS FROM PRESIDENT TO CITY COUNCILLOR IN CANADA, THE US AND BRITAIN. THIS INCLUDES TWO YEARS ON CAPITOL HILL AS A CONGRESSIONAL STAFFER DURING THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION.

THE FIRST POINT TO MAKE IS THAT GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENTS FAVOURABLE TO MAJOR POLICY REFORMS AND THEIR RELATED COMMITMENTS ARE HIGHLY VOLATILE, SO TEND NOT TO LAST AS LONG AS GOVERNMENT TERMS IN OFFICE. POLICY COMMITMENTS TEND NOT ENDURE AS LONG AS THE TIME REQUIRED TO DECIDE ON, PLAN FOR, TEST, LEGISLATE, FUND, IMPLEMENT AND PERFECT A REAL BASIC INCOME PROGRAM.

BEING COMPLICATED, ADOPTION OF A FUNCTIONAL BI PROGRAM IS LIKELY TO LAST BEYOND THE TERM OF ANY ONE ADMINISTRATION. CHANGES OF GOVERNMENT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO FAILED ATTEMPTS. INDEED, THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO ELECTION IS NOW PUTTING THAT REALITY TO THE TEST.

SO CAN WE GAIN AND KEEP GOVERNMENT INTEREST IN BI LONG ENOUGH TO COMPLETE A COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT CHAIN AND THEN IMPLEMENT A PROGRAM SUCCESSFULLY? I BELIEVE WE CAN. BUT THERE ARE REAL CHALLENGES TO BE OVERCOME AND HISTORICAL LESSONS TO BE LEARNED. IN PARTICULAR, THE BI COMMUNITY MUST CHANGE THE WAY IT RELATES TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR.

THE STARTING POINT FOR SUCCESS IS HAVING A FORMAL PLAN, ONE STRAIGHT-FORWARD AND COHERENT BUT REALISTIC, BASED ON WIDE CONSULTATION AND CONSENSUS. I SAY CAMPAIGN BECAUSE THAT IS WHAT IS NEEDED — A CO-ORDINATED SERIES OF EVENTS FOCUSED ON WINNING PROGRESSIVELY MORE SUPPORTERS FOR BI AND THEN TURNING THEM INTO COMMITTED BI VOTES. THAT IS THE PRIME BASIS ON

WHICH POLITICIANS WILL LISTEN. IF THIS IS CORRECT, HERE ARE A FEW CENTRAL ELEMENTS FOR THAT CAMPAIGN.

BEGIN BY FOCUSING ON ONE OR MORE NAMED GOVERNMENTS BELIEVED TO BE POTENTIALLY AMENABLE TO BI. AN EARLY TASK: FINDING OUT WHO ARE THE MOST INFLUENTIAL AND BEST-POSITIONED ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT ALREADY OPEN TO BI. WHAT ARE THEIR NAMES AND POSITIONS? WHY ARE THEY SUPPORTERS? HOW DEEP IS THEIR KNOWLEDGE? WHAT AREAS DO THEY REPRESENT? WHO ARE THEY CLOSE TO? HOW CAN THEY BE HELPED? ARE THERE OTHER GOVERNMENT MEMBERS THEY CAN INFLUENCE? WHO? WILL ONE OR MORE OF THE SENIOR ONES BECOME PROMINENT AND EFFECTIVE BI CHAMPIONS?

ENTHUSIASM BY ITSELF IS NOT ENOUGH. ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE AND PERSUASIVE SKILL ARE BETTER.

NEXT, DETERMINE WHETHER THERE ARE OTHERS IN THE GOVERNMENT, NOT YET COMMITTED, THAT MAY BE OPEN-MINDED ENOUGH TO BE BROUGHT ON BOARD. IN ANY LARGE ELECTED BODY THERE SHOULD BE AT LEAST A FEW. BE PREPARED TO MAKE A SERIOUS INVESTMENT OF TIME AND EFFORT HERE. CONSIDER DOING THE SAME FOR SENIOR PUBLIC SERVANTS WORKING FOR ELECTED MEMBERS WHO ARE FAVOURABLE. BUT BE FULLY SENSITIVE TO THEIR NEED FOR IMPARTIALITY.

