

Citizen's Income Toronto newsletter

October 19, 09

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If I have done this right, you should be able to use PDF to scroll through the pages.

Introduction

Well, here is the Citizen's Income newsletter in its new format. It is designed so it can be printed out. It does not contain links, but it has a links page. You have to cut and paste URLs into your browser.

The split page format makes it easier to read off the screen as well. It will require some fine tuning. Feedback is needed. A dream is to find some sponsor who can print the newsletter out and distribute it around to people who have limited internet access.

events

Fumagelli.

A couple of things have happened around Toronto to do with CI or BI. On October 14th, an Italian university professor came to U of T and gave a talk on Basic Income. It was sometimes hard to get through his accent, but what he had to say was pretty good.

He thinks present capitalism has become a very unstable system. But there is no "good capitalism" to go back to.

Basic Income is a means to independence. Yet the absence of unreasoned dominating control does not mean freedom and therefore a minimum income does not mean real freedom by itself. There needs to be analysis of the power/counterpower relations.

Basic Income is a claim; it demands remuneration of all productive activities which are not now considered as paid work. But He said that Basic income is not a method of redistribution; but is directly a distributive variable. It is part of the long struggle to go from the right to work to the right to choose work.

What this all means is; the right to work is not a right at all. The sign on the Nazi death camps said "Arbeit Macht Frei"; work makes free. He was never quite clear that the right to choose work means the right to choose how to be 'useful', which leads back to workfare, or if he is talking about a right to choose

Citizen's Income Toronto person was there who spoke a little Italian. They went to a bar and he was able to explain 'citizenship' in a north american context, and Fumagelli understood.

end poverty day

On October 17th, world day to end poverty, there was a dearth of events. The labor congress held a rally way up in North York. Perhaps everybody interested in ending poverty went up there. That would explain the low attendance at the Citizen's Income Toronto get together at the old Woodsworth college hang out.

One new person came but he had something else to do and could not stay for the whole spiel. I got some practice doing the visual presentation, and some useful criticism of it. I should perhaps shorten it and leave more time for questions. I have figured out how to tilt the easel so the cards stay on.

We had a fairly productive session. Those who were at the Ottawa conference rehashed it. One of us was very disappointed in Andrew Jackson the labor economist, who did not seem to really understand the

not to work.

BI as a directly distributive variable means that it does not depend on taxing those with too much in order to fund a BI, but on paying people an income directly. From where exactly, he I did not say, though that can lead into funny money stuff. Money must move in a closed loop. I will write up that concept some day.

Generally, Fumagelli has the concept down pretty well. One slight problem we had was that he did not like the term 'Citizen's Income'. To him it leads to the idea of citizenship in a nation state, or in other words, fascism.

I tried pointing out that this idea of 'citizenship' tied to a 'blood and soil' European nationalism has no validity in North America. Canada and the States are nations of immigrants, and European style nationalism is ridiculous here. Here, citizenship is about civil rights.

I had two obstacles in communicating this; the good Professor's limited English and one of these 'moderator' types who gets a little bit of power and goes off the deep end with it. However, another

concept of Guaranteed Income. I did not pick this up as well as I should have in my write-up of the event. He was pushing for a working income tax credit.

That is, if you have a job and you do not make above a cut line, you get a tax refund to bring your net income up to the line. The Americans have had that for a long time; it was introduced as an alternative to a negative income tax. It has not done much to relieve poverty down there, has it?

It is all about separating the poor into the working, 'deserving' poor and the workless 'undeserving' poor. The former's employer is subsidized so he can employ workers for less than a survival wage, while the worker continues to work in poverty. The latter can fuck off and die.

And the union guy agrees with this? And he thinks he is a 'progressive economist'? Hm.

Lynx page



These are not active links. You must cut and paste them to your browser

BIEN - Basic Income Earth Network NEWSFLASH 58 September 2009

<http://www.basicincome.org/bien/pdf/Flash58.pdf>

ACTION URGENTLY NEEDED TO DEFUSE PENSION BOMB, by Ish Theilheimer. Solutions exist, beginning with proper funding for CPP and OAS.

