

Basic Income and Freedom

A Vivant Manifesto



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This manifesto is the result of research into Vivant's philosophical roots, into the main arguments in favour of a Basic Income and into 21st Century values. The search is not yet complete – luckily, for we should like to invite you to contribute with thoughts and comments.

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Contents

INTRODUCTION

- A. *Basic Income and Freedom* 7
- B. *First Beginnings: The Values of the Enlightenment, Libert , Egalit , Fraternit * 8
- C. *Great Step Forward: A "Second Enlightenment"* 9
- D. *Why Do We Water Our Plants?* 10

I. KEYNOTE: A POSITIVE LOOK AT PEOPLE AND THEIR CREATIVITY

- A. Confidence** 11
1. Confidence in the Creativity of Human Beings 11
2. Today: Distrust and Sectarianism 11
3. Tomorrow: Trust and Democracy 12
- a) *Difference...* 12
- b) *... and Equality* 12
- B. Basic Income** 13
1. What Basic Income? 13
2. A Basic Income is an Individual Right 13
3. A Basic Income is an Unconditional Right 14
4. A Basic Income is a Universal Right 14

II. CENTRAL ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF A DECENT BASIC INCOME: FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND SOLIDARITY

- A. Call for Greater Freedom** 15
1. Voices:
- "Why am I a Member of Vivant?" 15

a) <i>"I want to decide for myself how much I work"</i>	15
b) <i>"More room for creativity"</i>	15
c) <i>"Utopian? All change begins as Utopia"</i>	15
2. Vivant Strives for the Accomplishment of the Ideals of the French Revolution	16
a) <i>Freedom of Speech</i>	17
b) <i>Freedom of Religion</i>	17
c) <i>Freedom of Instruction</i>	18
d) <i>Equal Rights and Freedoms for All</i>	19
B. Call for Greater Justice	20
1. Voices:	
"Why am I a Member of Vivant?"	20
a) <i>"Citizens' empowerment"</i>	20
b) <i>"Equality before the law for all"</i>	20
c) <i>"True participation is direct democracy"</i>	20
2. New Opportunities and New Possibilities	21
3. Equality Before the Law for All	21
4. The Right to Direct Democracy	23
C. Call for Solidarity	24
1. Voices:	
"Why am I a Member of Vivant?"	24
a) <i>"With Vivant, the traps of poverty disappear"</i>	24
b) <i>"A simpler and more transparent system"</i>	24
c) <i>"A more transparent and democratic system"</i>	24
2. Mutual Granting of Basic Income	25
3. Basic Income and Social Capital	25

4. Solidarity and Taxes	27
<i>a) Tax on Consumption: Social VAT</i>	30
<i>b) Tax on Work</i>	30
<i>c) Tax on Wealth</i>	31
5. The Full Right to Work	32
6. Insertion Offices to Cap the Full Right to Work	34
<i>a) Functioning and Funding of Insertion Offices</i>	34
<i>b) Insertion Offices and the Commitment to Furnish an Effort</i>	34
<i>c) Circumstances of Dismissal</i>	37
7. International Solidarity	38
8. Basic Income and Development Cooperation	39
9. Solidarity with the Handicapped, the Sick and the Underprivileged	40
<i>More social security than with the socialists, Greater freedom than with the liberals, And radically more democratic.</i>	41
D. Vivant on the Political Map	41

III. ADVANTAGES OF THE SYSTEM: THE POSITIVE EFFECTS OF A BASIC INCOME

A. Voices:

"Why am I a Member of Vivant?"	43
1. "Vivant makes us human again"	43
2. "Life becomes more enjoyable"	43
3. "Basic Income, the solution for social security"	43
B. Positive Effects of a Basic Income	44

1. The Social Security System is Simplified and Rendered More Transparent and Rational	44
2. Basic Income is an Effective Means of Combating Poverty	44
3. A Basic Income is Granted Independently of Family or Work Situation	44
4. Effects on Employment	45
5. Detailed Analysis of Two Effects of Basic Income	45
<i>a) Basic Income Brings People Together</i>	45
<i>b) The Right to Intellectual Work and Care Work for All</i>	47
<i>(1) Won't a Basic Income Produce Profiteers?</i>	49
<i>(2) People Don't Work Only for the Money</i>	50
<i>(3) Basic Income and Human Rights</i>	51
C. The World as a Work of Art	52
1. Environmental Effects of Basic Income	52
2. Society as an Open Work of Art	53
3. A Basic Income for the Rainforests?	54
GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS	55

Introduction

A. Basic Income and Freedom



The idea of Basic Income is haunting Europe in the universities and trade unions, in political parties and factories, in organisations of all kinds and among the unemployed and artists. More and more people are coming out in favour of a Basic Income, more and more people are beginning to realize its powerful potential – and see the logic of it.

The idea is not new and did not originate in Belgium. It has been inspiring people and organisations for several decades already, all over Europe. It is steadily moving up the political agenda of an ever-increasing number of countries. How far will it be able to go? The answer to this question will depend on people's sense of solidarity and on their willingness to simplify their lives. B.I.E.N. (the Basic Income European Network) has members in over 20 European countries, ranging from Ireland through Scandinavian and the Benelux countries to Austria and Italy. Outside Europe the idea has found support as far abroad as Australia, New Zealand, the U.S.A. and Canada. In Belgium, the most fervent supporters of a full-fledged Basic Income have come together under the name of Vivant. What is the driving force behind these people? Why do they think a Basic Income is so important? What is the background of the movement?

B. First Beginnings: The Values of the Enlightenment, Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité

The seeds of the movement can be traced to the values that inspired the French Revolution at the end of the 18th Century. Since that time, people have widely come to accept the idea of human dignity. Now, some two hundred years later, almost everybody adheres to the values of freedom, equality and soli-

darity. And most people throughout the world claim to be in favour of democracy. But sometimes the words do not reflect the deeds.

