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Authoritarianism and Social Policy

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Authoritarianism seems to be emerging as the default mode of global capitalism. In the absence of reliable economic growth, and with working-class incomes in long-term stagnation, both liberal and social democratic parties have lost support in many countries, and authoritarian regimes have come to power in several. But poor people in the USA, UK and Europe have long experienced coercion, being forced to accept low-paid, insecure work or face benefits sanctions. As a growing proportion of workers have come to rely on supplements such as tax credits, the working class has been divided, and opportunistic authoritarian politicians have mobilised the anxiety and resentment of those on the margins of poverty. This article argues that only an active civil society, with voluntary agencies uncompromised by involvement in coercive policies, along with universal, unconditional Basic Incomes for all citizens, can reverse these trends.

Keywords: Authoritarianism, poverty, coercion, sanctions, UBI.

Introduction

Why have authoritarian forms of government become so prevalent all over the world? Although there have been many variants, from overt fascism to belligerent Trumpism, and from Putin's post-Stalinism to the Chinese one-party state, in every continent regimes have evolved towards illiberal policies, with the support of large segments of their working-class constituencies (Jordan, 2019).

All this suggests that the preconditions for democratic forms of socialism, and even for tolerant liberalism, are both particular and rarely available. In retrospect, post-war North America, Western Europe and Australasia were economic environments in which rising shares of wages and salaries as a proportion of national incomes were combined with high levels of trades union membership, and stable political systems reflecting the interests of capital and labour. All this was taken for granted at the time; the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellites seemed to confirm its permanence.

In fact, all of these conditions were eroding by the early 1990s, and the financial crash of 2007–8 made this explicit. It has taken a further ten years for the political out-workings of this erosion to be consolidated. Authoritarianism, not liberalism, let alone democratic socialism, seems to be the default mode of global capitalism.

There is no evidence that a return to the benign circumstances of the post-war Western world will come about through spontaneous economic processes. So the urgent question is whether political leaderships can mobilise electorates, and particularly working-class electorates, through credible alternatives to authoritarianism.

It sounds crudely ideological to argue (against the claims of conservatives and liberals in the democracies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) that capitalism is not

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freedom-friendly but fascist-friendly. Yet history suggests that, even where regimes in developed countries were relatively respectful of the rights of their citizens, their prosperity was based on imperial rule that was violent and exploitative. The legacies of these colonial systems have persisted in such conflicts as Viet Nam, Mozambique, Chile, Malaysia and Rwanda, and in restrictive and punitive immigration rules.

Of course, most of these regimes have not conformed to the classical archetype of authoritarianism – unaccountable power, exercised by an individual or small group. But that version was in decline from the late eighteenth century onwards. Modern forms involve both capitalist manipulation and complex structures of state power, mediated by multiple private companies, voluntary bodies and public agencies.

One theoretical framework for analysing and understanding this process is to identify and explore recent changes in the nature of capitalism itself, or the consequences of recent economic transformations. Shoshana Zuboff, in her *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism and the Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (2018), argues that companies are using the raw material gathered from mobile phones, thermostats, computers, credit cards, supermarket checkouts and street cameras as 'prediction products', traded in 'behavioural futures markets', to modify behaviour, and ultimately to 'automate' it. Authoritarianism of this kind is a consequence for all citizens living under the regime of surveillance capitalism, a new form of this mode of production.

In *The People versus Democracy: Why our Freedom is in Danger and How to Save It* (2018), Yascha Mounk claims that the liberties that were won by centuries of political struggle are now endangered by working-class citizens whose living standards have been declining for decades under the globalised version of capitalism. Their justified anger is being captured by cynical authoritarian populists, supplying over-simple explanations for their plight, and remedies for the future (such as tariffs, walls and immigration quotas).

Alternatively, Guy Standing's account of *The Corruption of Capitalism* (2017) argues that it has been captured by a rentier class, a plutocracy with links to concentrated financial capital, which has enslaved a debtor population and enforces low-wage work. Although this affects the lives and liberties of all, the worst impact is on a growing class of low earners with insecure employment, the 'precariat'.