<http://www.straightgoods.ca/2009/ViewFeature.cfm?Ref=508>

Canada needs a national food strategy

<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/article/710334--canada-needs-a-national-food-strategy>

The Politics of Obesity in America Written by Al Huebner

<http://towardfreedom.com/home/content/view/1715/1/>

One World, One Money By Carl Teichrib

http://www.forcingchange.org/one_world_one_money_without_endnotes

On your bike: What the world can learn about cycling from Copenhagen

<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/features/on-your-bike-what-the-world-can-learn-about-cycling-from-copenhagen-1803227.html>

Close Encounters of the 'Thirties' Kind John Stapleton

http://www.policyalternatives.ca/%7EASSETS/DOCUMENT/National_Office_Pubs/2009/Close_Encounters_of_the_Thirties_Kind.pdf

how a basic income program saved a Namibian village

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,642310,00.html>

Assessing the Legacy of Norman Borlaug: Did the Green Revolution Prevent Famines?

Written by Alexis Lathem

borrowed from "Toward Freedom"

In the last month, following the announcement of the death of Norman Borlaug, we have been reminded of the sweeping claims that have been made about the successes of the green revolution. Borlaug was an agricultural scientist who, under the auspices of the Rockefeller Foundation, developed dwarf varieties of wheat and rice that are widely reported to have produced miraculous yields, and which "saved the lives of millions of people" in the developing world who would otherwise have starved.

"Father of green revolution saved millions of lives" reads one headline. "The Nobel winner who fed the world" reads another. It would seem that any claim that a single human being could have achieved these miracles, let alone a technician – should arouse at least a measure of skepticism. Although some of the

of green fields and amber waves of grain – or less objectionable than an effort to grow food to feed the hungry and the poor? For all the criticisms of the industrial agricultural system that the green revolution introduced to India, Pakistan, the Philippines and other countries, these concerns must be measured against the claim that "millions of people" would otherwise have starved.

What, however, is the basis for the claim that the green revolution saved millions of lives? It is repeated often enough, although source documentation is never provided – it is as generally accepted as, for instance, the claim that the civil war ended the institution of slavery in the United States. No source documentation is needed. But how do you measure, scientifically speaking, what would have happened? Have the alternatives to the agricultural model that prevailed been taken into account? Is it possible that – given that the predicted famines did not occur – that these projections were flawed? Can we assume that there were no alternatives to ramping up food production in the industrial style? Is it impossible that there might be another explanation to India's avoidance of widespread famines since Independence, other than

commentary that appeared following the announcement of Borlaug's death admitted that the green revolution has had its critics – it has after all, increased poverty in the world, widened the gap between rich and poor, caused water tables to drop to dangerous levels, caused widespread chemical contamination, and led to staggering losses of topsoil and soil fertility – the claim that Borlaug's innovations in plant genetics "saved millions of lives" has gone by virtually without challenge.

The moniker "green revolution," which refers to the United States' aggressive campaign to "modernize" third world agriculture, has been one of the most successful public relations ploys in the history of political marketing. For what could be more politically benign than the wholesome images it evokes – images

the intervention of the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations and Borlaug's miracle seeds?

The persistence of the belief that so-called high yielding seeds (they produce high yields only because they are tolerant of large doses of chemical fertilizers) saved millions of people from famine, is all the more remarkable given that the scholarship has thoroughly discredited it. What is implied here is that industrial methods produce more food than small farms that integrate a diversity of crops and rely on natural fertilizers and hand labor – which has been disproved by innumerable scientific studies.[1]