C. Great Step Forward: A "Second Enlightenment"

At present we are increasingly hearing calls for more freedom and greater justice and solidarity. The task of our present age is to create the space necessary to allow people to use their freedom, as individuals and as a community. A Basic Income is what is needed to provide the incentive to change our present-day mentality and mode of life. Would it be an exaggeration to call this the "Second Enlightenment"? Read on and decide for yourself.

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 25

D. Why Do We Water Our Plants?



Do you water your plants?

Do your plants have to prove that they are growing before you water them? Of course they don't. You water them precisely so that they will be able to grow, in order to give them a chance to grow.

With our present system of social security, people first have to prove a lot of things before they get any water. In addition, the system is often incompetent enough to mistake plants for weeds, and suppresses them.

But it doesn't have to be this way. People don't have to prove anything to get a Basic Income. A Basic Income creates the freedom and space for new initiative, creativity and growth.

Even if you are not a plant, this paper concerns you. We hope you will enjoy reading it.

I. Keynote: A Positive Look at People and Their Creativity

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 1

A. Confidence

1. Confidence in the Creativity of Human Beings

Vivant argues for a reasoned belief in human beings. Human beings are creative creatures. A Basic Income constitutes an important recognition of that creativity. As soon as you give that potential space to develop, it blossoms out – just as a plant will blossom if you give it the chance.

2. Today: Distrust and Sectarianism

Studies show that most people think they have more sense of humour than the average. Of course this is only possible if we underestimate other people's sense of humour. Studies also show that most people think they are more concerned than the average about the general welfare of society. This too is possible only if we underestimate the concern of others.

As things stand, people have too little faith in each other. There is too much in-fighting and too little democracy. Belgium is today not a democracy but a

"particracy". Power is in the hands of the political parties, not the people themselves. The inability to participate in decision-making is discouraging and leaves people feeling powerless.

3. Tomorrow: Trust and Democracy

Democracy rests on the conviction that most people do take the common good into account, provided they get the chance to. It is based on the principle of equality. Of course people are different. But over and above the differences, we are all equal.

12

a) Difference...

We all have different talents and weaknesses, different possessions and skills, and different biological characteristics. Some, such as Marx, Freud and Darwin, have studied those differences. People's qualities and characteristics do indeed differ widely.

b) ... and Equality

Beyond these differences there is something that people share. People can recognise common truths, not because they are socially or biologically conditioned to do so, but because a free, thinking person has access to the truth. This is why Vivant believes in what people have in common, in democracy, in the desire people have to help each other – and yes, in a better world.

B. Basic Income

1. What Basic Income?

People can only be creative if they are free. Vivant believes that everyone must be given the chance to freely organize his/her life. A Basic Income aims to provide that freedom.

Vivant is in favour of a full-fledged Basic Income, sufficient to enable a person to live and to learn. It must satisfy a person's basic needs, so that the person then has the opportunity to live his/her life freely and creatively. We will have more to say about this freedom below. The point we want to highlight at the moment is that a Basic Income is for Vivant a universal, unconditional and individual right.

2. A Basic Income is an Individual Right

A Basic Income is granted to everybody as an individual. A person has a right to it simply by virtue of existing. It is an expression of the right to a life of human dignity. A person acquires this right at birth, and continues to receive a Basic Income every month until his/her death. The amount of the Basic Income is not influenced in any way by a person's family situation, wealth or income from work. It is entirely independent of such considerations.

3. A Basic Income is an Unconditional Right

Nobody can take your Basic Income away from you. Nobody can withdraw your Basic Income as a punishment or sanction. You do not have to prove that you are looking for a job, you do not need a medical certificate and you do not need a degree to receive your Basic Income. The only condition for getting a Basic Income is that you exist.

4. A Basic Income is a Universal Right

Everybody in a community based on law has a right to a Basic Income. It is a universal right, conceded by all of us to each other, without exception.

II. Central Arguments in Favour of a Decent Basic Income: Freedom, Justice and Solidarity

A. Call for Greater Freedom

1. Voices:

"Why am I a Member of Vivant?"

a) *"I want to decide for myself how much I work"*

"I am a mother expecting my third child. If I had a Basic Income, I would have more freedom to stay at home for a while. I want to enjoy this period of my life without having to worry about the future. I vote for Vivant for the extra freedom and social security."

Mieke De Neef, social worker, Aalst

b) *"More room for creativity"*

"A Basic Income allows you to plan your work and your career more easily, without the worry of being penalised. In the worst case, my income would consist entirely of the Basic Income, about €500 (BEF 20,170 or \$450), which would still give me room for personal development and for improving my life. Vivant allows you to decide your level of well-being and comfort yourself. That is real progress."

Anna Aerts, Lessines

c) *"Utopian? All change begins as Utopia"*

"A Basic Income allows you to stop working for a while to do something else. That freedom is very important to me. It may sound utopian, but then again all important changes seem

utopian in the beginning. It's fascinating to meet people who are still able to dream about a better world. At a given moment you have to take action yourself to improve society."

Anita Bröls, English teacher, Bütgenbach

2. Vivant Strives for the Accomplishment of the Ideals of the French Revolution

One of the ideals of the French Revolution is freedom. Having a Basic Income gives you the freedom to choose whether you want to work or not, and whether you want to work full-time or just a bit. Stepping over from a salaried position to free-lance work becomes less hazardous. It becomes a lot easier to combine work with study, or even to stop working entirely to do other things. Your means of existence will always be guaranteed by your Basic Income. If you work, you simply earn more on top of your Basic Income. The choice is up to the individual. At Vivant we believe that the individual is perfectly capable of deciding on the best way to use his/her freedom.

