

The Right to Work: Universal Basic Income vs. Job Guarantee

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The Policies



Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a periodic payment delivered to all on an individual basis unconditionally so without a means test or a work requirement



A Job Guarantee (JG) is a policy that guarantees all citizens who want to work but are involuntarily unemployed can always take a job provided by the government

Aims of this Talk

1. Clarify the normative (non-economic) debate between UBI and JG
2. Provide the best version of a JG that can withstand Guy Standing's criticisms
3. Develop an additional, deeper criticism of JG that lends support for UBI on JG's own terms

Right to Work:

right to practice different forms of worthy activities that guarantee a good quality of life, whether remunerated or not



Right to Employment:

right to a job, its free choice, to just and favourable conditions of work and protection against unemployment

Standing's Two Empirical Concerns

1. people generally dislike their jobs and do them solely to make a living
2. jobs never captured all useful work (e.g. care work, volunteering), and precarious jobs makes this worse

Argument for UBI

Right to Work: right to practice different forms of worthy activities that guarantee a good quality of life, whether remunerated or not

Under capitalism the Right to Work is better understood as a mere right to free choice of employment

UBI decouples making a living from a job and delivers the Right to Work

Argument against JG

JG does not offer a wide choice of JG jobs

If worker refuses JG job they are not involuntarily unemployed anymore

Workers are not eligible for benefits

A JG weakens the Right to Employment:

because there is an additional way in which a worker need a job to make a living

JG is not Workfare

Dr. Pavlina Tcherneva: benefits are not tied to participation in the labour market

JG delivers the Right to Employment
with the benefit of additional public sector jobs

JOB GUARANTEE Policy Jobs:

- Pay a living
- Provide good working conditions
- Trains workers to then take better non-JG jobs
- Are diverse to accommodate a worker's needs
- Target the fulfilment of community needs

If workers can always take a good JG job then they are empowered to say no to bad jobs with precarious working conditions

Employers must improve jobs to attract workers

Does a JG resolve Standing's empirical concerns?

1. people generally dislike their jobs and do them solely to make a living
2. jobs never captured all useful work (e.g. care work, volunteering), and precarious jobs makes this worse

Does a JG deliver the Right to Work?

- UBI decouples making a living from jobs and embraces the Right to Work
- JG progresses by improving Right to Employment
 - Jobs improve
 - Provides meaningful jobs private sector failed to produce
 - Improves workers

Why might we prefer JG over UBI?

People do not just need a job but
people want a job to make a living

Will JG jobs be meaningful?

- People like JG jobs: higher wage, better working conditions, training, and more meaningful
- JG jobs are meaningful because they fulfil a real community need
- Worker's perspective?
- We can't be sure a JG job will be meaningful from the perspective of the worker

Ideology Critique

- Belief: People want a job to make a living
- Ideological beliefs are resistant to rational revision because they are tied to a person's identity
- First party question: "What do you do?"
- Moralised notion:
 - People with a job are good
 - People with no job are bad

Adaptive Preferences

- Story about Sour Grapes
- People need a job to make a living
- Over time preference may have changed to reflect a narrowed set of options
- The good life usually involves a job we like

Origins of Capitalism

- Feudal peasants worked enough to feed their families
- Made a living by working land often held in common
- Common land divided and came to be privately by privileged few
- People without property could only sell their labour to survive
- Overtime practice became standardised: job

Do people want a job to make a living?

- People did not always want a job to make a living
- They also did not always need one
- Under capitalism, a job becomes main means to make a living
- People may have adapted their preferences to reflect this transition
- In a capitalist society we cannot be sure whether people want a job to make a living

Powerful Interests

- Employers benefits from many willing workers
- The state benefits as work provides social cohesion and taxes
- Individual workers benefit because they can earn a living and earn a status

Conclusion

We can't be sure that:

- JG jobs will be meaningful from a worker's perspective
- People want a job to make a living

One way JG can be more sure deliver the Right to Work:

UBI

Thank you!