Costas Lapavitsas, whose focus is on Europe, argues in his *The Left Case against the EU* (2019) that it has been the transnational pursuit of an agenda of radical neo-liberal privatisation of public services that has eventually provoked a working-class backlash, in the form of populist, nationalist, right wing, authoritarian, anti-EU movements. He sees the EU as beyond salvation, and believes that resistance should be on a national basis.

All these analyses regard authoritarianism as a latent feature of capitalism, which emerged as dominant under the conditions of a global economy in which transnational capital gained control, and wages were in long-term stagnation. The financial crises of the new century supplied political opportunities for an authoritarian nationalism that had always been waiting in the wings for such a situation, as the traditional political parties of both conservatism and social democracy suffered a catastrophic loss of support from disillusioned electorates. Politicians like Bolsonaro in Brazil, who had been marginal to the mainstream for decades, seized their chance, and came to power on a wave of resentment – in his case, against corruption and high rates of crime, with murders at thirty per 100,000 there, compared with one in the UK (BBC Radio 4, *Profile*, 2018).

All states use the power of laws and the threat of sanctions and punishments for those who break them. The classic authoritarian state, Stalin's USSR, extended this control to

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every aspect of the economy, and much of society. It seems that present-day democracies are mobilising working-class electorates behind measures to monitor and coerce a growing proportion of citizens, both in employment and outside it.

An alternative framework for understanding this trend is that 'moral regulation' – the cultural and political processes by which societies' members regulate themselves through their everyday interactions, and are regulated by associations and state agencies (Jordan, 2008) – has become increasingly authoritarian in recent years. Here the role of civil society organisations can be seen as crucial, and their part in the emergence of authoritarianism in social policy is also analysed here.

In this article, I shall focus on these particular features of authoritarian regimes, one which is not new. Indeed, the coercion of poor people (claimants of means-tested benefits and tax credits), and measures to force them to accept low-paid, insecure work, was part of the social democratic state's longstanding system of social control. I shall suggest that it provided a basis for the new authoritarianism, by dividing the working class, and stoking resentment against poor people, especially immigrants and minorities.

At present, we do not have a clear framework in which to address the issue, because it has crept up on the political and academic communities largely unexpectedly. In large part, this is because we have not recognised the latent authoritarianism in market democracies; the coercion of poor people was not seen as a central feature of the political system. As inequality has increased, and the costs of subsidising low pay have risen, those just outside the line defining eligibility for these benefits have grown increasingly resentful of claimants (Jordan, 1973: 70; Jordan, 2019: 48).

Part of the success of authoritarian mobilisations (which have outflanked the traditional parties of the centre-right and centre-left in the European countries as well as the UK and USA) has stemmed from the failure of civil society bodies (voluntary organisations) to identify and resist them. I shall argue that this has been often because these bodies themselves have been drawn into the administration of coercive policies. By considering the theory of civil society, interest in which was sparked by Robert Putnam's study of Italian politics (Putnam, 1993), I shall suggest that they need to re-establish an independent and critical voice in the political and social life of societies for democracy and civil rights to return to healthy functioning.

I shall also consider how the case for a radical reform of the tax-benefit system is linked with this debate. The proposal for an unconditional Universal Basic Income (UBI) was advanced by philosophers such as Philippe Van Parijs (1995) in terms of 'real freedom for all'. But at that time it was not clear that the coercion of poor people (which the UBI is designed to sideline for all time (Jordan, 2019: ch. 9)) would supply an important platform for a new form of authoritarian politics, directly opposed to his vision for the future. The theoretical and practical basis for this proposal, and experiments in its implementation, will also be reviewed.