Freedom of choice and self-determination is something Vivant considers essential. It must be distributed equitably in the form of opportunities for free choice. Equitable freedom is at the centre of Vivant's concerns in all fields. For in the last analysis the various fields of life are all related. Following are a few examples.

a) Freedom of Speech

Vivant argues for complete freedom of speech. This freedom is inviolable. It must not be limited even in the name of "political correctness". Freedom of speech can become much greater than it is today. To distribute leaflets on the street is for example a question of free speech. To require that legal authorization be given by local or other authorities is a negation of the democratic debating culture.

b) Freedom of Religion

Vivant argues for a radical separation of Church and State and for full freedom of religion. Today the State recognizes certain religions while officially branding other religious groups as "sects". The State allocates tax-payers' money exclusively to the recognised cults. Vivant would like to put a stop to this practice. All financial, organisational and protocol relations between the State and "recognised cults" should be abolished. The religious ministers of cult would of course receive a Basic Income like everybody else.

The state may not impose restrictions on any religion. In Belgium today it is prohibited to marry in Church before first concluding a civil marriage. Why should the State have anything to say about religious marriage? On the other hand religious convictions may not be invoked in order to break democratically established laws.

c) Freedom of Instruction

Vivant argues for the greatest possible freedom of instruction. Education on every level should be free of cost for both parents and pupils. The parents of school-age children should receive every opportunity, including the funding, to take responsibility for their children's education. Freedom of instruction also means that it should be easier than it is today for families together to set up new educational associations, and for parents to choose to teach their children themselves. A Basic Income allows them to take time out to do this. In a free and technologically well-developed society education can take on very new and much less centralized forms. Freedom and creativity go hand in hand in this field too.

The main expenditures in education today consist of salaries. With the introduction of a Basic Income and lower tax burdens on wages the cost of salaries would decrease significantly. This would open up new perspectives for the budget.

In effect, the State would only be able to charge educational institutions with one serious responsibility – that of setting up their own educational programme and making it public. In this way parents are able to easily and freely choose the school they want to send

their children to, as they are able to find out about the different educational programmes available and make an informed choice. School inspection must ensure that the schools carry out their projects and realize their aims.

"Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 26

d) Equal Rights and Freedoms for All

Vivant would like to see the rule of law follow the principle of equality without exceptions based on sex, origin, race or social factors. Any attempt to concede more or fewer rights or opportunities to any individual through positive or negative discrimination, by means of quotas or similar regulations, is undemocratic and as such inadmissible.

Similarly, Vivant rejects all attempts to establish such measures by means of stating them as conditions to be met by organizations in order to obtain funding. All citizens are equal before the law regardless of biological and social differences. This is for Vivant a historically acquired fundamental and unassailable value.

B. Call for Greater Justice

1. Voices: "Why am I a Member of Vivant?"

a) *"Citizens' empowerment"*

"Vivant inverses the classical power hierarchy. It is turned upside down, so that the people have the power. This is called "synocracy", and it means sharing power. It has the effect of motivating people to get involved, to participate in the running of their country."

Petrus Durinckx, Heusy

b) *"Equality before the law for all"*

"I also find it very important that Vivant is not racist. Whether you are gay, lesbian or heterosexual makes no difference to your right to a Basic Income. It makes no difference to me either."

Lia Van Hof, Léopoldsburg

c) *"True participation is direct democracy"*

"For several years now I have been an active member of New Wommelgem, an independent party with three seats in the municipal council of Wommelgem and an alderman in the municipal coalition. Our main aim is to ensure information transfer and popular participation. This is our *raison d'être*. It is a question of direct democracy. Vivant's programme is entirely in line with what we are doing on a local level. The introduction of the legally binding referendum on popular initiative may seem less important than introducing a Basic Income, but I feel the two go hand in hand."

Bart Van Scharen, teacher and member of the municipal council, Wommelgem

Vivant believes that everybody has an unconditional right to a life of human dignity. This means the institution of a Basic Income for everyone. For you can't make a living without an income.

2. New Opportunities and New Possibilities

Rights are empty talk for those with an empty stomach. First and foremost people have to keep alive, have food to eat and a roof over their heads. And this can only be accomplished given concrete opportunities. The Basic monthly Income suggested by Vivant amounts to about €500 (BEF 20,170 or \$450), which is not much. If you live alone, you won't be able to splash out on a lot. But it does bring with it a certain freedom and certain opportunities. It enables you to establish cooperative and social relationships with others, giving you the opportunity to take part in society without having to meet any requirements by the authorities. With €500 you can survive in the community, even if you don't participate in the ordinary work circuit. Only one condition has to be met in order to receive a Basic Income – that you exist.

"Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 3

3. Equality Before the Law for All

Vivant pleads for complete equality before the law of all permanent members of the Belgian community

based on law. Everybody has exactly the same rights and responsibilities as everybody else.

Vivant views the notion of absolute equality before the law as a fundamental and unassailable acquisition of the Enlightenment.

Belgian nationality is the outward sign of this equality of citizens before the law. The Belgian identity card is a sort of membership card for the Belgian community based on law. Vivant rejects the classical notion of "nationality". For Vivant, to be a national of a country means that one is part of the society of that country, no more and no less. The cultural or ethnic origin of an individual is therefore entirely insignificant. As far as Vivant is concerned, proof of nationality could just as well be given a different name. All individuals residing legally and permanently in Belgium have the same rights and the same responsibilities towards the community. To become a member of the Belgian community based on law, all you have to do is request it. Belgian "nationality" is granted without a waiting period, without examination and without the application of any other criteria of appreciation. After all, a baby born in Belgium does not have to take a test or wait five or ten years in order to prove that he/she has become "integrated". Obviously, you will have to give up your old citizenship on becoming a Belgian citizen. Vivant is against double nationality because it creates legal inequalities between the citizens of the same community based on law.