ANY COHERENT STRATEGIC PLAN TO OBTAIN MAJORITY GOVERNMENT LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR A BI PROGRAM WILL BE SERVED BY ANSWERING A FEW KEY QUESTIONS ABOUT EXACTLY WHAT YOU ARE SEEKING FROM GOVERNMENT. HERE THERE IS A PROBLEM. THE HIGHLY APPEALING CONCEPT OF BASIC INCOME IS IN PRACTICE NO ONE THING. IN OPERATIONAL REALITY, BASIC INCOME CAN TAKE MANY VERY DIFFERENT CONTRASTING ADMINISTRATIVE FORMS. IRRESOLUTION ABOUT EXACTLY WHICH SPECIFIC OPERATIONAL SHAPE IT SHOULD TAKE HAS PLAYED A MAJOR PART IN THE COLLAPSE OF EARLIER INITIATIVES.

AS ONE OF THE LEADING EXPERTS ON BI, GUY STANDING, CORRECTLY NOTED IN HIS EXCELLENT BOOK "BASIC INCOME: A GUIDE FOR THE OPEN-MINDED": PAGE 73, "IT

SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED AT THE OUTSET THAT A BADLY DESIGNED OR POORLY IMPLEMENTED BASIC INCOME SYSTEM COULD LEAVE PEOPLE WORSE OFF THAN UNDER EXISTING SOCIAL PROTECTION SCHEMES.” WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A SOUND BI DESIGN?

I DO NOT PRESUME HERE TO RECOMMEND ANY ONE PARTICULAR VERSION.

RATHER, IT SEEMS SENSIBLE TO ME TO DEVELOP IN DETAIL, ASSESS AND PROMOTE SEVERAL DIFFERING MODELS, HAVING SIGNIFICANTLY DIFFERENT COSTS AND LIKELY BEHAVIOURAL IMPACTS, SO THAT POLICY MAKERS HAVE SEVERAL TO CONSIDER, FROM THEIR DIFFERING AND EVOLVING IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES.

ONE OF THE MAJOR LINES OF ATTACK AGAINST BASIC INCOME IS THE COST. BUT DEFENDERS OF BI CANNOT RELIABLY MAKE THEIR OWN SOLID COUNTER- COST ESTIMATES BASED ON A GENERAL CONCEPT. VALID COSTING REQUIRES FIRST HAVING ONE OR MORE REASONABLY DETAILED OPERATIONAL DESIGNS.

DO NOT RELY UPON POLITICIANS TO TELL YOU THE CRITERIA THEY WILL BE USING TO EVALUATE YOUR PROPOSALS. THEY TEND TO KEEP THIS INFORMATION TO THEMSELVES OR TO CHANGE THEIR MINDS AS THE ENVIRONMENT CHANGES. THUS, IT IS BEST ON ALL THESE GROUNDS TO ADVANCE SEVERAL DIFFERENT DETAILED MODELS THAT WILL APPEAL TO DIFFERING POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES.

ACCEPT THE POLITICAL REALITY THAT A FORM OF BI THAT POTENTIALLY REPLACES OR RATIONALIZES AT LEAST SOME ASPECTS OF EXISTING INCOME SUPPORT PROGRAMMING AND CONTRIBUTES TO THE OVERALL EFFICIENCY OF THE EXISTING NETWORK OF PROGRAMS, IS MORE LIKELY TO FIND POLITICAL SUPPORT; ESPECIALLY IF THIS CAN BE DESCRIBED AS REDUCING BOTH ADDED NEW ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS AND INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WORK INCENTIVES.

THIS PERSPECTIVE RESTS ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT THE APPEAL OF ANY ONE FORM OF BI WILL DIFFER CONSIDERABLY FROM ONE GROUP OF POLITICIANS TO ANOTHER. THUS, THERE IS DANGER IN THE PREMATURE ADVOCACY OF ANY ONE FORM UNTIL YOU HAVE SOLID AND KNOWLEDGE OF POLITICIANS PREFERENCE.

