

## The Citizen's Basic Income to Help the Transition to Democracy

### Essay presented to UN Regional Commissions' High Level Meeting on Transition to Democracy, Beirut, Lebanon, January 15 and 16, 2012

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It is an honor for me to be invited to participate in this "United Nations Regional Commissions' High Level Meeting on Transition to Democracy", in this panel on "Balancing Growth and Social Justice", concerning mainly the Arab Countries, held in Beirut, Lebanon, on January 15 and 16, 2012. This is a highly relevant opportunity to exchange ideas about the experiences of so many countries in the five continents about how we can raise the level of justice in our societies so as to live with a sense of solidarity and peace.

As a Brazilian Senator, member of the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores), author of Law 10.835/2004 that institutes a Citizen's Basic Income to all residents of Brazil, including those foreigners who are living in Brazil for five years or more, no matter the origin, race, sex, age or socioeconomic condition, and also Co-President of Honor of the Basic Income Earth Network – BIEN – I am happy to bring you information about what is going on in my country, and about the development of this proposal in other parts of the world.

According to the law, approved by consensus of all parties, in December 2002 in the Federal Senate, and in December 2003, in the Chamber of Deputies, and then sanctioned by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in January 8, 2004, the Citizen's Basic Income will be an annual monetary benefit, equal to all, sufficient to attend the basic needs of each person. It may be paid monthly, in equal parcels. Its level will consider the level of development of the nation and the financial possibilities. It will be instituted gradually, under the Executive criteria, taking into account those most in need in the first place, such as the Bolsa Família Program does today.

In his "The Idea of Justice" (Penguin Books, 2009), the Nobel Prize economist Amartya Sen tells us about the importance of searching for justice, of building democracy, of the government built by debate, as well as of the nature, the viability and the extent of the demands of human rights. He mentions the sense of perception of clear injustices that could be overcome that characterized the actions of the Parisians in the French Revolution of 1789, Mahatma Gandhi in India and Martin Luther King Jr in America.

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<sup>1</sup> *Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy* was born on June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1941 in São Paulo, Brazil. He completed his Bachelor's at the School of Business Administration of São Paulo, of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, where he became a Professor of Economics in 1966. In 1968 he completed his Master's and in 1973 his Ph.D in Economics at Michigan State University. In 1978, he was elected State Representative at the State Assembly of São Paulo. In February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1980, he was one of the co-founders of the Partido dos Trabalhadores. In 1982, he became a Federal Representative. In 1988, he was elected City Councilman and President of the City Council of São Paulo. In 1990, 1998 and 2006 he was elected Senator representing the State of São Paulo and the Workers' Party for three eight-year terms. As a Senator, he was able to approve the Law to institute a Citizen's Basic Income that one day will become unconditional. His main book is "Renda de Cidadania. A Saída é pela Porta", edited by Fundação Perseu Abramo and Cortez Editora, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 2002, 6<sup>th</sup> ed, 2010.

Amartya Sen mentions several examples of how democracy, freedom of expression and of the press have contributed for societies to solve their problems including that of severe famines.

Sen asserts that the history of the Middle East and of the Muslim people includes a large number of episodes of public discussions and participatory politics through dialogue. In the Muslim kingdoms centralized in Cairo, in Baghdad and Istanbul, in Iran, in India or even in Spain, there were many defenders of public discussions. He argues that the degree of tolerance with respect to different points of view was frequently exceptional in comparison to Europe in the XVI and XVII centuries. I am sure that Amartya Sen is regarding very well the development of this Meeting in Beirut.

Sen's starting point is the Theory of Justice as Equity elaborated by John Rawls. In his "A Theory of Justice" (Harvard University Press, 1971), Rawls establishes the principles of Justice that should be put into practice in a society:

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all (the principle of equal liberty);
2. The inequalities of social and economic advantages are justified only if (a) they contribute to the improvement of the less advantaged of the society (the principle of difference), and if (b) they are linked to positions that everybody has equal opportunities to occupy (the principle of equal opportunity).

In 2005, I had the opportunity to attend the first lecture given together by Professors Amartya Sen and Philippe Van Parijs, in their discipline, "Justice and Cultural Diversity", for the graduate students of Harvard University. Van Parijs asked the students who had a mother language other than English among them. About one third raised their hands. He observed that even having different backgrounds – in terms of origin, race, language, religion and so on – we could have common views on our criteria about how to build a just society.

Then, Amartya Sen explained that in that discipline they would examine what are the institutions that would help us in raising the level of justice. For example, when slavery was abolished, it raised the level of justice in society. If we provide a good level of education for all boys and girls in the society, we are raising the level of justice. "In this course we will examine", Sen mentioned, "to what extent an Unconditional Basic Income, as argued in favor of by Professor Philippe Van Parijs and Senator Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, who is visiting us today, will or not raise the level of justice in society." I felt quite happy.

We could think of other instruments that would help in this direction, such as the stimulus to cooperatives, the expansion of microcredit, the agrarian reform, a good public health system, the participatory budget and so on. John Rawls mentions in "A Theory of Justice" that a negative income tax that would guarantee a minimum income to all would help the application of the principles of justice.

According to Professor Philippe Van Parijs, in "Real Freedom for All. What (if anything) may justify capitalism?" (1995, Oxford), much better than the Negative Income Tax to Guarantee a Minimum Income is the Unconditional Basic Income to all, no matter origin, sex, race, age or socioeconomic condition, for the purpose of applying the three principles of justice.

What follows is the development of the paper that I have prepared for the Book of essays for Philippe Van Parijs, "Arguing about justice", edited by Axel Grosser and Yannick Vanderborght (2011, UCL, Universitaires de Louvain), because of his 20th year as the responsible for the Hoover Chair in economic and social ethics at the Catholic University of Louvain as well of his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **How Basic Income inspired Brazil's social policy**

In 1966-68, and again in 1970-73, as I was studying for my Master's and my PhD in Economics at Michigan State University, in the USA, I came across the concept of income guarantee through a negative income tax (NIT). Back in Brazil, I interacted with Professor Antônio Maria da Silveira, who had proposed the institution of such a NIT in our country (Silveira 1975). When I was elected Senator by PT-SP for the first time in 1990, we then worked together on a proposal called the *Guaranteed Minimum Income Scheme*, PGRM. Every adult person 25 years or older who did not earn at least 45 thousand Cruzeiros per month (at that time, about US\$150) should have the right to a complement of 30% to 50% of the difference between that level and his/her disposable income. The project was approved by the Federal Senate, by consensus of all parties, on December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1991. It went to the Chamber of Deputies where, at the Committee of Finance and Taxation, received an enthusiastic written opinion from Representative Germano Rigotto (PMDB-RS). The proposal, however, was not voted in that form because of several developments that followed.