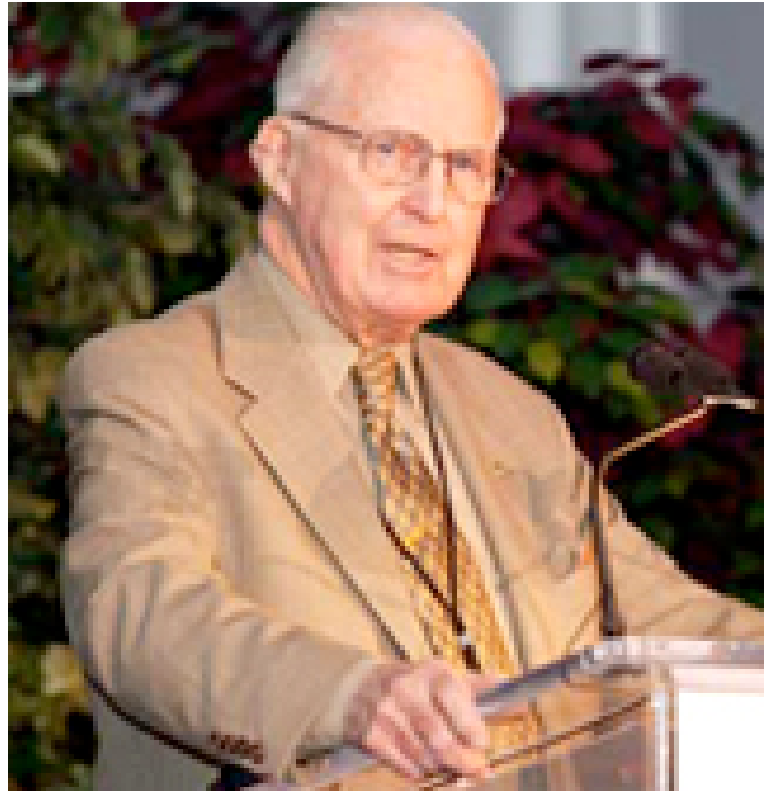
What is also implied by the argument is the Malthusian logic, which holds that famines are a consequence of a lack of food, and a lack of food is a consequence of the failure of agricultural systems to produce enough to keep up with population growth. Naturally where there is hunger, we assume that there is a lack of food. Historians and economists – most notably Amartya Sen, another Nobel laureate, who has examined the causes of hunger and famine in dozens of scholarly books – have found that famine and

hunger have historically been unrelated to food availability.[2] Malthus, in other words, is thoroughly irrelevant to any understanding of the causes of hunger in the world. What was true in Ireland during the potato famine of 1845-1852 was also true in Bengal in 1943, and it remains true today— which is that millions died of starvation in the midst of agricultural abundance.

According to the Malthusian view, which Borlaug himself adopted, the world had run out of land on which to grow food and the only way to increase food production was to find a way to increase the crop yields on any given piece of land through technological innovation. Malthus, however, did not take into account patterns of land ownership, or issues of who controls the land and what it is used for. Neither did Borlaug, who accepted that if there was hunger, there must be a scarcity of food. But one cannot, after all, eat cotton or jute, nor can one eat coffee or tea, nor for that matter, can a poor Indian peasant eat the food that she herself produces, because it is destined for export and for the tables of the affluent of distant cities.

This understanding of the lack of a relationship between food scarcity and hunger, although it has been deepened by the work of Sen and other scholars, it is not new; the Royal Commission of Famines established by the British in India in the nineteenth century understood it – namely, that hunger and famine under its rule were not a consequence of a scarcity of food. In the year 1880 the Commission found that:

The effect of drought is to diminish greatly and at last to stop, all field labor, and to throw out of employment the great mass of people who live on the wages of such labor ...distress arises, not so much from an actual want of food, as from a loss of wages – in other words, money to buy food...as a general rule, there is an abundance of food procurable, even in the worst districts and the worst time; but when men who at their best, live from hand to mouth, are deprived of their means of earning wages, they starve, not from the impossibility of getting food, but



Norman Borlaug

for want of the necessary money to buy it.[3]

Later, in its report on the Bengal famine of 1943 – the last major famine to occur in India, which claimed one and a half a million lives, the Commission also attributed other factors – namely greed and opportunism, as causes of the disaster: “Enormous profits were made out of this calamity, and in the circumstances, profits for some meant death for others. A large part of the community lived in plenty while others starved, and there was much indifference in the face of suffering.”[4]