The origins of compulsory employment

Long before the advent of present-day leaderships, the ideals of free and equal citizenship embodied in workers' rights and social insurance schemes began to be eroded, as industrial employment declined in the advanced economies (Jordan, 1973, 1996, 2008, 2010; Standing, 1999, 2002, 2011). In the first waves of this process, starting in the early 1970s, the growth of low-paid service work, along with rising unemployment,

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led to the expansion of means-tested social assistance provision, and the creation of new subsidies for households whose earnings fell below subsistence levels, such as tax credits (Waddan, 1997; Newman, 2003). In the USA, the latter expanded rapidly; by 1999 some 19 million households claimed the Earned Income Tax Credits created by the Nixon government in 1975, and in 2005 Wal-Mart, which was the largest company in the world, employing over 1.5 million people, forbade its mainly female employees from joining trades unions, but gave them classes in how to claim tax credits (BBC World Service, *News*, 2005).

From a political standpoint, this effectively divided the working class in these states, as those in low-paid service work and claiming such benefits largely dropped out of both unionism and community activism (everything from bell-ringing to cat-breeding and allotment gardening). In the UK, among Class V (unskilled) men born in 1946, and interviewed aged thirty-six, 58 per cent belonged to such organisations (either trades unions or these associations); for women it was 37 per cent. Among Class V men born in 1970, and interviewed aged thirty, only 2 per cent were members of these associations; for women it was 6 per cent (Bynner and Parsons, 2003, Figure 10.1a).

At the same time, membership of right-wing parties and groups protesting against the costs of poverty-relief (as well as immigration) were growing, as real earnings stagnated (Standing, 2017). In order to appease such movements, first 'workfare' in the USA (Mead, 1986), then 'welfare-to-work' in the UK, and eventually in Europe, all coercive schemes, were introduced to place unemployed claimants in various training programmes or employments, under threat of benefits sanctions; the same sanctions were applied to those claiming tax credits deemed to be working for fewer hours than were available for them (often in spite of their child-care commitments). In the UK, use of sanctions doubled in the period 2014–5, including those applied to claimants who refused 'zero-hours contracts' (Channel 4 TV, *Despatches*, 2015). In this way, a whole bureaucracy of enforcement developed around these measures, building an authoritarian base for what was inappropriately called 'welfare' in the USA, and increasingly in the UK. As inequalities of all kinds widened, prison populations grew rapidly in these countries (Jordan, 1996: 201–6).

Finally, when the Information Technology (IT) revolution began to transform the service sectors of developed economies in the new century, even managerial and professional occupations became less secure and well-rewarded. Young graduates endured more years of short-term contracts and sudden falls in incomes. For example, in Ireland the increase in poverty after 2008 occurred through falls in salaries rather than cuts in benefits payments (Cousins, 2016).

In the UK, the mass protests of August, 2011 were followed by an uneasy truce between citizens and the authorities. The police, in response to resource cuts, have drawn back from a model based on community policing and a visible pedestrian presence on urban streets to a strategy of mobile units, combining rapid automobile deployments with squads of defensively-clad officers, carrying shields, and quick to use truncheons and chemical sprays. Prison officers were also issued with sprays (BBC Radio 4, *News*, 2018).

The alternative: an active civil society

If neither markets, nor property ownership, nor economic growth can be relied upon to protect polities against authoritarian governments (or against the authoritarian deployment

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of social policy institutions), what can? In this section, I shall argue that the first requirement is a diverse network of civil society organisations, in which all sections of communities participate and interact. This may happen spontaneously among more privileged citizens, but it requires nurturing for the majority; as has already been noted, such participation among poor people has been falling alarmingly in the UK since about 1990.

Spontaneous co-operation between members of groups and small communities, working together for subsistence, was the original form of human association. Anthropologists have found that systems of reciprocity and co-operation are almost universal among hunter-gatherer peoples (Mauss, 1925). In such communities, rough equality prevailed, since no enduring property could be accumulated (Evans-Pritchard, 1940). When competition for resources occurred, the group simply divided, and one part moved elsewhere (Taylor, 1976: 135–6). As long as territory was available, these communities continued to spread out for millennia.