The debate on the subject then started to flourish in Brazil. In 1991, during a discussion with approximately 50 economists who were close to the Workers' Party (PT), Antônio Maria da Silveira and I presented the PGRM proposal. Professor José Márcio Camargo observed that the guarantee of a minimum income was a good step, but that it should be granted to needy families only, with children attending school on a regular basis. These children would then not be induced to work in order to help the survival of their families.

In 1995, taking these thoughts into consideration, Mayor José Roberto Magalhães Teixeira (PSDB), in the municipality of Campinas, and Governor Cristóvam Buarque (PT), in the Federal District, started minimum income schemes linked to educational opportunities. The programs were called *Bolsa-Escola*. All families with income *per capita* below half the minimum wage would have the right to receive: a) in Campinas: whatever would be necessary to complete half the minimum wage *per capita* for the family; b) in the Federal District: a full minimum wage, no matter the size of the family, or how many people in the family were working or not. Those experiments inspired several other municipalities. In the National Congress, bills were presented defining the support level that the Federal Government would provide to municipalities introducing minimum income programs related to educational opportunities.

In 1996, I took Philippe Van Parijs for an audience with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the Minister of Education, Paulo Renato Souza. Van Parijs argued that an unconditional basic income was a first-best, but also recognized that starting with a minimum income guarantee associated with education opportunities was a good step, because it was related to investment in human capital. President Fernando Henrique Cardoso then gave permission to the National Congress to approve a law which authorized the federal government to grant a financial support of

50% on the amount spent by the municipalities that provide a minimum income linked to social and educational opportunities.

In March 2001, again under Fernando Henrique Cardoso's impulse, the National Congress approved another law authorizing the federal government to conclude agreements with all Brazilian municipalities in order to implement the *Bolsa Escola*. Later on, the government also instituted the *Bolsa-Alimentação* and the *Auxílio-Gás* programs. In 2003, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government instituted the *Vale-Alimentação* program.

In October 2003, President Lula's government decided to unify and rationalize these different programs into a single *Bolsa Família* Program, which had 3.5 million families registered in December 2003. The number increased to 6.5 million families in December 2004, 11 million families in December 2006, and 13.352 million families, or almost 50 million Brazilians, in December 2011.

### **The Bolsa Familia: A Success Story**

Along with other economic policy instruments, the *Bolsa Família* Program greatly contributed for the reduction of absolute poverty and the level of inequality in Brazil. The Gini coefficient had reached 0.599 in 1995, but gradually decreased every single year, reaching 0.581 in 2003, 0.544 in 2008, 0.530 in 2009, and 0.526 in 2010<sup>2</sup>. The proportion of families under the extreme poverty line, with income *per capita* below R\$ 93.75 which was 17.5% in 2003, decreased to 8.8% in 2008. The proportion of poor families, with income *per capita* below R\$ 187.50, decreased from 39.4% in 2003 to 25.3%, in 2008. These favorable results can also be shown in the following way. The 20% poorest families had an income *per capita* increase 47% faster than the income of the richest 20%. While in 2001, the average income of the 20% richest families was 27 times more than that of the 20% poorest families, in 2008 it was 19 times higher, a reduction of 30% in inequality in seven years.

Since June, 2011, when the newly elected President Dilma Rousseff announced the Brazil Without Misery Plan and an adjustment of the program, the *Bolsa Família* stated to function as follows: If the family *per capita* income is below R\$ 70 per month, it has the right to receive a basic benefit of R\$ 70 per month<sup>3</sup>. All families with monthly *per capita* income below R\$ 140 are entitled to R\$ 32, R\$ 64, R\$ 96, R\$ 128 or R\$ 160 if they have one, two, three, four, five or more children under 16 years of age respectively, plus R\$ 38 for each adolescent between 16 to 18 years of age (up to a maximum of two). Therefore, the average benefit per family has increased to R\$ 120 per month, with a minimum of R\$ 32 and a maximum of R\$ 306 per month.

The average size of the Brazilian family is 3.3 persons. The average is somehow higher, for families that benefit from the program. These families need to meet important requirements. If the mother is pregnant, she has to go to the public health network for prenatal examinations and monitoring. Parents have to take their children up to six years of age to be vaccinated according to the calendar of the Ministry of Health. Children from seven to 16 years of age have to go to school, with

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<sup>2</sup> Sources: Study number 30 of IPEA – Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, First Analysis about the results of the 2008 PNAD – Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios, published in September 24th, 2009, plus the 2009 PNAD and 2010 Census results officially published by the IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística in 2010 and 2011..

<sup>3</sup> As of June 1st, 2011, R\$ 1,00 was US\$0.63, and €0.44.

an attendance average of at least 85%. Children from 16 to 18 years of age must attend school with at least 75% attendance.

Despite the achieved progress, Brazil is still one of the most unequal countries in the world. While the poorest 40% live with 10% of the national income, the richest 10% live with more than 40%. The income appropriated by the 1% richest is the same as of the 45% poorest. Undoubtedly, the creation and expansion of the *Bolsa Família* Program had positive effects. However, in order to move towards a more efficient and direct eradication of the absolute poverty, as well as to achieve greater equality and guarantee greater real freedom for all, Brazil should implement a true Citizen's Basic Income (CBI).

### **Towards A CBI**

During the 1990s, I increasingly interacted with the founders of the *Basic Income European Network* (BIEN)<sup>4</sup>, and took part in its bi-annual congresses. I was then convinced that an unconditional Basic Income for all was much better than conditional schemes or even a NIT. For this reason, in December 2001, I presented a new bill of law to the Brazilian Senate, which called for the institution of the Citizen's Basic Income (CBI). After having studied the proposition, Senator Francelino Pereira (PFL-MG) argued that it had to be made compatible with the Fiscal Responsibility Law under which it is necessary to secure correspondent revenue for expenditures. He suggested the inclusion of a paragraph saying that the CBI had to be instituted step by step, starting with those most in need, until one day it will be unconditional for everyone regardless of income. It reminded me of James Edward Meade's recommendation, in the last chapter of *Agathotopia*. What is important is to have our objectives crystal clear in mind, and to move firmly, gradually, in that direction.