AS A CENTRAL PART OF AN EFFECTIVE LOBBYING CAMPAIGN, CONSIDER DESCRIBING AND ADVOCATING NOT JUST THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF BASIC INCOME AS YOU UNDERSTAND IT, BUT SEVERAL SPECIFIC AND POSSIBLY DIFFERENT DELIVERY MODELS OF HOW TO DESIGN AND PROVIDE BI. FOR EXAMPLE, A DESIGN THAT CAN TAKE FULL ADVANTAGE OF MODERN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND THEREBY REDUCE THE ADMINISTRATIVE COST PER DOLLAR TRANSFERRED TO RATES WELL BELOW EXISTING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE OR WELFARE, WILL BE VERY ATTRACTIVE. IN SHORT, CONSIDER THE VARIABLE POLITICAL ATTRACTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT DESIGNS.

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCURATELY AND CREDIBLY COST OUT A GENERAL CONCEPT THAT TAKES A SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE WITH INCOME CALCULATION RULES. WE HAVE ALL SEEN COST ESTIMATES INTENDED TO SCARE OFF POTENTIAL INTEREST. CREATING COST -FEAR IS A MAIN LINE OF EFFECTIVE RIGHT-WING ATTACKS. THE BEST COUNTER IS A PLAUSIBLE LOWER ESTIMATE. BUT THAT REQUIRES A REASONABLY DETAILED MODEL.

NEXT, YOU ARE UNLIKELY TO KNOW WHICH SPECIFIC FORM OF BI IS LIKELY TO BE MOST APPEALING OR UNATTRACTIVE TO ANY PARTICULAR SET OF GOVERNMENT POLICY-MAKERS AT A PARTICULAR MOMENT.

IT IS ALSO VALUABLE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE ACTUAL OUTCOMES OF ANY ONE OPERATIONAL MODEL, ONCE ADOPTED AND IMPLEMENTED, WILL BE AFFECTED BY A HOST OF COMPLEX DELIVERY SYSTEM INTERACTIONS, INVOLVING SUCH FACTORS AS SUPPORT LEVELS, TAX-BACK RATES, OTHER INCOME DEFINITIONS, ACCOUNTING PERIODS, AND INCOME CALCULATION RULES, INCLUDING NET WORTH.

THEREFORE, IT IS A MISTAKE TO ADVOCATE A SINGLE FORM, WHICH IMPLIES REJECTING ALL OTHERS.

I AM NOT SUGGESTING FOR A MOMENT THAT ANY GOVERNMENT IS GOING TO ADOPT WHOLESALE ANY SYSTEM DESIGNED BY OUTSIDERS. BUT VARIOUS MODELS CAN INFORM PUBLIC DISCUSSION AND FACILITATE POLICY DECISION-MAKING. EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT IS ALWAYS DESIRABLE IN A POLITICAL CONTEST OVER POLICY

INFLUENCE TO DEFINE KEY ELEMENTS OF YOUR OWN POSITION YOURSELF. DO IT BEFORE OPPONENTS DO IT FOR YOU, FORCING YOU ONTO THE DEFENSIVE.

AFTER YOU COMPLETE A REVIEW OF THE PRESENT STATE OF SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION IN YOUR TARGET GOVERNMENT OR GOVERNMENTS, CONSIDER THE ACHIEVABLE BENEFITS OF DEVELOPING A SYSTEMATIC GOVERNMENT LOBBYING CAMPAIGN. THIS IS LESS CHALLENGING THAN IT MAY SOUND. THERE ARE EXCELLENT BOOKS AVAILABLE AND PEOPLE WITH EXPERIENCE ARE AROUND, OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH POLITICAL PARTIES OR PUBLIC POLICY FIRMS.

MANY REGARD LOBBYING AS DISREPUTABLE; AND SOME OF IT CERTAINLY IS JUST THAT. BUT SURELY WHETHER IT IS NOBLE OR BASE DEPENDS VERY MUCH ON THE ENDS BEING ADVOCATED, THE MEANS EMPLOYED AND THE CHANGES THAT THEY WOULD BRING. INCREASING THE NUMBER OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES FAVOURING BASIC INCOME IS, SURELY, DECENT AND JUSTIFIED.