It was only when faced with geographical barriers to this process that competition for territory, war and property ownership began (Cohen, 1965). These in turn required governments. Larger communities and tax collection led to authoritative organisation, private accumulation and the struggle for competitive advantage.

The disastrous international, religious and civil conflicts of seventeenth century Europe called for new theories of societies and government. Hobbes' account of the state of war (each against all) as the default position, and his justification of authoritarian power (Hobbes, 1651) called forth the utilitarian theories of the following century. In particular, Adam Smith argued that, despite the greed and selfishness of the rich, they were led by an 'Invisible Hand' to spend and invest in such a way as to give the maximum benefit to the poor (Smith, 1759). Economic growth came about as increased industrial productivity led in turn to higher productivity in agriculture. But this only led to better government when the traditional rulers, the authoritarian aristocracy, were drawn into business and trade, and acquired the habits of mind of the bourgeois class; merchants and manufacturers in turn bought land, and brought their commercial mentality to the countryside (Smith, 1776, Bks III and V). In this way, capitalism led to better government.

In the following century, liberalism gained ground, and seemed to be becoming the dominant creed of the future. Although they emphasised the importance of voluntary organisations in a free society, both de Tocqueville (1836), who regarded American democracy with some ambivalence, and John Stuart Mill (1848, 1859), who retained some authoritarian powers for his version of the liberal state, praised the example set by the USA, France and Britain, and inspired opponents of traditional authority in Germany and Russia. Yet in the twentieth century, fascism and Soviet communism reverted to authoritarian systems, in far more comprehensive rule over society and economy than was even attempted during previous eras, and with all forms of association under state control.

In the post-war democracies, it would have been perceived as coercive and counterproductive to try to pressurise or compel any group of citizens to join associations. To counter authoritarianism, citizens should be free to choose between a broad range of activities, including the pursuit of their economic interests, the expression of their social needs, and the development of their cultural lives. The state should be neutral between the use of time and energy to work for wages, to co-operate in the improvement of physical and social environments, or to take part in activities such as music or sport.

This implies that society as a whole should be, as much as possible, organised and activated by what I have called 'moral regulation' (Jordan, 2010: ch.5), as distinguished

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from 'contractual regulation' – the incentives and penalties that drive market transactions of all kinds, and which had been introduced into the whole public sector in this period (Davies, 2012). Moral regulation operates through face-to-face relationships, in which positive regard or disapproval are communicated, often in implicit, non-verbal ways, and the regard, respect and sense of belonging that are created and distributed in such interactions become embodied in cultural practices and standards (Jordan, 2008).

The theory that voluntary associations contributed substantially to such an order, and that this in turn sustained healthy, democratic politics, was researched by Robert Putnam (1993) in Italy. He compared the notoriously corrupt regimes of cities and provinces in the south of the country, dominated by mafia families, with the more open and participatory culture of the north, with its plethora of associations, charities and trades unions. He went on to conduct a similar study in the USA (Putnam, 2000), analysing 'the collapse and revival of American community' in terms of the 'social capital' – 'social networks and norms of trustworthiness and reciprocity' – generated by voluntary organisations.

Faced with examples in that period of rival religious communities which were organised in a plethora of sectarian organisations (in armed conflict with each other), Putnam distinguished between 'bonding' social capital, of the kind that sustained these groups of co-religionists, and 'bridging' social capital, which involved associations of members from across a spectrum of classes and faiths. But such long-running conflicts demonstrated that the existence of a multiplicity of civil society organisations may be a necessary condition for a healthy and tolerant democracy, but not a sufficient one. Furthermore, the shift from state grants to contracts for voluntary organisations had, in the opinion of some critics, 'recast them as delivery vans for their own policies and programmes' (National Coalition for Independent Action (NCIA) (2006), quoted in NCIA, 2015: 2).

The critique of the contract culture, and the idea of a moral basis for social policy was revived in the work of Phillip Blond (2010). He argued for a devolution of the powers of many state agencies to voluntary organisations and charities. The theory behind this was a critique of individualism and capitalism; ethical, aesthetic and spiritual elements, leading to a cultural transformation, should be part of a new moral order, led by civil society organisations. In this, voluntary systems should always be preferred to compulsory, state agencies (and high finance).