Due to this aspect, the bill of law was approved by consensus of all parties in the Senate (December 2002) and the Chamber of Deputies (December 2003). When it came to the President for his examination, Minister of Finance Antonio Palocci told him: "since it is to be introduced step by step, it is feasible and you may sanction it". On January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2004, President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva sanctioned the Law 10.835/2004 that institutes a CBI, step by step, under the Executive criteria, starting with those most in need, such as in the *Bolsa Família* program. Later, then, we will have an equal CBI for everyone as an individual right to participate in the wealth of the nation. On this day, the President received the following message from economist Celso Furtado:

*At this moment when Your Excellency sanctioned the Citizen's Basic Income Law I want to express my conviction that, with this measure, our country puts itself in the vanguard of those that fight for the building of a more harmonious society. Brazil was frequently referred as one of the last countries to abolish slave labor. Now with this act which is a result of the principles of good citizenship and the wide social vision of Senator Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy, Brazil will be referred as the first that institutes an extensive system of solidarity and furthermore, it was approved by the representatives of its people*

As I see it, a true CBI should be as high as possible in order to meet each person's vital needs, and should be paid to all inhabitants of a community, municipality, state, country, or even, someday, to the whole population of a continent or the world. Regardless of his/her origin, race, sex, age, civil, social or economic

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<sup>4</sup> In 2004, BIEN became the Basic Income Earth Network.

condition, everyone will have the right to receive the CBI as a right to participate in the wealth of that community, municipality, state, country, continent or the planet. Such a scheme has many advantages. Let me mention a few of them.

First, all the bureaucracy involved in knowing each person's income in formal or informal market would be eliminated. This would also allow for the elimination of any stigma or shame, since individuals would not need to tell civil servants: "I earn only *this much*, so I need a supplement of income for my survival".

Second, perhaps the most important advantage of the Citizen's Basic Income is that it raises everyone's level of dignity and freedom. From the point of view of what Amartya Sen says in "Development as Freedom" (1999, New York: Knopf): "Development, to be meaningful, must mean a greater degree of freedom for everyone in society." Take the case, for example, of a girl who does not have another alternative for her survival than selling her body. Or a young man who, to support himself and his family is forced to work for the drug traffic gangs. If there is a Citizen's Basic Income, they can refuse those alternatives, and wait for opportunities that match their propensity or vocation.

Third, a basic income allows for the elimination of the dependency phenomena. Conditional programs function as follows: if a person's income is below a given amount, she is entitled to an income supplement. When she gets a job, she loses (part of) the benefit. Hence, she might decide not to take that job and gets into the unemployment or the poverty trap. With a universal basic income she will have more employment options.

One of the most often-heard objections to Basic Income consists in saying that it would stimulate idleness. The Brazilian Constitution and laws, as well as the laws of so many countries, assure the right to private property. That means that the owners of factories, farms, hotels, restaurants, banks, real estate and financial bonds have the right to receive capital revenues, that is, profit, rent and interest. Do the Brazilian laws, or of most other countries, mention that to receive those revenues, the capital owners must demonstrate that they are working? No, and they usually work, and many of them also dedicate a good part of their time to voluntary work. Do they need to demonstrate that their children are attending school? No. Nevertheless, their children usually attend the best schools.

So, if we assure those who have more resources the right to receive their revenues without conditions, why not extend to everyone, rich and poor, the right to participate in the nation's wealth as our right for being Brazilians? If we want to eliminate absolute poverty, becoming a more equal and fair society and assuring dignity and real freedom to everyone in the society, instituting the Citizen's Basic Income is a solution as simple as leaving home through the door.

### **Turning Basic Income into reality in Brazil**

In Brazil, we could consider the institution of the Citizen's Basic Income (CBI) as consistent with the values defended by the indigenous, by the fighting "quilombolas" and those for the slavery abolition, and by all those researchers and scientists who fight for the creation of a fair nation.

In the same way as the first minimum income linked to educational opportunities started locally, in Campinas and in the Federal District, it is possible to start the CBI in communities or municipalities.

Take the example of *Recivitas – Instituto pela Revitalização da Cidadania*, an organization which has created a free library and a free toy center in Vila de Paranapiacaba (Serra do Mar, 1,200 inhabitants). It has recently proposed the creation of a CBI. *Recivitas* President Bruna Augusto Pereira and coordinator Marcus Brancaglione dos Santos are waiting for the steps of Santo André's Mayor to carry out the project. While waiting, they started a pioneering experience in another village, Quatinga Velha where, since the beginning of 2009, they pay R\$ 30, or US\$ 18, per month to 83 persons. This is possible thanks to the voluntary contributions of several citizens.

Another promising experiment is taking place in Santo Antonio do Pinhal, in Serra da Mantiqueira, 177 km from São Paulo, 6.500 inhabitants. There, on October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the Municipal Chamber, by consensus of its nine councilmen, approved the Municipal Bill of Law for a Basic Income, proposed by Mayor José Augusto de Guarnieri Pereira (PT). Among the 5.565 Brazilian municipalities, it is the first that approved a law instituting the CBI. Its first article declares:

*"With the purpose to turn Santo Antonio do Pinhal into a Municipality that harmonizes sustainable social and economic development with the application of justice principles, meaning the solidarity practice among all its inhabitants, and, above all, to grant a higher level of dignity to all its inhabitants, the Citizen's Basic Income of Santo Antonio do Pinhal – CBI is instituted, consisting in the rights of all registered residents or residents in the Municipality for at least 05 (five) years, regardless of their social and economic status, to receive a monetary benefit."*

Exactly as in the federal law, it also states that the CBI will be achieved gradually, giving priority to the most needed segments of the population. To finance the payment of the CBI, a Municipal Fund will be created.

To turn the CBI feasible for the whole country however, it would be necessary to collect a great amount of resources. If it wants to provide an even modest improvement in relation to the *Bolsa Família*, Brazil should begin with at least an amount higher than the average paid by this scheme, *i.e.* R\$ 120 per family, which means something like R\$ 40 per person for a family of three members. So, if we think about a CBI of R\$ 40, it would be R\$ 240 per month for a family of six members. In 12 months, the yearly amount would be R\$ 480 per person. With Brazil's population reaching 191 million in 2011, we would need R\$ 91,680 billion, something around 2.71% % of the Gross National Product of R\$ 3,388 trillion or US\$ 2,287 trillion in 2010, about 6.7 times the *Bolsa Família* budget of R\$ 13.6 billion for 2010, a considerable leap.