Historians who have examined the periodic famines that plagued India during the colonial and modern periods have concurred with the Famine Commission that occurrences of famine were not a function of food scarcity, nor were they a result of a Malthusian imbalance between the size of India’s population and the food producing capacity of the land. Under British rule, the commercialization of agriculture that would be stepped up in the late twentieth century had already begun, with an emphasis on industrial and export crops over food crops, as Daniel and Alice

Thorner describe in their 1962 book, *Land and Labor in India*: “Wheat poured out of the Punjab, cotton out of Bombay, and jute out of Bengal. As commercial agriculture and money economy spread, the older practices associated with a self-subsisting economy declined...In some districts the peasant shifted over completely to industrial crops, ...villagers sent to market the cereal reserves traditionally kept for poor years...Years of successive droughts in the 1870s, and 1890s led to great famines and agrarian unrest.”[5] The landless laborers who lived “from hand to mouth” could scarcely feed themselves even in a good harvest year. As one agricultural laborer from Bihar, India put it, “If you don’t own any land, you never get enough to eat, even if the land is producing well.”[6]

It was the Malthusian argument however, that framed the justification for an aggressive intervention in the agricultural economies of developing nations that we call the green revolution. India, it was predicted in the 1960s, faced widespread food shortages and famine. What was the basis for this projection? The prediction of widespread famines, which gained such currency through in the popular books, *Famine- 1975!* by William and Paul Paddock, and *The Population Bomb*

Peasants all over the world were demanding land. “If in 1945,” wrote Ford Foundation chair Paul Hoffman in a letter to the United States ambassador to India, “we had embarked on such a program and carried it on a cost of not over 200 million a year, the end result would have been a China completely immunized against the appeal of the Communists. India, in my opinion, is today what China was in 1945.”[8]

After two billion dollars in aid from the United States over ten years, India had established an industrial agriculture system with a complex of dams, irrigation systems, roads, grain elevators, and petrochemical plants. India became one of the leading wheat producers in the world. What remains invisible behind the statistics of its enormous wheat production is the enormous social, economic and ecological disruption that this transformation had caused, and which, in fact, increased poverty and hunger rather than reduced it. “The food systems that have maintained humankind through most of its history are disintegrating,” wrote Andrew Pearse, the author of the United Nation’s fifteen- nation study of the results of the green revolution, who concluded that “emergence of more capital intensive farming,” and the “dissolution of self

by Paul Erlich, had its genesis in a 1959 Ford Foundation report prepared by an Agricultural Production team from the United States, that examined demographic trends and food production in India and predicted widespread famines would occur in the year 1967. Given that India did not experience the massive die-offs that were predicted, we might allow that, quite possibly, the predictions were based on a flawed analysis. This was the conclusion of the economist Daniel Thorner, who examined the statistical methods of the 1959 report and judged that “this is the sort of jugglery that gives statistics a bad name.”

“The fuss and the furor,” wrote Thorner, “the ‘crisis of overwhelming gravity’... are not a matter of 1959, but of 1966...one wonders whether an ominous crisis came to India along with the team...”[7]

If the threat of famine looming over the horizon was not what motivated the United States to invest billions of taxpayer dollars into revitalizing agriculture in the third world, there was a very real menace, which was the growing social unrest among the rural populations and a very real potential for communist insurgencies.

provisioning agriculture” where the leading causes of the “crisis of livelihood” – in other words, poverty – in the developing world. [9]

Prior to the green revolution, wheat had never been an important crop in India, and it was not a staple of the Indian diet. What does it mean to boast that India increased its wheat yields under the green revolution other than to say that it grew more wheat in place of traditional cereal crops – at the insistence of the United States? Crops produced by subsistence farms are statistically invisible, and so to are the declines in the production of traditional food crops as a consequence of the commercialization of its agriculture.