Note that the Basic Income is independent of a per-

son's nationality. It depends only on a person's legal and permanent residence in the country. Foreigners who live in Belgium therefore have the right to a Basic Income, as do recognized refugees and candidate refugees, on the condition that they do not receive one from another country.

4. The Right to Direct Democracy

Law is law only on the condition that it be established democratically. Democracy is not a perfect system, but according to us it offers the best guarantee for sound government in the long term. Today Belgium is not a democracy but a participacy.

In Belgium citizens are obliged to elect a small number of people to act as legislators for them. The political establishment has made sure that the citizens themselves are not able to legislate directly. Nevertheless, 70% of Belgians would like to be able to introduce new laws directly by means of legally binding referenda on popular initiative.

Vivant supports the system of legally binding referenda on popular initiative, at all levels of government and on all issues. Political parties who oppose this idea cannot be considered democratic parties by Vivant.

If the people do not request a referendum on a particular issue, the power of decision on that issue will lie with the permanent representatives of the people. If the people do ask for a referendum, the power of decision will lie with the community of electors who participate in the referendum.

C. Call for Solidarity

1. Voices:

"Why am I a Member of Vivant?"

a) *"With Vivant, the traps of poverty disappear"*

"I became a widow when only 44. So I know all about problems of debt, problems with the banks and financial disasters. It's a vicious circle that's very difficult to get out of. Vivant's Basic Income would have made my life a lot easier."

Lia Van Hof, Leopoldsburg

b) *"A simpler and more transparent system"*

"All these ridiculous legal statuses! As the president of a non-profit organization, I should know. Exemption from dole card stamping, job seekers being put to work, the "Smet" jobs... This whole administrative Leviathan is just getting more and more complex. Vivant makes society much simpler and more transparent. And at the same time people are made happier because they gain more control over their own lives."

Toon Van den Bossche, president of Taxifiets, Ghent

c) *"A more transparent and democratic system"*

"It has been my job for the last 20 years to try to explain the ins and outs of our political system to people. But it's practically impossible to do. Vivant would change that. There would not only be more social security but it would also be a lot simpler, more transparent – and therefore more democratic."

Cor Claessens, civil servant at the Information Service of Antwerp City

2. Mutual Granting of Basic Income

Vivant supports the introduction of a universal, unconditional and individual Basic Income.

Vivant also wants the introduction of a Basic Income to be decided on democratically. This means that the members of the community expressly and effectively recognize each other's unconditional right to live. That is solidarity in its purest form.

3. Basic Income and Social Capital

The introduction of a universal, unconditional and individual Basic Income provides people with the necessary opportunities to produce social capital, and at the same time generates social capital. (We recommend you reread this sentence, as we think it is the most important sentence of this manifesto. It expresses for us the principal reason for introducing a Basic Income.)

What is social capital? Social capital is the foundation of the whole economy. It comprises the trust that members of the community have in one another and their willingness to help each other out and to cooperate. To take a simple example, in our society you can ask anybody on the street for directions and expect an honest answer. Even such a simple example of social capital has economic importance. Lorry drivers in unfamiliar areas can save a lot of time by asking directions. And even if they do not stop to ask

the way, they know that they could, and are therefore able to get on the road with a tranquil mind.

This is typical of social capital. It inspires confidence and the assurance that is necessary for being an active agent in the economy. This trust in other people, the expectation that others are reliable, that they will help you out if you need it – this is a productive force. A climate of trust and mutual respect is a necessary ingredient in human life.

Social capital is a real factor of production (alongside work, raw materials and machines for example). Clearly therefore, investing in social capital has economic consequences. If the social capital diminishes within a society, it can be felt in declining productivity.

Another happy characteristic of social capital is the fact that the more you use it, the bigger it gets. It is the same with ideas. Developing and using an idea generates more ideas. In other words, use of social capital creates social capital. Create new relations of cooperation on the basis of mutual trust and it's plain sailing.

If we as a community together decide democratically that everybody has a right, unconditionally and individually, to a decent Basic Income, then this Basic Income will engender an enormous amount of social capital. Such an event would in effect mean that every individual is explicitly granted the right to exist.

The right would no longer be theoretical but effectively recognized by democratic decision. In giving to each other a Basic Income we explicitly give each other the opportunity to participate in all forms of work, including intellectual work and care work (see Glossary) – all unconditionally. In this way everybody increases the credit at the disposal of the community in the form of social capital.

4. Solidarity and Taxes

To fund its expenses and the Basic Income the State needs revenue. This revenue comes essentially from taxes. Paying taxes is an expression of solidarity and the equitable redistribution of available means. Vivant wants to eliminate as much as possible the taxation of work and replace it with tax on consumption (social VAT).

By abolishing tax on work for low and medium-sized incomes, the cost of work is reduced (which encourages employment), as well as administrative costs. In Belgium alone, five million yearly tax declarations and about 30 job insertion programmes can be dispensed with under Vivant's system. Employment and social security can be managed under one system needing very little administration. This increased administrative efficiency saves 6% of the State's expenses, or €6.2 billion (BEF 250 billion or \$5.58 billion), which is enough to pay a Basic Income to one million people.

Tax on consumption means that the VAT increases, without however modifying the price of the goods. The price structure changes, but the price paid by the consumer remains the same.

THE PRICE REMAINS THE SAME

	price structure today	VIVANT'S proposal	
Paid by employers and workers	VAT	VAT	Paid by the consumer
	Tax on work	Social VAT	
	Naked cost	Naked cost	

Tax revenues remain the same

How is the loss of revenue from taxes on work compensated for? The diagram shows that the VAT increases while the consumer pays the same price for the goods. In this way, hundreds of thousands more people could be given work.

