The feasibility of a Citizen’s Basic Income from a socialist perspective

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Initial premise

• Basic Income is a mechanism or technique for income distribution: a tool, not a silver bullet.

• Its feasibility, functionality and efficacy are wholly dependent on the context in which, and the terms upon which, it is implemented.
Compatibility with socialist principles

• From each according to her ability; to each according to her needs.
• Detaching subsistence needs from (inherently exploitative) wage labour.
• Marx’s concepts of ‘radical human need’ and ‘species being’: the meaning of ‘work’.
• Equality of human fulfilment.
The limitations of a CBI under capitalism

• So long as wage levels and labour conditions are governed by market forces a CBI will not eliminate income inequality.
• So long as prices and the distribution of goods are governed by market forces a CBI will not achieve equality of living standards or substantive equality of opportunity.
• Under certain conditions, a CBI could fuel inequalities.
The strategic potential of a CBI

• As a component of an anti-capitalist struggle (alongside e.g. reductions in working hours, wage regulation, and the defence/promotion of public services).

• As a means to promote citizen solidarity and common identity/recognition.

• The scope for compromise/incremental improvement to existing social security provision.