If the commercialization of agriculture increased poverty in India rather than alleviated it, we must look elsewhere to explain the avoidance of famines since the middle of the last century. In 1947, India won its independence from Britain and became a democracy, and democracies do not allow millions of people to drop dead on the streets from hunger where food is available. In an exhaustive study of the occurrence of

famines in India over the last two hundred years, Jean Druze offers an alternative explanation to the appearance of miracle seeds for the avoidance of famines in India since Independence, which is political and administrative rather than technological or even agricultural. If the food-to-head ratio had remained steady, as Druze found, what had changed since Independence was development of an effective emergency relief system and a commitment on the part of its leadership to avoid famines that has amounted, in Druze's words, to a "political compulsion." [10]

If India's food situation was precarious in the middle of the last century, which it was, we might ask if there were alternatives to the industrialization of its agriculture. Paul Erlich, typically, suggests that what the "under producing" countries of the world needed was the interference of more agricultural scientists from the West – however, maybe what they needed was to be left to continue the agricultural practices that had served them for millennia. Maybe what they needed was access to lands that had been taken from them by European colonizers and their descendants. What might have been the result if the United States had directed its two billion dollars in subsidies toward

While an industrial system of monocultures, mechanical tilling, and over-fertilization is ill-suited to any ecological – or social – environment, it is particularly ill-suited to a tropical environment, and the environmental consequences of introducing this technology to the tropics has been devastating. Today, as a consequence of technologies introduced by the green revolution, India loses six billion tons of topsoil every year. Ten million hectares of India's irrigated land is now waterlogged and saline. Pesticide poisoning has caused epidemics of cancers. Water tables are falling by twenty feet every year. The soil fertility and water resources that had been carefully managed for generations in the Punjab were wasted in a few short years of industrial abuses. [12] If India's masses have avoided starvation, they have endured chronic and debilitating hunger and poverty. Over 200 million people in India are hungry, according to the 2008 Global Hunger Index, although India is a leading food exporter. The ongoing commercialization of agriculture in India continues to this day, and the result – which is exacerbated by climate change – is a swelling slum population that is growing at 250 times the rate of population growth. [13]

a peasant based, labor intensive agriculture, rather than for the purchase of machines and agro chemicals that displaced human labor and the more sophisticated agricultural wisdom that had served Indian farmers for centuries?

There was an alternative, and it had its proponents, besides the peasants themselves. Sir Albert Howard, an agricultural officer with the British colonial government, who is considered to be the grandfather of the modern organic farming movement, published *An Agricultural Testament* in 1943, which was based on his years of patient observations of traditional farming in India. "Instead of breaking up the subject into fragments," he wrote, "and studying agriculture in piece meal fashion by the analytical method of science, appropriate only to the discovery of new facts, we must adopt a synthetic approach and look at the wheel of life as one great subject and not as if it were a patchwork of unrelated things." [11] But it would be the reductionistic model that would prevail, and that is still misunderstood to be more "efficient" and superior, although it is based on an outmoded mechanistic model rather than on a scientific understanding of the complexity of biological systems.

The alternative, as proposed by Howard, and as practiced for thousands of years by Indian farmers, is a multi-tiered system of agro forestry that is capable of supplying food, fuel, and fiber needs, while providing year-round employment, and a surplus, over the long term. [14] In addition to these benefits there are those that are impossible to quantify because the values are immeasurable – the value of clean water, meaningful work, biological diversity, and the cultural, social and physical vitality of thriving farming communities.

Such a system of small holdings would have required land reform, and it would have done little to feed the larger industrial economy; although it may have benefited the rural poor in India, it would not have helped the economic security of the United States, which benefited greatly from the sales of fertilizers and machinery as a result of the green revolution. If the green revolution failed as a humanitarian program, it succeeded as an economic stimulus plan for the United States by creating unprecedented opportunities for western capital.

The industrialization of agriculture has never been a means of meeting human needs, but of feeding the demands of an industrial economy, which requires cheap grain and a cheap pool of surplus labor. Malthus originally wrote his essay as an argument against the poor laws; Malthusian arguments about ratios of population growth and food production have always been ideologically motivated, and have been used to advance the view that hunger in the world is “natural,” deflecting criticisms away from the inequalities of colonial or capitalistic systems and onto the poor themselves. [15]

While these considerations may be important to correct the historical record, they are more than of academic interest. The same justifications for a second generation green revolution are being advanced in the promotion of genetically modified crops, to the detriment of the world’s small farmers but to the benefit of companies like Monsanto. (“Nine billion people. A Changing climate.” – we have all seen the advertisements.) In cooperation with the World Food Program, well meaning philanthropic organizations

technological magic, and our faith that technology will solve our problems is as irrational as it is dangerous. Behind the curtain, as it turns out, there is only a little old man with a cook stove.