The VAT rates on different goods will not be uniform, as cost structures differ from sector to sector and the various VAT rates should express the population's sense of justice. VAT rates are to be established democratically. This is how a social VAT is attained, establishing lower taxes for services than for luxury cars for example. In addition, the whole VAT system is simplified through social VAT replacing all the indirect taxes in place today, including customs and excise duties (as well as opening taxes, licences, road taxes, stamp duties, registration taxes, court fees, mortgage taxes, betting and gaming taxes, Euro-tax discs, pollution taxes, etc. All these levies and taxes can be subsumed under one single system of social VAT).

For funding of the State's expenses, Vivant is not relying exclusively on consumer tax (VAT). Income tax is paid on monthly incomes exceeding €1,240 (BEF 50,000 or \$1,116), inclusive of Basic Income. Vivant is also in favour of the Tobin tax on financial transactions, and also of corporation tax at 15%. These 15% would provide a significant disincentive for larger companies to move their activities abroad. Vivant aims further to abolish all tax exemptions and subsidies presently granted to companies. There exists today a multitude of other kinds of often absurd taxes, and their elimination would make the whole system much more transparent and easier to control. The collection of certain taxes costs more than the revenue they supply. We want you to be able to sit in the sun on your balcony without having to worry about balcony tax.

Which taxes are fair?

Papers and econometric models have been published to show that a Basic Income and the Vivant programme are feasible and affordable. In this paper we are dealing with the "why" of the matter rather than with the "how". Are taxes on consumption, work and financial transactions morally justified? Are they fair? What are the arguments behind the answers to these questions?

a) Tax on Consumption: Social VAT

The most logical method of taxation is tax on consumption. You pay VAT in proportion to the amount you consume. If you consume more, you contribute more tax. This is clear and fair, for if you consume more it also means that you are making more use of the public infrastructure and services that are directly (e.g. roads) or indirectly (e.g. the justice system) necessary for the production of the goods and services you purchase. It is therefore logical that those who consume more should pay more taxes than those who consume less. Vivant is expressly in favour of differential social VAT rates dependent on the nature of different products. The increased VAT is therefore not a "linear" or antisocial measure – on the contrary.

b) Tax on Work

Taxing work is in principle not justified, as people have to work in order to keep the economy alive. It is by working that we produce goods and services for others. Whoever is contributing to the common well-

being of the community should not be taxed for it. Vivant believes that the level of pay for work and differences in pay are questions of right. Most people agree that dirty or heavy work for example should be paid more. This is expressed in the natural tendency for that type of work to command higher wages. But it is also true that differences in pay are often exaggerated, offending people's sense of justice. Or it can happen that the majority of the population finds the minimum wage too low. In such cases the problems can be corrected democratically. The minimum wage was increased by popular referendum in the American state of California, and in Washington a referendum was held on the exaggerated salaries of parliament members. Vivant believes that this should also be made possible in Belgium.

c) Tax on Wealth

Our present economic system admits of something that is entirely wrong – currency transactions deliver vast profits to market speculators, whereas these transactions should in the first instance serve the people and their economy. Every day, several thousand billion dollars are sent around the world to gain from fluctuating exchange rates. These currency flows account for about 95% of all monetary transactions, and make no contribution to the real economy. In 1972, Nobel laureate James Tobin suggested introducing a modest taxation of these transactions in order to counteract the phenomenon. The tax would not only restrain frenzied currency speculation, but also release a significant sum for spending on social

welfare. A tax rate of 0.1% would yearly raise more than \$166 billion, enough to effectively combat poverty on a world scale.

Vivant is therefore a fervent proponent of the Tobin tax for example. Even a low tax rate can reduce currency speculation significantly without hampering the currency circulation beneficial to the real economy.

5. The Full Right to Work

Vivant is a proponent of a real and actual right to paid work. Vivant aims to ensure that everybody who wishes to work can do so, in a job that is remunerated and fulfilling. Only in this way is solidarity restored between those who work and those who do not.

This ideal can only be attained on the condition that three essential aims are realized:

- The institution of a Basic Income, eliminating the artificial surplus in demand for jobs.
- The abolition of tax on work, eliminating the artificial deficit in jobs available.
- The democratic structuring of society, enabling the people to decide what further measures are needed in order to reduce unemployment to an acceptable level.

Studies show that unemployment is what people today worry about most. A really democratic society should enable the population to approve measures

for raising the level of employment to desired levels. Consequently Vivant is in favour of a popular referendum for the introduction of a Basic Income and for the determination of the amount of the Basic Income, as well as for the determination of the length of the legal working week and all other measures affecting employment. Vivant rejects the notion that a political elite should determine the amount of the Basic Income in order to control the economy without popular participation. It would like to see the people, as members of a democracy in practice, learn to make this kind of delicate judgment themselves. Only in this way can the fairness of the economic measures taken be guaranteed. Economic experts are consequently also obliged to explain their arguments.

"Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 23

6. Insertion Offices to Cap the Full Right to Work

If the measures described above are implemented then the only unemployment left would be transitional unemployment during the period between two jobs. To meet this residual unemployment Vivant proposes the institution of a network of insertion offices to help the unemployed search for a suitable job. Workers' unions and special initiatives like Vitamine W in Antwerp, would be exemplary partners for the constitution of such a network.

a) Functioning and Funding of Insertion Offices

The network of insertion offices centralizes job offers in a database. It assists the job seeker through training and feasibility research if the job seeker is starting up a new business. The job seeker who appeals to the network concludes a full-time work contract with one of the insertion offices, and receives in return (on top of his/her Basic Income) the legal minimum wage. In return for your efforts to find a job you therefore always receive directly a minimum wage on top of your Basic Income.

b) Insertion Offices and the Commitment to Furnish an Effort

The Vivant model does not oblige anybody against his/her will to make ends meet only with a Basic Income.