SO HERE ARE A COUPLE OF SUGGESTIONS. DELEGATE PEOPLE TRULY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT BI TO MAKE THE CASE FOR IT TO POLITICIANS. NEXT, DO NOT BOTHER TO TRY INFLUENCING AN ELECTED MEMBER OR THEIR STAFF UNTIL YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED AN INITIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM, PRESENTED YOUR CREDENTIALS, AND GIVEN THE PERSON ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DESK GOOD REASON TO HAVE CONFIDENCE IN WHAT YOU ARE ADVOCATING AND WHY.

DO NOT ASSUME THAT JUST BECAUSE SOMEONE HOLDS PUBLIC OFFICE THEY OR THEIR STAFF MUST AUTOMATICALLY, OUT OF JEFFERSONIAN CIVIC-MINDEDNESS, PAY SERIOUS ATTENTION TO YOUR MESSAGE. GIVE THEM A GOOD REASON TO CARE WHAT YOU SAY. AMONG THE BETTER ONES ARE: YOU REALLY DO KNOW WHAT YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT; YOU BELONG TO A GROUP THAT IS OR IS BECOMING IMPORTANT TO THE PERSON'S RE-ELECTION PROSPECTS; YOU WILL PERSONALLY WORK FOR THEIR RE-ELECTION; OR HAVE VOTED FOR AND DONATED TO THEIR CAMPAIGN OR THAT OF THEIR PARTY IN THE PAST.

DO NOT BOTHER TO SEND PEOPLE TO CALL ON A MEMBER WHO DO NOT LIVE IN THE DISTRICT THE MEMBER REPRESENTS. DO NOT BRING ALONG YOUR FAVOURITE 90-PAGE PAPER ON BI. ONCE YOU LEAVE, IT WILL BE IN THE TRASH BEFORE YOU GET BACK TO THE ELEVATOR LOBBY. BRIEF IS BETTER.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, EFFECTIVE LOBBYING IS NOT A ONE-TIME EVENT. IN YOUR FIRST MEETING, MAKE IT CLEAR YOU WILL BE BACK. BUT ALSO OFFER IN THE MEANTIME TO BE HELPFUL, TO BE A RESOURCE IN WAYS THAT MATTER TO THEM. IN YOUR FIRST MEETING DO NOT HANG AROUND AND TAKE UP TOO MUCH TIME. HAVE YOUR MESSAGE ORGANIZED, BE READY TO DELIVER IT CRISPLY AND THEN QUICKLY LEAVE.

A PROMPT DEPARTURE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE APPRECIATED AND IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF A GOOD RECEPTION NEXT TIME. IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR A MEMBER'S OFFICES TO HEAR FROM DOZENS OF DELEGATIONS A WEEK. FOR THAT FIRST MEETING IT IS BEST TO MEET IN THE MEMBER'S MAIN OFFICE. STAFF THERE WILL BE MORE SENIOR AND INFLUENTIAL THAN IN THE DISTRICT OFFICE.

IF THE MEETING GOES WELL, WRITE A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF THE MAJOR NEWSPAPER IN THE AREA THEY REPRESENT, SAYING SO. DO THEY HAVE A SATELLITE OFFICE IN THE DISTRICT? FIND OUT THE OFFICE HOURS AND MAKE A FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENT. IN A FEW WEEKS SHOW UP THERE WITH A COUPLE OF FRIENDS. IF YOU CAN'T GO, SEND A FRIEND TO THE LOCAL OFFICE. DO NOT BE A PEST BUT DO TAKE THE LONG VIEW. POLITE PERSISTENCE IS KEY.

NEXT, IDENTIFY AND CULTIVATE NEWS MEDIA PEOPLE WHO ARE INTERESTED IN BI, BOTH PRINT AND ELECTRONIC. THERE ARE AT LEAST 4-5 ALREADY VISIBLE IN THE TORONTO AREA MEDIA ALONE. WHILE BEING EVER-MINDFUL OF THEIR NEED TO MAINTAIN INDEPENDENCE AND PROFESSIONALISM, TRY TO MAKE CONTACT. IF THIS HAPPENS, OFFER TO BE HELPFUL. WHEN THEY MAKE PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR A FAVOURABLE POSITION, SEND A CONGRATULATORY LETTER TO THE EDITOR. IF THERE ARE CRITICISMS, ALSO SEND LETTERS OFFERING CONTRASTING VIEWS. MAKE THIS SOMEONE'S RESPONSIBILITY.

