

BI which are: securing everybody's existence, individual, unconditional, universal. There was consensus that the predominant social system which heavily stresses discipline and tends to impoverish people is heading in the wrong direction. Therefore new ways to guarantee social security and real freedom for all are necessary. Many of the persons organizing the congress argued that a basic income grant definitely is a human right.

This second German-speaking BI-congress was organized by the BI-networks of Austria, Germany and Switzerland together with ATTAC Germany and Switzerland and the BI-group within ATTAC Austria. The congress was held in participation with the Institute of Sociology (University of Basel), Initiative BI Basel and others. Please find the program and articles on the congress (in German): www.grundeinkommen2007.org Some of the workshops were recorded. Audio CDs (all German) can be ordered: www.grundeinkommen.at

***OXFORD (UK), 10 October 2007: "Will the Right Basic Income Please Stand Up?"**

On Wednesday 10 October, the Foundation for Law, Justice and Society (FLJS), in association with the Centre for Socio-Legal Studies, Oxford University, hosted a Keynote Address by Amitai Etzioni on guaranteed basic income (GBI). The lecture opened the Foundation's two-day conference on 'The Contract for Income Support and Pension in the Modern Welfare State', attended by an international panel of government officials, policymakers, academics, economists, and political scientists.

Professor Etzioni, a former Senior Advisor to the White House and President of the American Sociological Association, speaking to an audience at Rhodes House, Oxford, argued that everyone should be entitled to a guaranteed basic income 'as a reflection of our basic humanity'. From his standpoint as founder of the Communitarian Network, he outlined his proposal for a GBI that is not means tested and not contingent on people's ability to work. Etzioni argued that we are not complete human beings when deprived of lasting, meaningful human relationships, and that we have basic obligations toward one another that GBI can help to engender. A basic income, he went on to say, would allow for a stakeholder society that would mitigate the dependence of the disempowered and foster a stakeholder society of mutual respect.

John Adams, FLJS Chairman, opened the conference the following day as part of the Foundation's programme on the Social Contract, which aims to examine the reciprocal rights and obligations between the citizens and the state in modern liberal society. The first speaker, Professor Peter Edelman, drawing on his experience as a servant in all three branches of US government, challenged the idea that welfare causes dependency, and called for an expanded conception of the social contract from a commitment to end poverty to a determination to achieve a living income for everyone. Dalmer Hoskins, the newly appointed Chief Officer for Strategic Planning of the US Social Security Administration, corroborated this perspective of American welfare, attacking the 'myth' of the US pension policy and the US healthcare system that is 'spinning out of control'.

Various alternatives were explored, including the Swedish model for merging welfare with the social contract to produce a system of income support which verges on a basic income, albeit one that is slightly means tested. Avia Spivak, former deputy governor of the Bank of Israel, examined the increased economic risks caused by ageing populations through case studies of Sweden and Chile, and Jef van Langendonck proposed a global welfare fund to which governments would contribute, enforced by international trade agreements.

Professors Lucy Williams and Charles Mills offered feminist and racial critiques of the precepts underlying social contract theory, arguing that it obscures the roots of poverty by

'naturalising' it, thereby ignoring the imbalance of assets and opportunity inherent in most societies. The conference was concluded with an assessment of the feasibility of GBI by the sociologist Michael Opielka, and Professor Charles Murray's proposal for GBI as a replacement for the welfare state.

For further information: Phil Dines, Phil.Dines@fljs.org, Publications and Communications Manager, **The Foundation for Law, Justice and Society**, Wolfson College, Linton Road
Oxford OX2 6UD, <http://www.fljs.org>

* **OXFORD (UK)**, 26-27 October 2007, Conference: Towards a 'Basic Income Society'?

On 26 and 27 October, the Centre for the Study of Social Justice at Oxford University (with support from the Department of Politics and International Relations and the Public Policy Unit at Oxford as well as the Association for Legal and Social Philosophy) held a two-day conference on basic income. The conference brought together an audience of 15 invited speakers and 60 delegates to discuss a number of issues surrounding the idea of the basic income society. The organizers of this conference, David Casassas (University of Oxford), Jurgen De Wispelaere (Trinity College Dublin) and Stuart White (University of Oxford) explicitly wanted to question the notion of a basic income society, its likely form and limitations, and how pathways towards its achievement could be conceived. To this effect they invited a number of speakers who are sympathetic to both the strengths and limitations of basic income.

The first day of the conference comprised a roundtable debating the normative justification of basic income schemes from a republican perspective. Building on recent work in republican political theory, David Casassas (University of Oxford), Daniel Raventós (University of Barcelona), Carole Pateman (University of Cardiff/UCLA), Stuart White (University of Oxford) and Karl Widerquist (University of Reading) discussed various aspects of republican political thought and whether this perspective can offer a robust philosophical justification for the basic income society. Casassas and Raventós outlined a strong republican case for basic income, with Pateman, White and Widerquist introducing critical remarks. Most of the contributions of the roundtable will be published in a special debate section, guest-edited by David Casassas of *Basic Income Studies*, forthcoming December 2007.

The second day of the conference offered a set of panels discussing the normative justification and political feasibility of the basic income society. In his introductory lecture, Tony Fitzpatrick (University of Nottingham) offered an assessment of the current state of the basic income debate a decade after the publication of his book *Freedom and Security*. Fitzpatrick identified both theoretical and practical challenges that basic income advocates must engage with when advancing the debate.

The next panel offered two papers discussing the ideal of the basic income society. Bill Jordan (University of Plymouth) challenged the strong individualist focus of much of the basic income debate, suggesting that advocates and researchers instead should be more concerned with social value (and the ways in which it can be promoted) if basic income is to deliver on its promises in terms of emancipation and freedom. José Antonio Noguera (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) then questioned the very idea of a basic income *society*, arguing that basic income advocates should not overstate the role and importance of these policies in current welfare arrangements. In her invited commentary, Louise Haagh engaged with both papers offering an institutionalist account of basic income.

After lunch the conference moved from the ideal of the basic income society to examining some aspects of the political feasibility of basic income schemes, and how these insights might impact on the form of the proposed basic income society. The first contribution