Everybody thus has the chance to earn a minimum wage of €500 (BEF 20,170 or \$450) on top of his/her Basic Income. In this way nobody is obliged to sur-

vive on a monthly income of less than €1,000 (BEF 40,340 or \$900).

Attendant on the minimum wage of €500 (BEF 20,170 or \$450) there is however the obligation to exert yourself to find a job. You attend courses at the insertion office, apply for jobs, and prepare for your new job. The insertion office is not a parking lot. The aim is naturally that you find your way to a new job as quickly as possible.

This measure is intended for people who previously only had a Basic Income. If you are dismissed by your employer, then your employer will pay you for the normal notice period. During this period, you can visit the insertion office part-time to find a new job. The insertion offices are financed by employers who fire employees, the employer paying the insertion offices two months' salary per person who needs a new job. Alternatively, the employer can pay the total amount of the pay for the notice period to the insertion office, whereupon the fired employee starts a full-time job search at the insertion office.

You can also approach an insertion office if you want to change job. This procedure significantly increases the job mobility of workers as well as their chances of finding their preferred job. It aims to provide the best job in the best workplace, or the right person for the job. Suppose you are working as a salesperson although you would really like to teach. For another job seeker to take your job while you join

the teaching profession would be the ideal solution all round. It is the purpose of the insertion offices to make this easier to do. The job mobility that today is possible only within a given company can tomorrow become a reality of the global economy.

The insertion offices are not State-run. They work on the same principle as insurance companies. In addition to the dismissal compensation paid by employers, the network is also financed by insurance premiums paid by employers and workers. All companies and wage earners are legally bound to subscribe to the network. A no-claims bonus principle (as for car insurance) determines the amount of the insurance premium to be paid. So businesses that fire more employees pay a higher premium, as do individuals who have recourse to the system more often.

In the no-claims bonus system businesses are given an additional responsibility – they will not only have to look at their own cost-effectiveness but also take into account their cost-effectiveness within society. Today, a company in the process of "restructuring" is in effect dumping the costs of redundancy entirely on the community. In the future, that company will have to pay a higher premium as it represents a greater "risk" for the insertion network. With the system of insertion offices a new business culture is made possible. Because of the higher premium attached to dismissals, companies will take greater account than they do at present of the social cost of dismissals. In

addition, they will have greater opportunities for outplacement by mutual agreement with the worker.

c) Circumstances of Dismissal

It can happen that companies have no choice but to dismiss workers, as a result of rapid technological growth for example. It is difficult to blame companies for such dismissals as nobody can predict future technological developments. In consideration of such events, industrial associations could by mutual agreement decide to redistribute amongst themselves the premium amounts they have to pay. In time, the system can therefore take on forms the details of which are impossible to foresee at present. In any case, however, the system renders the responsibilities of the various economic actors transparent for the job seeker, and offers the greatest possible opportunities for finding the most suitable job.

The whole Vivant system is geared to guarantee everybody the right to meaningful and remunerated work. It ensures the right of everybody to choose for him/herself between a bigger income with more work, and a smaller income with less work. It creates, via Basic Income, fair opportunities for carrying out unpaid but socially and economically justified work.

7. International Solidarity

A Basic Income is a sign of solidarity beyond the bounds of the small circles of similarly minded people, people of the same colour or people from the same place.

If a Basic Income is first introduced in Belgium or Europe, all those who reside here legally and permanently will receive the same Basic Income. But this should not be to the disadvantage of those living in communities where the system has not (yet) been introduced. For Vivant, open and honest trade relations with the South are an expression of the same solidarity between people. Vivant does not want to create a European "stronghold" with the introduction of a Basic Income. A Basic Income is not a question of favouring one's own people. In the end it is the responsibility of every community based on law to democratically decide on the introduction of a Basic Income. In order to be an expression of solidarity, the decision must be taken by mutual agreement. To bring our social security system into equilibrium with the forms of social security existing for example in so-called low-wage countries, is one of the greatest challenges that now face us. It is the responsibility of every community based on law to prevent exploitation abroad as well as at home. European fair trade organizations can lend valuable advice on this matter.

8. Basic Income and Development Cooperation

Vivant also supports the movement to free third-world countries of their debts. These debts have mostly been contracted by authoritarian regimes. The banks authorized loans without carefully examining the risks. In general, the population of these countries did not participate in the decision to grant the loans and benefited even less from the money allocated. It is therefore not fair that the living standards of these people should fall in order to reimburse the debts or pay the interest on the debts.

Vivant is also of the opinion that the introduction of a Basic Income in third-world countries would be an effective way to spend the budget for development cooperation. It is possible to give a Basic Income of €40 (BEF 1,614 or \$36) to every Nicaraguan with 1% of our GNP. For the Nicaraguans, this is equivalent to a spending power of €247.89 (more than BEF 10,000 or \$223), because basic products in Nicaragua are less expensive than here. At the same time a local economic market is created in that country. A Basic Income also gives maximum autonomy and freedom for own initiative to the individual people who receive it.

9. Solidarity with the Handicapped, the Sick and the Underprivileged

Vivant is convinced that the handicapped should not be considered a separate group within the community. Every person with a handicap has the right to a Basic Income like everybody else, but he/she also receives supplementary financial help. This supplement is necessary in order for the handicapped to be able to participate fully in the community. Vivant aims to offer the handicapped full opportunities for integration, without too many complications, rules and regulations or paper-work. Vivant also aims to provide for their specific needs in matters of housing and health care.