IF THEY SHOW ANY INCLINATION TO CO-OPERATE, DO THE SAME WITH STAFF IN THE HEADQUARTERS OF POLITICAL PARTIES ACTIVE IN YOUR TARGET GOVERNMENT'S ELECTED BODIES. LOOK HARD FOR ALLIES IN THE PARTIES AND BE VERY CONSCIOUS THAT FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERING VERSIONS OF BI HAVE HISTORICALLY APPEALED TO DIFFERENT LEFT, CENTRE AND RIGHT-WING IDEOLOGIES.

NAME A MEMBER OR TWO OF YOUR ORGANIZATION WHOSE JOB IT IS TO TRACK PUBLIC OPINION ON BASIC INCOME. MANY REPUTABLE POLLING FIRMS OFFER NEWSLETTERS AT LITTLE OR NO COST, CONTAINING THEIR LATEST POLLS RESULTS. PAY ATTENTION TO THE CROSS-TABULATIONS AND CLOSELY OBSERVE THE DIRECTIONS OF CHANGE AND THE FACTORS BEHIND THESE FOR MAJOR DEMOGRAPHIC GROUPS.

MAKE SURE THOSE DOING LOBBYING WITH POLITICIANS AND PUBLIC SERVANTS KNOW THE LATEST DATA ON PUBLIC OPINIONS AND BRING THESE TO THE ATTENTION OF CONTACTS. BE ON THE ALERT FOR RESULTS THAT MIGHT INFLUENCE CRITICS OF BI.

IF YOU HAVE THE RESOURCES, CONSIDER ORGANIZING YOUR OWN FOCUS GROUPS. THEY ARE NOT DIFFICULT TO CONDUCT, AND CAN PROVIDE INVALUABLE INSIGHTS INTO THE THINKING BEHIND KEY PUBLIC OPINIONS, INCLUDING MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND KNOWLEDGE GAPS, FOR IDENTIFIABLE SEGMENTS OF THE ELECTORATE. THEY DO NOT NEED TO BE EXPENSIVE, CERTAINLY MUCH LESS SO THAN SURVEYS. OFFER THE RESULTS OF THESE TO FAVOURABLE POLITICIANS AND PARTY OFFICIALS.

KNOW WHAT ELECTED BI CRITICS ARE SAYING. DEVELOP AND EXPRESS RESPONSES TO THESE, ESPECIALLY WHEN THESE CAN BE BACKED UP WITH SOUND AND RELEVANT DATA FROM RELIABLE STUDIES. DO NOT HESITATE TO SEND RELEVANT AND DIGESTIBLE INFORMATION TO CRITICS, ALWAYS BEING CAREFULLY RESPECTFUL OF THEIR VIEWS AND POSITIONS. IF AN OPPONENT SHOULD RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT THE EFFECT OF BI ON WORK EFFORT, POINTING TO EXPERIMENTAL DATA INDICATING THERE WAS A SMALL REDUCTION IN LABOUR SUPPLY, PRIMARILY BY EARLY THOSE JUST ENTERING THE WORK FORCE AND BY SECONDARY WAGE EARNERS.

YOU SHOULD ALSO POINT OUT WHAT WAS DONE WITH THE ADDITIONAL LEISURE TIME RECIPIENTS GAINED. MUCH OF THIS WENT TO INCREASED CHILD CARE, FOR ELDERLY RELATIVES; OR WAS USED TO GAIN FURTHER EDUCATION OR TO VOLUNTEER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE.

TO SUM UP, THERE ARE SEVERAL COMMON ARGUMENTS AGAINST BI. THREE OF THESE ARE PROMINENT AND HAVE BEEN AROUND SINCE MINCOME DAYS. THE THREE ARE: THE COST OF BI IS EXCESSIVE. IN RESPONSE, DO YOUR OWN COSTING WITH CONCRETE MODELS, USING AUTHORITATIVE ANALYSTS. THEN EMPHASIZE THE LONGER-TERM SAVINGS FROM INCREASED PUBLIC INVESTMENT BY RECIPIENTS IN THEIR OWN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE, IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT AND RELATED INCREASES IN EARNINGS.