R\$ 40, or US\$ 22, per month is a modest amount, but in time, with the progress of the country and the growing approval from the population, the CBI could turn into R\$ 100, then R\$ 1.000, and so on. A way to make it feasible is the creation of the Citizen's Brazil Fund, according to the Bill of Law 82/1999, which I presented to the Senate. It has already been approved by consensus by the Senate, and is in legal procedures in the Chamber of Representatives, where it has been approved by the Committee of Family and Social Security. This Fund is constituted by 50% of the resources generated by authorization or concession of natural resources exploitation; 50% of the revenues from rentals of federal government real estate, which belong to all the population; 50% of the revenues generated by concession and services and public works and other resources. The output generated by the investments of the

Fund resources, like the Alaska Permanent Fund, will be used to pay CBI to all the Brazilian residents.

Citizen's Brazil Fund legislation is now awaiting approval by the Chamber of Representatives Committee of Finance and Taxation. A new reporter has been nominated, Federal Representative Cláudio Puty (PT-PA) (from the Workers' Party, State of Pará). He will be able to present a favorable report as long as there is a green light from the Executive. This is not so easy, although I always say that I am ready to accept any suggestion to make the proposal feasible, such as to diminish the proportions that are listed in the proposal. It is important to consider that Congress approved in 2010 President Lula's initiative regulating the proceeds of the oil found in the Pre-Salt area deep in the Atlantic Ocean. The legislation has the eradication of poverty, the expansion of educational opportunities, scientific and technological progress, and better environmental and cultural activities as its main objectives. There is a strong dispute, however, between the representatives of the Federal Units, 26 States and one Federal District, on how to distribute the resources from the exploitation of the pre-salt oil.

Another promising alternative is being pointed out Professor Philippe Van Parijs while quoting Edward Glaeser's excellent book "The Triumph of the City", Penguin, 2011, p.221:

"Smart environmentalism needs to embrace incentives (...) Throughout the world, we can adopt a global emission tax that charges people for the damage done by their carbon emissions (...) Opponents of big government understandably worry that this type of policy will just turn into an added source of revenue for the government, but this worry can be reduced with a public commitment to rebating tax to citizens as an energy dividend, much as the state of Alaska pays each of its citizens an annual dividend from all revenues."

Especially when more people understand how CBI could contribute for the construction of a fair and more civilized Brazil, more voices will be saying to the President of the Republic, to the Governors and Mayors: "It is a good proposal. Let's put it into practice right away".

### **Conclusion: what are the immediate prospects?**

During the IV National Congress of the PT in Brasilia, February 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010, by the unanimous vote of the 1.350 delegates, the following point was added to the National Program of Dilma Rouseff, who was acclaimed Presidential candidate by consensus:

*"The Great Transformation*

*The accelerated growth and the fight against racial, social, regional inequalities and the promotion of sustainable development will be the axis of the economic development structure.*

*19) The expansion and the strengthening of the popular consumption goods, that produces strong positive impact over the productive sector system, will be attained by:*

*a)...*



f) permanent improvement of the income transfer programs such as the Bolsa Família, to eradicate hunger and poverty, to facilitate access of the population to employment, education, health and higher income;

g) transition from the Bolsa Família Program towards the Citizen's Basic Income, CBI, unconditional, as a right of every person to participate in the wealth of the nation, such as set by the Law 10.835/2004, a PT initiative, approved by all parties in the National Congress and sanctioned by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in January 8, 2004."

It would be rational that the Bolsa Família and the state social programs become unified since they are quite similar. Both could be increased in value, for more people, in the direction of the CBI.

President Dilma Rousseff was elected in October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010 in the second ballot, with almost 55.7 million votes, 56% of the total. On her inauguration day, on 2011, January 1<sup>st</sup>, she announced that the eradication of misery or extreme poverty in Brazil would be her first and most important priority.

On June 11<sup>st</sup>, President Dilma Rousseff announced the Brazil Without Misery Plan. The main purpose is to include in the program those 16.27 million people who are not yet being benefitted by the Bolsa Família program, although they are people who, according to the 2010 Census, are living with less than 70 reais *per capita*. She announced that the government will start making an active search for these people wherever they are. Since many of these people are children up to 14 years of age, the Bolsa Família Program increased the benefit from three to five children up to 15 years of age that may receive the 32 reais per child. This measure is expected to reach 800 thousand families more, up to 2014, and 1.3 million more children.

It will be a tremendous challenge for a 150-year old financial institution like the Caixa Econômica Federal, a *Caisse des Dépôts*, to administer the unconditional right to all 191 million Brazilians, even more in the future. But for an institution that was able to increase the number of families being benefitted by the Bolsa Família Program from 3.5 million families in December, 2003, to 13 million in December 2011, that corresponds to around 50 million inhabitants, and so efficiently, to manage the Citizen's Basic Income to all Brazilians is a feasible objective. It is my purpose to help President Dilma Rousseff and her Ministers to take the necessary steps to institute the Citizen's Basic Income by 2014.

***(End of my lecture to the Beirut Meeting. My oral exposition will be of 7 to 10 minutes as required by the organization. The following essay is just a more complete information on the origins of the Basic Income proposal and its development, including in the Arab world and Africa, especially in Iraq and Namibia)***

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## **Some Good News about the Advancement of an Unconditional Basic Income.**

### **Part of the Lecture to the Tenth North America Basic Income Guarantee Congress**

**New York, February 27, 2011**

Eduardo Matarazzo Suplicy

Those who were present in the USBIG Congress in Washington D.C., in 2004, will remember that, in one of our main conferences, I had the honor to share the table with Alaska's ex-Governor, Jay Hammond (1922-2005). In that occasion, I spoke about the development of the proposition of a Citizen's Basic Income in Brazil. I told you that President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva had sanctioned the Law 10.835/2004, that institutes the CBI, step by step, under the Executive criteria, starting with those most in need, such as the Bolsa Família does, until the day when we will have an equal income for everyone as a right of everyone to participate in the wealth of the nation. Jay Hammond made his speech about how he had first proposed the constitution of a fund that would pertain to everyone in the fishermen village of Bristol Bay, and then how, in 1976, as Governor, he proposed to the people to separate 25% of the royalties coming out of the exploration of natural resources to build what became the successful story of the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend system. On that day I asked Jay Hammond whether, before making those proposals, he had read Thomas Paine's essay "Agrarian Justice", written in 1795 to the National Assembly of France. He hadn't. I mentioned that he had applied that ideas expressed two centuries before by one of the most important ideologues of the American and French Revolutions, and he was happy to know it. More than that, he told me that in the same way that I was trying to stimulate Iraq to follow Alaska's example, he was also trying to persuade his colleague from the Republican Party, President George Walker Bush, to propose the Iraqis to follow Alaska's example, since they had so much oil reserves.

