Can America Be Convinced?

If evil men can work together to get what they want, so can good men work together to get what they want.

—Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, *first published* 1869, *Penguin Classics*

134. **Why Do Some Support and Some Oppose a Basic Income Guarantee?**

Most people who oppose the concept of a basic income guarantee are sincere, hardworking, well-meaning people who simply feel it’s wrong to give people money for not working; that people should work for what they get.

Many who support a BIG see people as inherently good; that, given a chance, people will behave in a thoughtful, intelligent manner.

Many who oppose the idea see people as basically weak or evil; that people must be controlled and regulated; that too much freedom will lead to anarchy.

Many who support it see freedom and liberty as essential to a full, rewarding life.

135. **Who Is Right?**

It’s the age-old question about the basic nature of people. The conflict between these two philosophies is as old as time. It’s said that on the day one person invented the wheel, someone else invented a no-parking sign. And there’s been a continual conflict ever since.

Even our own Constitution reflects these contradictory philosophies. The Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights declare that all men are created equal. But the body of the Constitution says a “Negro . . . is to be counted as three-fifths of a person.”

A. Sheahen, *Basic Income Guarantee*  
© Allan Sheahen 2012
The men who drafted the Declaration of Independence and Bill of Rights were men who believed that people are basically good. They believed in liberty and freedom; in our ability to govern ourselves. The men who wrote the body of the Constitution tried to check democracy. They denied the vote to whole segments of the population—women, blacks, the young, the poor.

The Bill of Rights is the thing that gives us our freedoms. It hangs, sort of like a cocker spaniel tail on a Great Dane, on the body of the Constitution. It doesn’t even fit, because it’s a whole different philosophy. And there has been conflict between those two documents throughout our history.

The truth, of course, is that human nature is both good and evil. Each of us has our own inner conflict. Each of us is capable of bravery, unselfishness, love, charity, honesty, and compassion.

Each of us is capable of greed, avarice, fear, selfishness, dishonesty, and worse whenever they present themselves in acceptable terms.

Civilization is the continuing struggle to keep the good guys a step ahead of the bad guys.

136. Why Should Conservatives Favor a Basic Income Guarantee?

Conservatives have long opposed big government. They have rightly felt that government should do for the people only what the people cannot do for themselves.

Conservatives believe that individuals, given a fair start, can manage and handle their own affairs better than a government bureaucracy.

This is exactly what a BIG will do—give each person a fair start.

It will remove the government from the day-to-day, cradle-to-grave guidance and supervision of the individual. Outside of providing for the basic necessities to stay alive, the government will leave an individual’s chances for success or failure up to his or her own efforts.

“The question is whether we believe that individuals need to be guided, guarded and controlled in every facet of their lives or whether the judgment of the individual is usually better than that of a bureaucrat with little time or flexibility. Conservatives today have an unparalleled opportunity to make their point.” (Robert Theobald, The Guaranteed Income (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1966))

“My proposal for a negative income tax is more compatible with the philosophy and aims of the proponents of limited government and maximum individual freedom than with the philosophy