NEXT IS THE FEAR OF REDUCING PAID EMPLOYMENT. IF AN OPPONENT SHOULD RAISE CONCERNS ABOUT THE EFFECT OF BI ON WORK EFFORT, POINT TO EXPERIMENTAL DATA INDICATING THERE WAS ONLY A SMALL REDUCTION IN LABOUR SUPPLY, PRIMARILY BY THOSE FIRST ENTERING THE WORK FORCE AND BY SECONDARY WAGE EARNERS. NOT BY PRIMARY WAGE EARNERS.

IN RESPONSE, YOU SHOULD POINT OUT WHAT WAS DONE WITH THE ADDITIONAL LEISURE TIME. MUCH OF THIS WENT TO INCREASED CARE FOR CHILDREN OR ELDERLY RELATIVES; OR WAS USED TO GAIN FURTHER EDUCATION OR TO VOLUNTEER FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE. THESE HAVE SUBSTANTIAL OFF-SETTING SOCIAL BENEFITS.

THE FIRST TWO ARE FROM A RIGHT-WING PERSPECTIVE. FROM THE LEFT, CAN COME A CONCERN WITH THE LOSS OF SOME EXISTING PROGRAM BENEFITS, USING BI AS THE EXCUSE. SEVERAL RESPONSES ARE POSSIBLE. ONE IS FOR GOVERNMENT TO MAKE A "NO-LOSERS" PLEDGE. IT WOULD ONLY BE NECESSARY IF ASPECTS OF EXISTING PROGRAMS ARE REPLACED BY BI. MAKE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN ANY SAVINGS FROM ALLEGED PROGRAM CUTS AND THOSE FROM ADMINISTRATIVE AND OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES. ANOTHER IS TO SET UP AN APPEALS SYSTEM FOR THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEY HAVE BEEN TREATED UNFAIRLY.

MAKE IT SOMEONE'S JOB TO STAY UP TO DATE WITH THE LATEST BI RESEARCH AND PUBLISHED FINDINGS. IF YOU HAVE THE CAPACITY, BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE RESULTS OF NORTH AMERICAN EXPERIMENTS OF THE 1960S AND 1970S, AND ON MORE RECENT ONES GOING ON AROUND THE WORLD. CRITICS MAY OTHERWISE USE THEM SELECTIVELY AGAINST YOU.

FINALLY, ONCE A PIECE OF BI LEGISLATION IS ADOPTED, DO NOT ASSUME THE BATTLE HAS BEEN WON. IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES WILL REMAIN AND WILL NOT BE TRIVIAL. IN MY 20 PLUS YEARS IN MANAGEMENT CONSULTING TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR, I HAVE YET TO SEE A SINGLE PUBLIC PROGRAM THAT WORKED IN PRACTICE EXACTLY AS THE DESIGNERS OR THE LAW INTENDED . IT IS BETTER TO STATE AT THE OUTSET THAT THERE WILL BE A POST-IMPLEMENTATION EVALUATION PERIOD, FOLLOWED BY ADJUSTMENTS AS REQUIRED. THAT WAY, MAKING CHANGES IS MUCH LESS EMBARRASSING AND MORE EFFECTIVE.

PRIOR ATTEMPTS TO ADOPT BASIC INCOME PROGRAMS HAVE RUN INTO POLITICALLY AND FINANCIALLY COSTLY IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS, EXACTLY AS HAS THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT WITH UNIVERSAL CREDIT. ADVOCATES SHOULD BE AWARE OF THESE DETAILS. WHILE THE BI CONCEPT IS RELATIVELY SIMPLE, THE OPERATIONAL REALITY IS NOT. IF THEY WILL LISTEN, GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BE WARNED OF THIS FACT.

ONCE THE BILL IS PASSED AND THE PROGRAM IS RUNNING WELL, QUIETLY CELEBRATE AND THEN HAVE ONE HELL OF A BIG PARTY. AND PLEASE INVITE ME.