Ever since the advent of the market-minded regimes of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, moral regulation had become increasingly neglected and invisible, as government programmes aimed to introduce contractual regulation into more and more spheres of life; these innovations were gradually adopted and imitated in the other developed economies (Sandel, 2009). This was most obvious in the introduction of rewards, penalties, quantified targets, codified outcome measures and league tables in fields such as education and health care (Sandel, 2010).

This tendency, so evident in the Third Way governments of Tony Blair in the UK, Bill Clinton in the USA, and their imitators in Australia, New Zealand and Canada, seemed to be coming under scrutiny and critique when David Cameron, newly elected as leader of the UK Conservative Party, launched his 'Big Society' initiative (Ishkanian and Szreter, 2012). The declared aim of this was to stimulate citizens to participate in voluntary activities of all kinds, and to organise themselves for these purposes. He spoke of a 'shift in the culture' and a 'radical redistribution of power' to individuals and communities – seemingly a return to regulation and citizenship based on associative bonds and mutual commitments, rather than abstract systems, rules and incentives (Cameron, 2009).

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In retrospect, this seems to have had limited success in the UK. At the same time, established charities and voluntary organisations became involved in many of the coercive elements of 'welfare-to-work' schemes; their funding relied on payments for employing claimants who were required to take such posts by the benefits authorities. There was little evidence of a renaissance in associations and communities. Instead, in all the developed economies and many former communist ones, there has been a rise in authoritarian political movements, based on resentment against minorities and migrants, and committed to enforcement and punishment throughout their legal systems.

So, the alternative basis for a less coercive regime would have to be far more radical than the 'Big Society' programme. It would need state agencies to encourage and enable associations and community groups, but to avoid polluting them with tasks of social control. At present this would go against a longstanding trend in political culture.

The alternative: an unconditional basic income

I have argued that the basis for authoritarian politics, especially in the UK and USA, lies in the division in the working class, and the creation of a new class of those who rely on means-tested subsidies (tax credits) to supplement their earnings; whether they are in work or unemployed, they are subject to the coercive power of the benefits authorities (Jordan, 1973, 1976, 1981, 1986, 1996, 2010, 2019). The only viable alternative in an economy mainly consisting of service work, often occasional, seasonal or with variable hours, is for the state to supply every adult citizen with a regular payment, without test of work or household status, as an unconditional right.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states seemed to have ushered in a new age of liberal democratic regimes worldwide. The revival of authoritarianism prompts a re-examination of the bases for individual freedom, and how this relates to an economy which is increasingly polarised between a global elite of super-rich financiers, and a growing proportion of impoverished service workers, sustained by conditional, means-tested benefits, under the regime of benefits authorities.

One policy measure which might re-assert the claims for freedom is an unconditional Universal Basic income. The Basic Income Earth network (BIEN), which campaigns globally for this, defines it as 'a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement' (Haagh, 2018: 1).

The theoretical basis for a UBI in Van Parijs's (1995) analysis is a hypothetical contract between the individuals in an imaginary society, and is aimed at giving each the opportunity for him or her to live as he or she might like to live (to do whatever he or she might want to do). Since these individuals are assumed to be diverse in their tastes and aptitudes, markets and flexible employment contracts generate the best outcomes towards that 'real libertarian' goal; but they also need the security to pursue their life-plans, and this can only be supplied by an unconditional UBI for each member of that society.