Well, those who were here in New York in 2009, will remember that I told you about my trip to Iraq in January of 2008. Invited by the President of the Council of Representatives of Iraq I spent two days in Baghdad telling several ministers and members of the parliament how they could democratize and pacify that nation through the introduction of a Citizen's Basic Income that would make everyone feel as if they had a stake in the wealth of the Nation. I showed you the video of my trip arriving there, very well protected by a helmet and a bullet-proof vest. In February 2011, in Brasília, I was invited to have lunch with the Iraqi Ambassador in Brazil, the President of the Iraqi-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the two main aides to the present President of Iraq. They wanted to tell me that the proposals that I made in Bagdad in 2008 had recently been the object of a message sent by President Jalal Talabani, to be appreciated by the Parliament, to institute that the oil reserves of Iraq pertains to the people and to the governorates, that every Iraqi family should have the right to receive about US\$ 65 per month, what would be around US\$ 15 to US\$ 20 per month to all 30 million Iraqis. Last January 5, 2012, Mr. Jalal Jamed Dawwod Chaya, President of the Iraqi-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, sent the attached Law about Gas and Oil, in Arab, already approved by the Iraqi

Council of Representatives, that is now being examined by the President to be sanctioned probably by March 2012.

Also, in our USBIG Congress of 2009, Guy Standing told us about the pioneer experience that was just starting in the rural village of Otjivero in the Omitara region of Namibia, 100 Km from Windhoek, Namibia's capital. He suggested that all of us here present could give a contribution to that fund that was built out of voluntary contributions from Namibian citizen's, from others around the world, and from the German churches who were persuaded by the efforts mainly of Bishop Zephania Kameeta, the Chairman of the Namibian Coalition for a Basic Income Grant. Last February 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup>, I visited Namibia to see with my own eyes the results of providing to almost 1,000 residents of Otjivero 1,000 Namibian dollars, equivalent to about US\$ 13 dollars, per month, as long as they had been living there since December 2007. From January 2008 to December 2009, they all received that monthly amount. From January 2010 on, they have received a smaller amount, of 80 Namibian dollars per month. With Bishop Kameeta, Dirk and Claudia Haarmann and other enthusiasts of the Namibian Coalition for a BIG, accompanied by the Brazilian Ambassador to Namibia, José Vicente Lessa, we went from the Windhoek airport straight to Otjivero. At our arrival, around 1:00 p.m. and under a very strong sun, we stopped our cars to walk with the people, who welcomed us with songs and dances, until we stopped under the shadow of a very large Arrow Thorn Tree, where over 300 people sat down on benches to talk to us.

I told them how happy I was to know about that experience, since in Brazil we had approved a law to institute a Citizen's Basic Income that would be introduced gradually with time. But that I was also stimulating local experiences, such as that one to start the basic income. On the other hand, I could see how they wanted very much for the Namibian authorities in the Executive, as well as in the National Assembly, to know about the advantages of what was happening with them, so as to really embrace the cause and to put it into practice all over Namibia.

Bishop kameeta told us how the Otjivero experience had made us better understand the miracle of the multiplication of bread and fish. When Jesus was called attention by his disciples in Galilee that the 5,000 people who were listening to his words were already tired and hungry, he told them to give them food. But we have here only five loaves of bread and fish, they said. Jesus, then, did not say to the people that some of them deserve it, others don't; that some should stay on line, others shouldn't. He simply said, distribute equally for all. From then on, a new sense of solidarity started, so that each one started to give to others whatever they had. Since a new demand, however modest, started to exist in that village, some of the people started to produce vegetables and fruits, others bread, bricks, clothes and so on. Economic activity and entrepreneurship started to increase, unemployment diminished, malnourishment practically disappeared, children started to go more to school, school dropout came down from 40% to zero, criminality came down 42%, a new sense of everybody helping everyone started, in a way that people helped those who were ill be taken to the clinic and so on.

I went to the houses and could see a woman who produces over 10 types of vegetables and fruits around her house; another one had waken up at 5:00 a.m. to bake breads in their home stove, to be sold by one Namibian dollar each; the other who was sewing clothes; the other was making bricks, and so on. I visited the health clinic and the village primary school for about 350 children. I decided to return on the

following Tuesday, to talk again with them and also to visit the children in a school day. All of them in uniforms, they chanted to us beautiful songs, such as Africa, Africa, Africa. I read to them this cartoon story that one of our best Brazilian cartoonist, Ziraldo, offered me as a gift, for people to better understand what the basic income is. They liked very much. In retribution I sang to them Bob Dylan's "Blowin in the Wind". In Windhoek, I had meetings with the President Hifikepune Pohamba, the Prime Minister Nahas Angula, the Ministers of Trade and Industry, Hage Geingob, and of Health and Social Affairs, Richard Kamvi, the Director of the National Planning Commission, Tom Alwendo, the Speaker of the House Theo-Ben Gurirab, and the Chief Whip SWAPO, Peter Katjavivi, in the Parliament. To all of them I spoke about the relevance of that pioneer experience and the good results that it was showing for all of us who believe in the Basic Income in the five continents. I had also the opportunity to participate in large conferences of the Lutheran Church of Katutura, a large popular region of Windhoek, and others organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

### **The Origins of the proposal starts with the History of Humanity**

It is a good sense proposal. Its bases were elaborated along the history of the human being and they are present in all the religions and in the thinking of a large spectrum of great philosophers, economists and thinkers.

When you left your home today, did you pass through the window or any other way?

Through the door? Well, as Confucius Said, 520 years before Christ that "uncertainty is even worse than poverty" and that "can anyone leave his home except through the door?"

We want to demonstrate that, if we want to eliminate absolute poverty, becoming a more equal and fair society and assuring dignity and real freedom to everyone in the society, instituting the Citizen's Basic Income is a solution as simple as leaving home through the door.

300 years before Christ, in the book "Politics", philosopher Aristotle taught that politics is the science that shows how to reach a fair life for everyone – the common good. For this, it is necessary political justice, which must be preceded by distributive justice that makes more equal those who are so unequal.

Which is the most cited Hebraic word in the Holy Bible, 513 times in the Old Testament? It is Tzedaka, which means social justice, justice in the society, which was the great longing of the Jewish people, as well as the Palestine people.