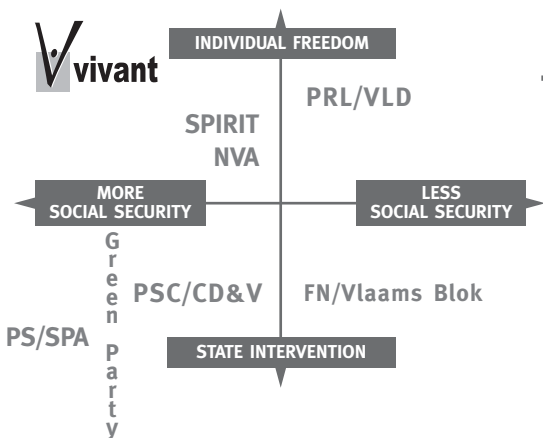
Nor can the sick be fobbed off with just a Basic Income. For Vivant, everybody automatically has the right to reliable health insurance, including those who have never worked.

Of course the Basic Income does not solve all social problems. In some cases emergency relief will still be necessary. Creating the necessary means to do this is also a question of solidarity.

*More social security than with the socialists,
Greater freedom than with the liberals,
And radically more democratic.*

D. Vivant on the Political Map

Vivant is clearly a political maverick. We asked voters to situate the various political parties on a map with a pair of axes indicating respectively greater versus less social security and individual freedom versus State intervention.



Vivant is the only party embodying both greater social security and greater individual freedom. Which goes to show that freedom and solidarity can go hand in hand. Better still – true solidarity is the result of freedom, not a constraint.

If we could print a three-dimensional diagram, we would be able to add a third axis, indicating more or less democracy. By supporting direct democracy Vivant would then come to stand at the greatest extreme of democracy – as more democratic than the greens and much more democratic than the Christian socialist party, which for years has been the highest embodiment of participatory democracy in Belgium. Vivant is a proponent of legally binding referenda on popular initiative at all government levels and on all issues.

In the same line of argument, Vivant wants to see the application of a "right of recall". This gives citizens the possibility of removing elected representatives, civil servants or judges from office by direct popular vote, as soon as they betray public confidence. Vivant stands for a progressive alternative, a radical choice in favour of emancipation and direct democracy.

"Why am I a Member of Vivant?"

"More liberal than the liberals, and more socialist than the socialists."

"With Basic Income Vivant makes a radical stand in favour of greater freedom. The administration becomes much simpler and much more transparent. And at the same time the Vivant-model represents a great step forward in matters of social security. I have been looking for this kind of realistic, feasible alternative for years. The combination of liberal and socialist ideas is particularly attractive – it is perfectly possible to be more liberal than the liberals and at the same time more socialist than the socialists. With Vivant all the pieces of the puzzle fall into place perfectly."

Jean-Pierre Lemaire, Anderlecht

III. Advantages of the System: The Positive Effects of a Basic Income

A. Voices:

"Why am I a Member of Vivant?"

1. "Vivant makes us human again"

"I work in the health sector. We have to do as much as possible to make the cash register ring. Respectable doctors are frustrated by this, they feel that they are unable to adequately fulfil their roles as carers. Because of this there is now a general climate of tension and stress. With Vivant all this would change fundamentally. A Basic Income affects all spheres of life. A much safer system is put in place for everybody."

Annick Dekeyser, physiotherapist, Tubize

2. "Life becomes more enjoyable"

"Vivant is a joyous party. Basic Income is a beautiful technique for making life more pleasant for everybody. And that's the groundwork for a better quality of life, after all."

Johan Behets, consultant, Brasschaat

3. "Basic Income, the solution for social security"

"I worked for General Motors for 18 years. I was also an alternate delegate on their works council. Our whole social security system is breaking up, despite our grandparents having fought so hard for it. Vivant's programme gives us the possibility of rectifying that."

Gilbert Hars, trade unionist, Deurne

B. Positive Effects of a Basic Income

Is it possible today to get a full picture of the positive effects of a Basic Income? A Basic Income solves problems on many levels. Following are a few examples:

1. The Social Security System is Simplified and Rendered More Transparent and Rational

This significantly reduces the social security system's administrative costs, thus releasing money for more socially justified ends.

2. Basic Income is an Effective Means of Combating Poverty

Poverty traps disappear as a Basic Income can be combined with paid work. People who fall along the wayside today, would have social security. Think of housewives or househusbands, artists, sportspeople and free-lancers.

3. A Basic Income is Granted Independently of Family or Work Situation

You therefore have more freedom to act and more freedom of choice. People entitled to receive social benefits no longer get branded negatively, as everybody without exception has a right to a Basic Income.

4. Effects on Employment

The unemployment trap disappears, labour costs fall – correcting the artificially high labour costs we have today – and room for initiative in determining your own work rhythm is established. Basic Income is the solution for putting a stop to involuntary unemployment – for realizing in practice the right to work. Each of these is a sufficient reason for opting for a Basic Income.

5. Detailed Analysis of Two Effects of Basic Income

While the present social security system encourages people to live apart, with a Basic Income more people would probably choose to live together. Everybody is also enabled to do intellectual and care work. The environmental effects of a Basic Income are also not to be neglected.

a) Basic Income Brings People Together

Human beings are naturally gregarious and sociable. They like to be and live with others. If they choose to live together, they do so for the sociability and because it is more economical.

Today our social security system splits us up a lot. It atomises people instead of bringing them together. Unemployed people who live together lose a part of their benefits. Handicapped people and pensioners abandon their marriage plans because the sacrifices would be too great. People opt to live apart, each on

his/her own little island. This is social security at its meanest.