Although this idea was hinted at in the early nineteenth century by Fourier and Saint-Simon, the first worked-out schemes for this policy emerged at the end of the First World War. The Quakers Dennis and Mabel Milner proposed a universal 'State Bonus' as an alternative to both the Poor Law and the embryonic Social Insurance system (Van Trier, 1995); their work influenced the distinguished economist James Meade, who later advocated UBI (Meade, 1938). The other proposal (for a 'Social Dividend') was made at the same time by Major C.H. Douglas – disparagingly referred to by Keynes as 'a private,

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surely, rather than a major in the great army of under-consumptionist theorists'. Douglas started the Social Credit movement, which evolved into a political party and a paramilitary group, the Greenshirts, eventually achieving one MP (Hutchinson *et al.*, 2002). Social Credit parties still exist in New Zealand and Canada, and formed the administration in the province of Alberta for many years.

In spite of the best efforts of the last parliamentary campaigner for the Social Dividend, Sir Brandon Rhys-Williams (Conservative), the proposal seemed to have been sidelined in the UK by the Beveridge Social Insurance scheme as the basis for the post-war welfare state, and elsewhere in Europe, the USA and the Commonwealth by similar systems. While full employment lasted, trades union membership was high and above-subsistence wages were the norm, the power to impose sanctions against claimants who evaded the work conditions of benefits was sparingly used, mostly for the very poor.

All this began to change as industrial employment shifted to the Far East and South America in the early 1970s. The introduction of subsidies for low-wage and non-standard hours service work, culminating in extensive tax credit systems, created 'poverty traps' as income tax combined with benefits withdrawal as earnings rose. So the new subsidies were accompanied by an increasing use of sanctions against a rising unemployed claimant population, who had little incentive to take this kind of work. These authoritarian measures coincided with a renewed interest in an unconditional income for all citizens, first through a social movement, the Claimants Unions (Jordan, 1973), then among political philosophers (Van Parijs, 1989, 1995; Offe, 1992), economists (Parker, 1988; Gorz, 1997; Standing, 1999, 2002), feminists (Pateman, 1988; Lewis, 1992), and environmentalists (Fitzpatrick, 1999, 2003).

In principle, a UBI would complement and enable the kinds of activities, associations and communities outlined in the previous section, as well as giving all citizens incentives to participate in paid employment. But it would also allow paid and unpaid work (in economy, household and society) to be shared more equally between men and women, and among all citizens (Torry, 2013). It would therefore at very least greatly reduce the whole authoritarian basis of means-tested benefits administration, with its coercive powers and punitive sanctions.

Most of these authors assumed that a UBI would be introduced by a liberal or social democratic government in a prosperous developed economy. In fact, the first schemes were initiated in states where revenues from sudden discoveries of mineral wealth were distributed among indigenous populations. These did not fulfil the defining conditions listed by BIEN, but they all had some of their characteristics.

An early example was Alaska; there the taxes on new oil production were consolidated in the Alaska Permanent Fund, and paid out to all citizens. Those whose incomes were most enhanced were Inuit populations. The scheme was judged to be successful enough to be continued under the governorship of Sarah Palin.

Similarly, new mineral finds transformed the economy, and allowed church groups to organise a scheme for unconditional payments to all under sixty years of age in one district of Namibia (Jauch *et al.*, 2009; Harrmann and Harrmann, 2012). The NGO co-ordinators reported that, starting with an unemployment rate of 36 per cent, and 44 per cent of the population under sixteen years of age, as well as high income inequality, poverty levels and child malnutrition declined dramatically, while school attendance and health improved. Economic activity, especially among women, increased, while crime levels dropped. More small businesses were started (BIEN NewsFlash, December, 2009).

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Other 'experiments' have arisen more unconventionally. For instance, a casino run by the Cherokee First Nation made such substantial profits that the elders decided to distribute them to all tribe members. Drug and alcohol addiction fell, as did juvenile delinquency, and school attainment improved (Akee *et al*., 2010). Many smaller-scale projects, in which unconditional sums have been paid to selective groups (such as alcoholics) have had similar results (Bregman, 2017). One study lists forty-five countries and 110 million people taking part in Southern Hemisphere schemes (Hanlon et al., 2010).