In the New Testament, in the Acts of Apostles, we observe that they decided to join all their possessions, to live in solidarity, so as to provide to each one according to his/her needs. In Jesus' parables, like in the Vineyard Landlord, we find similar principles. He hired several workers along the day. With each one he agreed what both considered fair. At the end of the journey he began to pay, starting with the last ones that had arrived, giving to everyone the same amount. When he reached the first peasant, this one complained; you are paying the same to me as the last one that arrived here and I worked much more than he did. And the vineyard landlord answered; so, didn't you realize that I'm paying exactly what we both considered fair, and that the last one that arrived here also has the right to receive enough for the needs of his family?

In the Second Epistle of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, he recommends everybody to follow Jesus' example. Despite being very mighty, he had decided to join the poor people and to live among them. As it is written, in order to have justice and equality, "He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that gathered little had no lack".

Also the followers of Muhammad, the Qurán and the Islam, in this aspect, adopt the similar principles. In the Hadith Book, the second of the four caliphs, Omar, said: Everyone that had big properties should separate a part for the ones who had little or nothing.

In Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, in "Ethics for the New Millennium", affirms that if we accept the luxurious consumption of the very rich we should ensure before the survival of all humanity.

If we advance in the History, in the beginning of the XVI century, we will find the taught a great humanist, Thomas More. In 1516, he wrote a very nice book, "Utopia", a place where everything works well. The story contains a dialog about capital punishment that, after being introduced in England, did not contribute to the reduction of violent crimes. So, the character commented that much better than inflicting these horrible punishments to whom does not have another alternative of becoming first a thief and then a corpse, is to assure everyone's survival. Based on this reflection, a friend of Thomas More, Juan Luis Vives, wrote to the mayor of the Flemish city Bruges, a subvention treaty for the poor in which, for the first time, he proposed the guarantee of a minimum income.

Two centuries later, Thomas Paine, considered one of the greatest ideologues of the French and American revolutions, explained to the National Assembly of France, in 1795, in "Agrarian Justice", that poverty is originated by civilization and private property. In America, where he had been before the independence, he didn't see such deprivation and poverty as in the European villages and cities. But he considered a good sense that the person who cultivates the land and makes some improvement should have the right to receive the outcome of that cultivation. However, he should separate a part of this revenue to a fund that belongs to all. This fund, once accumulated, should pay a basic capital and income to each resident in this country, not as a charity, but as a right of everyone to participate in the wealth of the nation that was taken away when private property was instituted. This was a proposal for all countries.

Another Englishman, an elementary school teacher, Thomas Spence, in a pamphlet published in London under the title "The Rights of Infants"(1797), proposed that each city should have auctions to cover all public expenditures including the building and the maintenance of real estate, as well as taxes paid to the government, that will distribute quarterly equal parts of the surplus among all residents ensuring

In 1848, Joseph Charlier, in "Solution du problème social", stated that everybody has the right to enjoy the usufruct of natural resources created by the Providence to meet all their needs. In "Principles of Political Economy" (1848), the English economist and philosopher John Stuart Mill defended that a minimum for survival should be assured to everyone with or without capacity to work.

Joseph Charlier lived in Brussels, in the same city and not far from where Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, as Philippe Van Parijs showed to me, in 1948, had written the Communist Manifesto. Later they wrote the volumes of "Das Kapital". In 1875,

Karl Marx wrote "The Critique of the Gotha Program", where he says that in a more mature society people will behave in such a way to be able to write in their banner: "From each according to his capacity, to each according to his needs".

Once, when I made a lecture to the peasants organizations and the National Council of Catholic Bishops, the President of CNBB, Dom Cândido Mendes de Almeida called my attention that I did not need to mention Karl Marx to argue in favor of a guaranteed income since the proposal was so well defended by Saint Paul in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Since then I always quote both of them.

In the XX century, philosophers and economists of several tendencies, after examining several ideologies and proposals, reached for a common conclusion, as expressed by Bertrand Russel, in 1918, in "Roads to Freedom: socialism, anarchism and syndicalism":

The plan we are advocating amounts essentially to this: that a certain small income, sufficient for necessities, should be secured to all, whether they work or not, and that a larger income, as much larger as might be warranted by the total amount of commodities produced, should be given to those who are willing to engage in some work which the community recognizes as useful.

In 1920, in "Scheme for a State Bonus", the couple Dennis e Mabel Milner proposed that:

*All individuals, all the time, should receive a small sum of money from a central fund that would be sufficient to maintain their life and freedom, should all else fail; that all people should receive a part of a central fund, in a way that all would have some sort of income to contribute proportionality to their capacity.*

In 1937, the great economist Joan Robinson in "Introduction to the Theory of Full Employment", suggested distributing to everybody on Saturdays, one pound sterling. Her fellow at the University of Cambridge, in England, who also had acquaintanceship with John Maynard Keynes and that, in 1977, was honored with the Nobel Prize in Economics, James Edward Meade, was one of the defenders of Citizen's Income. Since when he elaborated the "A Guide of Economic Policy for a Labor Government", in 1935, until the works in more matured way in his trilogy about Agathotopia, in 1989, 1992 e 1995, he developed a beautiful argumentation.

Meade related his long journey in search of Utopia. No matter how much he sailed, he did not succeed in finding it. On the way back, however, he came across Agathotopia. An economist, who became his friend, told him the Agathopians knew where Utopia was, but they would not tell him because they were different from the Utopians, perfect human beings who lived in a perfect place. The Agathopians were imperfect human beings that committed foolishness and perfidies, but that after all, had succeeded in building a good place to live.

Meade observed that in Agathotopia they had built institutions and social arrangements that were the best to attain simultaneously the objectives of freedom, in the sense that each one is able to work in his/her vocation and is able to spend what he/she receives on the goods that he/she wants; equality, in the sense that there are no great differences between income and wealth; and efficiency, in the sense to reach the highest possible life pattern with the resources and the technology in effect.

And what were the arrangements? Flexibility in prices and wages to reach the efficiency in resource allocation: forms of association between the entrepreneurs and the workers so that the workers were hired not only for wages, but also for output participation; and finally, a social dividend that provides a guaranteed income for everyone. Meade proposed the achievement of these objectives by stages, but with firm steps.

The greatest economist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, John Maynard Keynes, in 1939, in “How to Pay for the War?”, published by “The Times”, tried to convince his compatriots, before entering into the war, that they should get ready for the defense, and also, to separate around 2% of the Gross National Product, thus 100 million sterling pounds from a total of 5 billion to ensure everyone a basic income.