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[1] See, for instance, Lappé, Francis Moore, et al. *World Hunger: Twelve Myths*, 2nd ed. Grove Press, New York 1998; Johda, N.S. *International Crops Research Institute for Semi Arid Tropics*; Rosset, Peter, “The Multiple Functions and Benefits of Small Farm Agriculture,” Policy Brief N. 4, Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1999.

[2] Sen, Amartya. *Poverty and Famines : An Essay on Entitlements and Deprivation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.

like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, are subsidizing the purchase of agro chemicals, hybrid and GM seeds for small farmers in Africa, where agriculture is in dire need of support and development. But is this the most suitable form of agriculture for Africa? The world has at least grown wiser from the lessons of the green revolution. Or has it?

Discussions about the legacy of Norman Borlaug – saint or sinner? – over-estimate his contribution on both sides of the debate. To misunderstand this is to exaggerate the importance of the genetics of crops, which has so perilously little to do with the persistence of hunger in the world. Borlaug’s seeds are the equivalent of the proverbial stone in the soup – for what would these seeds have meant without, not just the technological package of machines and agrochemicals, but the entire ideological package that constituted the green revolution? As much as the “red” revolution it was designed to contest, the green revolution was ideologically inspired; it was a form of social and political engineering necessary for the global triumph of industrial capitalism. This was no miracle, and there was no wizardry involved. Our culture is all too easily seduced by the make-believe of

[3] Quoted in Dreze, Jean. “Famine Prevention in India,” in *The Political Economy of Hunger*. Ed. by Jean Drèze, Amartya Sen, and Athar Hussain. Oxford : Clarendon Press 1995. p. 92.

[4] Quoted in Lappé, Frances Moore. *Food First. Beyond the Myth of Scarcity*. New York: Balantine 1978. p. 80.

[5] Quoted in Ross, Eric. *The Malthus Factor. Poverty, Politics and Population in Capitalist Development*. London: Zed Books. 1998. p.49-50.

[6] Quoted from the New York Times in Lappé, Food First. p. 147.

[7] Thorner, Daniel and Alice. *Land and Labor in India*. London: Asia Publishing House. 1962. p. 114.

[8] Quoted in Ross, p. 153.

[9] Pearse, Andrew. *Seeds of Plenty, Seeds of Want. Social and Economic Implications of the Green Revolution*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1980. p. vii

[10] Druze, Jean. "Famine Prevention in India."

[11] Howard, Sir Albert. *An Agricultural Testament*. New York: Oxford University Press [1972] 1943.

[12] Rathindra, Nath Roy. "Trees: Appropriate tools for Water and Soil Management," in *The Green Revolution Revisited : Critique and Alternatives*. Ed. by Bernhard Glaeser. London: Allen & Unwin 1987.

[13] Davis, Mike. *Planet of Slums*. London: Verso. 2006.

[14] Rathindra, Nath Roy. "Trees: Appropriate tools for Water and Soil Management."

[15] See Ross, Eric. *The Malthus Factor*.

Barbara Ehrenreich: The Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America

By Emily Wilson, AlterNet. Posted October 10, 2009.

The author talks about how a plague of positive thinking is permeating our society, from medicine to business, and is even contributing to our financial crisis.

When Barbara Ehrenreich went to be treated for breast cancer, she was exhorted to think positively; and when she expressed feelings of fear and anger, she was chided for being negative.

Ehrenreich, the author of 16 books, including *Nickel and Dimed* and *Bait and Switch*, which examine the blue- and white-collar job markets, took on what she sees as an epidemic of positive thinking in her new book: *Bright-Sided: How the Relentless Promotion of Positive Thinking Has Undermined America*.

Positive thinking is different, she says, from being cheerful or good-natured -- it's believing that the world is shaped by our wants and desires and that by focusing on the good, the bad ceases to exist.

