What Will Life Be Like under a Basic Income Guarantee?

What we want are not jobs; we want productive jobs. We want jobs that will enable us to produce goods and services we consume at a minimum expenditure of effort. In a way, the appropriate national objective is to have the fewest possible jobs, that is to say, the least amount of work for the greatest amount of product.

—Milton Friedman, Capitalism and Freedom (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1962)

104. If We Adopt a Basic Income Guarantee, Will There Be More Unemployment than There Is Now?

Maybe, but if there is, we’ll regard that as good, not bad.

Today we try to provide jobs for everyone. But that’s not realistic anymore. There are more people than jobs. So we must guarantee everyone a minimum income. Maybe this will mean more unemployment. But that’s okay.

Today we’re afraid of being out of work because:

1. It means the end of our paycheck.
2. It means we’ll have nothing worthwhile to do.

A basic income guarantee will take care of #1. Then we set up new ways for us to do worthwhile things. To develop our full potential. Whether in the usual type of “job.” Or in something completely different. But still worthwhile.

A. Sheahen, Basic Income Guarantee
© Allan Sheahen 2012
A basic income guarantee will provide each of us with the freedom to develop ourselves and our community.

“I have a principle that the more complicated your job, then the more learning you get out of it and you ought to start having to pay a tuition. Bank presidents, college chancellors, superintendents and governors, let’s charge them a tuition for the privilege of having such interesting jobs…and give a raise to the people who work on dull, routine jobs.” (California Governor Jerry Brown, News Conference, 1st term, September, 1975)

105. WHAT ABOUT MENIAL AND MONOTONOUS JOBS; JOBS WITH LOW PRESTIGE? WHO WILL DO THESE JOBS?

The fact that our society forces alleged “menial” jobs on people, under the threat of starvation if they don’t perform the jobs, says something about the way we live.

Yet, although it’s widely believed that some jobs are so menial that only illegal aliens will take them, 75 percent of unemployed workers said they would apply for jobs paying the minimum wage.¹

There are four ways of solving the problem of “menial” and “monotonous” jobs, such as janitor, garbage man, assembly line work, and so on:

1. Let technology take over as many of these jobs as possible.
2. Pay more money for doing “dirty jobs.”
3. Change our attitude. “Menial” and “monotonous” are mainly states of mind. In our status-oriented society, an executive or lawyer has more prestige than, say, a taxi driver. But why? Each performs a service for society. If we change our attitude, jobs that are now considered menial won’t be. All jobs will be considered worthwhile contributions to the betterment of the community.
4. Create a work situation so we can give our life and energy to something that has meaning for us; to something that has importance; to something in which we feel united with, rather than separated from, each other. The work situation can organize workers into small enough groups to enable us to relate to the group as real, concrete human beings, even though the organization as a whole may have thousands of workers.

One way to create this situation is to simply copy the Europeans. The workers in each plant and industry can elect committees. The