Abba Lerner, who worked with Oskar Lange in “On the Economic Theory of Market Socialism”, in 1944, published “The Economics of Control: Principles of Welfare Economics”, containing the proposition of institution of a fixed sum as a negative income tax for everybody.

Other economists honored with the Nobel Prize in Economics, defenders of the market system, argued in favor of the guaranteed minimum income for those who do not have the necessary for survival. So did Friedrich Hayek, in “The Road to Serfdom”, in 1944. George Stigler, in “The Economics of Minimum Wage Legislation”, in American Economic Review, 36, of 1946, observed that if we want to eradicate absolute poverty and promote employment, better than a minimum wage, should be the institution of a negative income tax, which should provide a minimum income to those who do not reach the necessary with his/her income. The same subject, was popularized in a very didactic way by Milton Friedman, in “Capitalism and Freedom”, in 1992. Also the Nobel Prize James Tobin made a great effort in the elaboration and defense of a guaranteed minimum income through a negative income tax during the sixties and seventies. James Tobin in many aspects was different than Friedman, because he was a defender of the Keynes propositions. In 1972, James Tobin helped the democrat candidate George Mc Govern in the elaboration of the proposition of one “Demogrant” of US\$ 1.000 per year for all Americans, exactly the concept of a basic income.

James Tobin, Paul Samuelson, John Kenneth Galbraith, Robert Lampman, Harold Watts and 1,200 economists, in 1968, sent a manifest to the U.S. Congress in favor of the adoption of a complement and guaranteed income. In 1969, President Richard Nixon invited Daniel Patrick Moynihan, an architect of social programs of the governments of John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, to design the Family Assistance Plan, which institutes the guaranteed minimum income through a negative income tax. It was approved by the House of Representatives, but obstructed by the Senate. Then, one who made a great effort in the defense of a guaranteed income was Martin Luther King Jr, as we can observe in his several essays in “Where Do We Go From Here: Caos or Community?”, of 1997, where he affirms, “I am now convinced that the simplest approach will prove to be the most effective – the solution to poverty is to abolish it directly by a now widely discussed measure: the guaranteed income”.

In 2005, while I was in USA, I called on ex-Senator Mc Govern, who had lost the presidential elections for Richard Nixon, in 1972, to tell him that Brazil had approved the institution of the Citizen’s Basic Income, a similar concept to what he



defended in 1972. He was very happy and told me, "People say that I was a man with ideas before my time".

In 1974, the US Congress approved a proposal of a partial negative income tax, only for those who work and do not reach a certain level of income, under the name of Earned Income Tax Credit, which had an important development. Today more than 23 million families receive this income complement that amount more than two thousand dollars per year in average. This scheme is added to the Aid for Families with Dependent Children, replaced in 1996, by Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, to Unemployment Security, to Food Coupons, and to Social Security. In the last decades, almost all European countries created income guarantee and transference schemes, like the Minimum Income of Insertion, in France, Minimum Familiar Income, in Portugal, and child benefits in a very general way. In the Latin-American countries, conditional income transference schemes spread out, like *Oportunidades* in México, *Chile Solidario*, in Chile, *Jefes and Jefas del Hogar*, and more recently, *Asignación Familiar*, in Argentina, *Avancemos* in Costa Rica and *Ingreso Ciudadano* in Uruguay.

In 1986, in Louvain, Belgium, a group of social scientists, economists and philosophers, among them Philippe Van Parijs, Guy Standing, Claus Offe, Robert van der Veen, created BIEN, Basic Income European Network, to constitute a debate forum of forms of income transference in several countries, and to propose that in every country an Unconditional Basic Income should be instituted. Since then, every two years BIEN has held international congresses. In 2004, during the congress held in Barcelona, as there were researchers from the five continents, they decided to change BIEN into Basic Income Earth Network. During the 12<sup>th</sup> BIEN International Congress, in Dublin, in June 2008, a question was asked to us, Brazilians, whether we could host the next 13<sup>th</sup> BIEN International Congress. So it was defined that the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress would be held at the Faculdade de Economia, Administração e Contabilidade da Universidade de São Paulo, FEA-USP, as it happened so successfully in June 30<sup>th</sup>, July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010. President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva received the Executive Board of BIEN for a 90-minute audience on June 29<sup>th</sup>, in which he explained the advances of his government in eradicating poverty.

In the early sixties, in a fishermen's village, the mayor observed that a huge amount of wealth under the form of fishing was produced, but many of its inhabitants were still poor. So he told its inhabitants about creating a tax of 3% on the value of fishing for the institution of a fund which belongs to everybody. He faced a great resistance: "Another tax? I'm against it".

It took five years to persuade the community. Once instituted, it was so well succeeded, that ten years later he became the governor of the State of Alaska, where they discovered a large oil reserve in the late sixties. In 1976, Governor Jay Hammond told his 300 thousand co-citizens: "We should think not only about this current generation, but about the forthcoming one. Oil, like other natural resources is not renewable. So let us separate a part of the royalties originated from the natural resources for the constitution of a fund that shall belong to all residents in the state of Alaska. By 76 thousand votes for and 38 thousand opposed, 2X1, the proposal was approved. The law separates 25% of the revenue coming from the natural resources exploitation and invested in US bonds, Alaska's companies stocks, contributing to diversify its economy, USA and international companies stocks, including some of the 30 most profitable companies from Brazil, like Petrobrás, Vale do Rio Doce, Itaú

and Bradesco, which means we Brazilians are contributing to the success of this system, and real estate. The equity of the Alaska Permanent Fund increased from US\$ 1 billion, in early eighties to US\$ 40 billion recently. In 2009 and 2019 it decreased because of the economic crisis, but is already in recovery.

Each person living for one year or more in Alaska could fill in a one-page form, between January 1<sup>st</sup> to March 31<sup>st</sup>, that included his/her business and home address, if he/she lived there for one year or more, even if he/she had travelled, the number of people in the family up to 18 years of age, not being necessary to inform his/her income or possessions, a few more data and the witness of two persons about the veracity of the information. Who did that, since the early eighties, every year until the beginning of October, received in his bank account, by electronic transfer, or by a check sent to his house, first around US\$ 300 and gradually more, up to US\$ 3,269 per person in 2008. It is interesting to know that the dividend estipulated by the Alaska Permanent Fund in 2008 was set at US\$ 2,069. Since the prices of energy sources, such as oil, increased very much that year, from the Alaska State Budget, being Sarah Palin the Governor, an extra US\$ 1,200 was paid to all inhabitants. I would like to ask Sarah Palin why she did not proposed yet to have a basic income for the whole USA. In 2009, the sum decreased to US\$ 1,305, because of the economic crisis that affected the economy and reduced the oil and stock prices in the New York Stock Exchange.