Ehrenreich believes this has permeated our culture and that the refusal to acknowledge that bad things could happen is in some way responsible for the current financial crisis.

In her new book, Ehrenreich examines how the positive-thinking movement was started by Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, and an amateur metaphysician named Phineas Parkhurst Quimby in response to Calvinism; how being positive became mandatory in corporate culture; and how she thinks prosperity preachers, such as Joel Osteen of Lakewood Church in Houston encouraged a culture of debt by telling their congregations that God wants them to have a big house and a nice car.

Emily Wilson: At the beginning of the book, you talk about going to be treated for breast cancer and being told to think positively. Was that what started you thinking about this?

Barbara Ehrenreich: That was my first exposure to positive thinking as an ideology. I was just astounded and dismayed by it. Here I was in a real crisis in my life, and people were trying to market pink ribbon teddy bears to me, and where I thought I would find sort of sisterly support on the Internet, I found instead

the constant exhortations to be cheerful and to embrace my disease [she laughs].

EW: What is the difference between being told to try and stay upbeat and to have a good attitude and positive thinking?

BE: I think it's a slippery slope. Once you start on how you have to face your problem with a good attitude, they start looking for justifications for that, and it became you actually get better only if you are upbeat, only if you visualize your recovery and so on.

EW: Were the doctors telling you that?

BE: The doctors don't say much, but there are books they have written, or psychologists have, trying to get in on the breast cancer business, but to my chagrin I was often encountering it from fellow sufferers. Individual women have written books, too, like my favorite, *The Gift of Cancer*, and it seems to be pretty ubiquitous. I wasn't finding any dissent, and when I

I use that word advisedly, with cancer and with lay-offs from unaccountable corporations. And then you tell them, "Well, you just have to change the way you think." And that's very clever.

EW: You write about how positive thinking started with Mary Baker Eddy and Phineas Quimby and how it was a response to Calvinism.

BE: I was actually kind of a fan of Quimby. Here was a blue-collar guy, basically a skilled craftsman living in Portland, Maine, and who had a sideline of being a metaphysician. What it's all about is he was rejecting a Calvinist worldview -- that people are damned, that we're wretched sinners and that we should spend all of our time examining our souls for sins and flaws.

And he said "Hey!" [She laughs.] He understood that that worldview was making people sick. It was kind of brilliant, I thought. He was part of a larger populist health movement arising against the regular medical

tried to dissent on a message board, I was told to run, not walk, to therapy.

EW: You write a lot about how positive thinking is in all aspects of life. Do you think this is the most insidious about it -- this idea of a disease being your fault?

BE: I look at it with a little bit of sociological detachment. It's a brilliant system of social control. When bad things happen to people you say, "Well, it's really your attitude that has to change."

The second big place where I encountered all this was in the kind of motivational services that are offered to laid-off white-collar workers, where every networking event or seminar you get the same message about how it's really your attitude that is going to determine if you're going to get a job and probably has something to do with why you lost that last one.

You take people who have been really victimized, and profession.

EW: When does this idea of positive thinking change into being what you're saying it is now?

BE: It had ceased to be seen as a healing method, although that comes back. By the time I encounter it, breast cancer has come back into the health area. But in the early 20th century there was, for the first time, scientific medicine and the beginnings of some sorts of effective treatments. That kind of closed a door for the positive-thinking movement, which then increasingly in the 20th century addressed itself to prosperity and wealth and success.

EW: You write about the connection you see between positive thinking and the subprime-mortgage meltdown. Talk about that.

BE: I'm not saying this is the only thing that caused the financial crash. You can't rule out greed and the exceeding rapid nature of transactions and

globalization and all that, but we had a culture that by the mid '00s was totally encouraging debt, the assumption of reckless levels of debt.

We often blamed the victim, the rather low-paid person who wound up with a subprime mortgage, but they were even hearing it from their preachers if they went to one of these megachurch, positive-thinking preachers who said God wants you to have a larger house.

Maybe you were never able to get any credit because of your race or your income, but you could be blessed suddenly! If someone offers you a mortgage that has no down payment and no proof of income, that's God coming down and saying, "Go get that house I wanted you to have."