As these findings have gradually become known, some developed countries are introducing their own projects. Pilot studies have been conducted in Finland and are under way in cities in Belgium and the Netherlands. More controversially, the Italian government, on the urging of the Five Star coalition partner, is attempting to introduce a scheme. This has been vigorously opposed by the EU (and especially Germany) on account of Italy's massive public debt. Any large European country might face similar opposition.

The Finnish pilot is an instance in which controversies of several kinds were generated. First, purists insisted that it was not really a UBI scheme; it selected 2000 long-term unemployed men, aged twenty to fifty-eight, at random, gave them an unconditional income of $560 a month for two years, and compared them with a control group. In this sense, it simply compared an unconditional with a conditional means-tested unemployment benefit. However, although the outcomes showed no decrease in unemployment rates among those receiving the unconditional benefit, their well-being was significantly better than that of the control group (Lehto, 2018).

However, few of these initiatives have developed from mainstream social policy organisations. They have either been carried out through NGOs or by academics with a special interest in the Basic Income approach to redistribution. Above all the power of the state, exercised through the tax-benefit system, is still seen as an essential feature of government. In this sense, the coercion required for 'workfare' and 'welfare-to-work' schemes is perceived as appropriate for a stigmatised minority, and media campaigns denouncing benefits claimants fuel authoritarian politics.

Because no mainstream parties embrace the Basic Income approach, their policy programmes do not address the central issues of today's economies and societies. This leaves the field open for politicians like Trump and his imitators, who can blame immigrants and claimants for all current ills.

But despite all this, Basic Income pilot schemes, trials and experiments have sprung up all over the world. Apart from the ones already mentioned, there have been many other small scale projects in North America (some with the blessing of business tycoons like Elon Musk and Mark Zuckerberg, and Nobel laureate Angus Deaton). There have also been many articles on internet sites such as Hackernoon, Huffpost and Business Insider, recommending it. And in the UK and Europe, it has been endorsed by the distinguished economist Robert Skidelsky (BBC Radio 4, *One to One*, 2019).

Conclusions

Some optimists take a long-term view of social and economic change in this century which sees these to be reconcilable with environmental sustainability through the introduction of Basic Income schemes. For instance, Robert Stayton's *Solar Dividends: How Solar Energy can Generate a Basic Income for Everyone on Earth* (2019) anticipates

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the prospect of each individual owning solar panels and living off the money they earn from selling the electricity it can generate; and Aaron Bastani's *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* (2019) predicts a future when new technologies, including spaceships mining minerals from asteroids, will allow a world of liberty, luxury and happiness for everyone.

There seems to be little prospect of a quick transition to such a Utopia. But while neither strong civil society organisations nor UBI schemes guarantee polities against authoritarian governments, in tandem they seem to offer the best protections against divisions in the working class that make states susceptible to such regimes. Above all, it is important to recognise that, on their own, capitalist institutions and processes – far from favouring liberalism or social democracy – actually enable authoritarianism. While globalisation has created billionaires like Trump, and greatly increased inequalities in wealth and income in many countries, it has also, as Adam Smith pointed out, allowed billions of 'peasants' to move to cities, escaping what Marx and Engels called 'the idiocy of rural life'. What Smith did not anticipate was the post-industrial phase of its development, still less the IT revolution. He associated authoritarianism with the unaccountable power of monarchs, landowners and the military.

The history of the twentieth century has taught us that authoritarianism can take root in a wide variety of economic and social terrains, and that no system of government, production or exchange can give reliable long-term protection against it. None of the major democratic political traditions – market-minded conservatism, liberalism or socialism – developed convincing policy programmes to counter the effects of earnings stagnation, social polarisation and rising crime. Instead, their reliance on means-tested wage subsidies, re-enforced by workfare coercion, has prepared the way for authoritarian opportunists.

This is why new civil society organisations and a new tax-benefit system seem to me to be necessary conditions for convincing new forms of liberalism or social democracy, even if they are not sufficient ones. There are already enough discernible signs that a shift away from authoritarian politics could happen, but only if traditional parties embrace radically new approaches, or new social movements supply electoral momentum for policies at present on the margins of mainstream debates.

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