As shown by Professor Scott Goldsmith's, of the University of Alaska, in Anchorage, in his paper presented in the IX BIEN International Congress, in 2002, in Geneve, the FPA has distributed around 6% of the Gross Domestic Product during the last 28 years to all its inhabitants – presently, there are about 700 thousand, among which 611 thousand complied with the requirements in 2008 – and has made Alaska one of the most equalitarian of the 50 American states.

During the period 1989-99, while the *per capita* family income of the 20% richest families in USA increased 26%, the *per capita* income of the 20% poorest families increased 12%. In Alaska, due to the dividends paid equally to all its inhabitants, the increase of the *per capita* family income of the 20% richest families was 7%. The increase of the *per capita* family income of the 20% poorest families was 28%, thus 4 times more. This means that for the objective of reaching a fairer society, the experience has been very successful. These results were shown by Scott Goldsmith in his lecture to the XI International Congress of BIEN, in Geneva, 2002. He mentioned that today it is political suicide for a political leader to propose the end of the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend system.

I want to congratulate Karl Widerquist, Michael Howard, Scott Goldsmith for their initiative to organize a Workshop on Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend next April 22 in Anchorage as well as write a book on that beautiful example. It must be known all over the planet..

In 1999, professors Bruce Ackerman and Ann Alstott, from the University of Yale, published the book "The Stakeholder Society". Based on the proposal of Thomas Paine, they proposed that everyone in USA when turning 21 should have the right to receive a sum of US\$ 80 thousand to start his/her adult life with the possibility to spend in anything that he/she wants, to conclude his/her studies, to start an enterprise or any other thing. One of his post-graduate students, member of the Fabian Society presented the idea to his personal friend, the former First Minister Tony Blair. When Blair announced that his wife Cherie was pregnant of their fourth

son, Alexander, he said that from that time on every child born in England would receive a bank deposit when the child is born and completes 6, 11 and 16 years of age, respectively the amounts of 250, 50, 50 and 50 sterling pounds. If the child's family had an annual familiar income below a certain level, near to 17 thousand sterling pounds, those amounts should be 500, 100, 100 and 100 pounds sterling respectively. As these deposits earn interests, when the person turns 18, he/she would have an amount near to 4 thousand or 5 thousand pounds sterling, as a right to participate in the wealth of the nation. Under the name of "Child Fund Trust", this law was approved by the United Kingdom Parliament on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Finally, in his birthplace, the proposition of Thomas Paine, formulated in 1795, was applied, even modestly. The present Conservative Government of UK, because of the economic crisis, has decided to cut the Child Fund Trust.

In Brazil, we could consider the institution of the Citizen's Basic Income as consistent with the values defended by the indigenous living in community, by the fighting "quilombolas" and abolitionists for the slavery abolition and by all those researchers and scientists who fight for the creation of a fair nation in Brazil. Among those we can mention Caio Prado Junior, Milton Santos, Josué de Castro and Celso Furtado. In 1956, as the Representative of PTB, in a speech in the Chamber of Deputies about the income unevenness, the author of "Geografia da Fome" and "Geopolítica da Fome"(Hunger Geography and Hunger Geopolitics), Josué de Castro stated, "I defend the need of giving the minimum to each one, according to the right that all Brazilians should have the minimum for their survival."

I was happy to participate last April, 2011, in the US and Canada BIG Conference in Montreal. It is relevant to remind that when Major Clifford H. Douglas created the Movement for a Social Credit, in England, a form of a basic income, this had a great repercussion in several countries, particularly in Alberta, Canada, where the Social Credit Party was created in 1935. Recently the State of Alberta decided to pay to all its inhabitants an equal dividend thanks to a very good result of oil revenues on that year. The experience, however, from what I know, has not being continued. It is quite relevant that the pioneer and successful experience of a basic income in the world exists in the US State of Alaska, neighbor to Canada. The positive results of that experience, as commented above, should obviously stimulate the people of US and Canada to follow that example.

I was also happy to participate in the BIG Ecumenical Gathering last June in Munich that has called so many people interested in the building of a just society where everybody may be together in the Table of Fraternity. It is good to know that German Churches are helping the development of the pioneer Basic Income experience in the village of Otjivero/Omitara, in Namibia. Also that the proposal of Eiinkommen für Alle, as argued since the eighties by Professor Claus Offe and, more recently, in the book of Professor Götz W. Werner, is spreading all over Germany and on Earth.

It was also good to be in Seoul last January 2010 for the International Congress of the South Korean Basic Income Network with Professor Philippe Van Parijs. Professor Guy Standing told us that he participated last March in the first Japan BIEN Congress in Japan with about 250 participants.

One very pioneering experience is also happening in Iran since a new law was enacted through which, in order to compensate for the end of subsidies on energy sources, the government decided to pay the equivalent to US\$ 80.00 every two

months to all 70 million citizens. It is one experience that should be followed with great interest by all interested in the basic income. This information was provided by Professor Hamid Tabatabai, in his paper to the XIII International Congress of BIEN.

It is excellent to know that about 192 papers from experts from 31 countries of all continents were presented and debated at the XIII International Conference of BIEN held at the University of São Paulo, in July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011. You may read most of these papers at the site <http://bien2010brasil.com>, and have more information at: <http://www.basicincome.org> and at <http://www.senado.gov.br/eduardosuplicy>. I would like to invite you all to participate in the next XIV International Congress of BIEN that will be held in Munich, Germany, next September 2012.

In December 21, 2010, it was so nice to be invited by the Flemish Theater Group to give a special Conference on the Eradication of Absolute Poverty and the Perspective of a Basic Income to all of those of work in theaters and participants of social movements in Brussels, Belgian, together with Professor Philippe Van Parijs.

I am sure that Namibia will soon be able to pass from the 1,000 people experience of Otjivero to the Citizen's Basic Income to all 2.2 million inhabitants in a reasonable amount of time. Positive news are coming from Iran and Iraq. The good word is being spread all over thanks the efforts of people like Philippe Van Parijs, Guy Standing, Karl Widerquist, Clauss Offe and so many others. I will do my best effort to help President Dilma Rousseff and her Ministers to take the necessary steps to institute the Citizen's Basic Income by 2014.

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