Far worse, and on a far larger scale, was the role of this ideology in the corporations and in the finance industry.

category himself, but in reality that wasn't likely to happen. Why do you bring that up?

BE: I'm saying this is an ideology that takes away all the indignation there might be about extreme economic polarization.

If you think you're going to be rich someday, why would you be resentful of million-dollar bonuses or \$10 million CEO salaries, you know? You're going to be there, so it would be against your own self-interest to stand up for your class interests.

EW: You write that the alternative to positive thinking isn't despair. What do you see as the alternative?

BE: How about a little realism? How about not seeing the world so totally colored by our own wishes and emotions? For the positive thinker, that means everything looks rosy and everything is going to be all right no matter what, so you have to block out the little

I have traced how positive thinking became the corporate culture in America. It was mandatory to be positive.

So you had companies who would literally fire people for being negative, negative in the sense of maybe raising too many questions, maybe expressing a doubt.

One example is the man who was the head of the real estate division of Lehman Bros. in 2006 and told his CEO that he thought the whole housing thing was a bubble and they should start getting out, and he was fired for that.

So we had a culture of complete denial at all levels of the possibility that bad things could happen and maybe God doesn't want you to get rich.

EW: You mention how "Joe the Plumber" came out against the idea of Barack Obama raising taxes on people making over \$250,000 because he said he was going to buy his plumbing business and be in that

warning signs.

For the very depressed person, you're just convinced that everything is going to be miserable, that you're not going to enjoy anything you undertake, that you're going to fail at everything.

There, too, you're just projecting things. It's extremely hard to "see things as they are." It's a project -- we have to consult other people, we get other views, we sometimes have to question other people's views, but that's the only way to proceed, and that's how our species has survived as long as it has.

EW: Do you think the recession is going to be an antidote to this?

BE: If I have anything to say about it [laughs]. It's crazy to me we haven't had an apology from Joel Osteen, America's most high-profile positive preacher, for this.

They should have said, "I'm sorry about the

subprimes." We haven't had anybody coming forward from the corporate culture and saying, "Yeah, we kept our heads in the sand because it was so much more comfortable."

EW: Anything else you want to say?

BE: You could say, "Well, but it feels nice to be positive. I do all this work on myself and become more positive, and I feel better." And I say, "You might feel better if you stopped doing all that work on yourself."

This is a burden people take on. Just put that aside. Don't fuss all the time about your mood and your

attitude. Try to deal with the world itself.

One of the major sources of misery in the world is poverty. We can do one of two things. We can tell poor people they need to change their attitudes, and there's a whole industry of that kind of thing -- motivational speakers that tell people to get over their bad attitudes towards wealth so it will just come to them.

Or we can say, "What's the cause of this? How are we going to get together and do something about it?" And I come down on that side.

GLI as development: Der Spiegel on Namibia

By Chandra Pasma

Der Spiegel, a German newsmagazine, has an article on the basic income project in Namibia. The article highlights some of the outcomes of the basic income experiment in Otjivero-Omitaro, as well as some photos of the village. It is well worth checking out.

Here's an example of a success story:

"With the first 100 dollars, she bought a bag of flour, some yeast, firewood and an aluminum sheet. She dug a hole in the sand in front of her hut, placed the wood in the hole and lit a fire. Then she placed an oil drum over the fire. She filled empty sardine cans with a dough she had made with the flour and placed them inside the hot drum, replaced the lid and waited. After 20 minutes, Nembwaya had her first batch of miniature loaves of bread.

She started selling the mini-loaves for one Namibian dollar apiece. Word spread quickly that Frieda was selling bread, that it was inexpensive and tasted good, and that you had to get there early before she sold out. After 10 months, Nembwaya had made enough money to buy a stove for 3,000 Namibian dollars, something that hardly anyone else in the village owned. She is proud of her acquisition. "Look, three burners," she says. She opens the lid, closes it, then opens it again and pulls out her sardine tins. "Now I can bake 250 little loaves a day," she says. That translates into 250 dollars a day in revenue."

how a basic income program saved a Namibian village

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,642310,00.html>