A Basic Income does not differentiate between cohabitants and people who live alone, or between heads of families and their "unemancipated subjects". Fraudulent cohabitation is no longer possible. Officials knocking on your door in the early morning in order to check that you are really sleeping alone and other such violations of privacy and of human dignity at last become obsolete. A Basic Income is a strictly individual and unconditional right enjoyed by everybody. Whoever wants to start living together with somebody else does not have to give up any fraction of his/her Basic Income. Cohabitation can never be sanctioned. In Vivant's system cohabitation is purely advantageous socially and economically. So people will probably cohabit more. As a consequence, energy and individual consumption will be economized, and this means that Basic Income also has environmental advantages. Perhaps a Basic Income even enables people consciously to choose to consume less. In any case, free, creative people can freely and creatively choose how they want to live with others.

"No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 12

That a Basic Income also has a great effect on the redistribution of wealth can clearly be seen if you look at families where only one of the partners has a paid job. Today, these families mostly belong to the lower income categories. With Vivant's system, the partner who stays at home receives a Basic Income. For most families with one working partner that extra income would certainly not be a superfluous luxury.

*b) The Right to Intellectual Work and Care
Work for All*

Vivant is in favour of the right to paid work for everybody. But work is more than just a paid job on the anonymous labour market of goods and services. That is why Vivant argues that everybody also has the right to intellectual and care work. The economy would not be able to function at all if people did not continuously carry out unpaid care work for each other, nor if people were not able to develop new skills spontaneously. Even in our present society, people still spend more time on unpaid work than on paid work.

A student, for example, works. So do people who look after their elderly or sick family members. The activities involved in bringing up children is also "work", even though it does not produce goods and even though it is not always remunerated. Although that intellectual work and that care work are not remunerated, they are vital for our economy. It is a question of mutual responsibility for each other.

Of course our society gives some people the means to engage in full-time study or teaching, scientific research or care for the elderly and the sick. These remain sectors where it is necessary to provide paid work.

But studying in the widest sense of the word, as well as caring for our families, are also things that everybody does. Studying and care are simply a part of a fulfilling life. To be a fulfilled human being, one needs the space to carry out all these kinds of unpaid commitments. Everybody needs a certain margin in order to be able to develop, to care for children or parents, or simply to carry out voluntary work. All these activities depend on spontaneous qualities such as sympathy, empathy and concern. These qualities are priceless and cannot be bought. But you can create the space for them to blossom. This creation of space for learning and study, care work and voluntary commitments, constitutes precisely one of the important roles that a Basic Income fulfils.

Without these spontaneous activities society cannot function. Today we act as though only paid work is "real" work, and we often unfairly take advantage of unpaid work, for which there exist fewer and fewer opportunities. By neglecting unpaid work, we confirm the self-fulfilling idea that people only do things for money. In this way we are destroying social trust and social capital. A Basic Income counters this tendency. The introduction of a Basic Income is the recognition

of each other's capacities for empathy, sympathy and concern. In this way more social capital is built up.

For with a Basic Income you effectively get the space to devote some of your energy to intellectual and care work. It is a form of concrete solidarity.

(1) Won't a Basic Income Produce Profiteers?

"If you don't work, you don't eat!"

"A Basic Income creates nothing but laziness and profiteering!"

"It's actually very unfair – everybody gets the same Basic Income as everybody else. Some people will be giving a lot back in the form of intellectual work, care work and social capital, but others will depend entirely on the Basic Income and not give anything back to the community. Real democracy means giving to each according to his/her needs and everybody contributing according to his/her capacities."

This is the strongest argument against a Basic Income – you have to deserve an income. You have to give something to get it, and so it should not be unconditional.

Then comes the question, What should you have to do to get it? How should your efforts be measured? If we decide democratically to grant each other a Basic Income, we do it of course also to create the opportunity for more intellectual work, more care work and more social capital. In other words, for imagination, human concern and trust. For the imagination has to be given free rein in order to produce innovative ideas; concrete human concern is the source of all

care work; and trust is the stuff out of which social capital is constructed. But how can you compel the imagination? How can you measure concern or trust? These are things that by definition cannot be enforced or measured. Consequently, the State should not concern itself with them.

Of course a Basic Income is an investment that we make as a community. And of course the community has the right to expect "social returns" from that investment. But social returns cannot be divided, measured or controlled on the level of the individual. There is only one norm that allows us to verify whether the social returns are great enough – the democratic decision of the whole community based on law.

If you view a Basic Income only from the standpoint of those who receive it, then it does create private freedom. But viewed from the standpoint of the community that grants it, its true significance becomes clear. It is something that we give to each other, collectively, by a democratic decision of the whole community. And for the community taken collectively, it delivers a significant amount of "social return".

(2) People Don't Work Only for the Money

What motivates people to work? Anthropological and sociological studies show that people do not work primarily for the money. Money is an external motivating factor. People are also personally motivated to do a lot of things. If you stress the financial aspect

of the job in order to get somebody to do something for you, then you even undermine his/her internal motivation. This discrepancy between external and internal motivation was illustrated in the U.S.A. when blood donors started to be compensated financially for their donations – people who previously did it voluntarily and for free stopped donating blood altogether. External motivating factors (money) can therefore sometimes destroy the internal motivation. Today people are forced to work for money. If people can be motivated to work for the work itself, then the quality of the work they deliver immediately improves. A Basic Income certainly does not lead to profiteering, but rather to increased social capital.

(3) Basic Income and Human Rights

A Basic Income is the expression of a fundamental human right, the right to a decent life. Without a Basic Income, human rights can hardly be given concrete content. In addition, our economy cannot function without intellectual work, care work and social capital. A Basic Income creates more space for these things too.

Part I of this manifesto began by quoting Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It states that we are "endowed with reason and conscience", and that we should act towards each other in a spirit of solidarity. This can also be read as, "Human beings are capable of constructing social capital. Without that social capital a decent human life is not possible."

You can of course force people to collaborate entirely within an economic rat race, by making their right to survival and their income depend entirely on their work performance. A society that does this indicates to its people that they only really count as economic producers, and not as persons endowed with conscience or as producers of social capital. A Basic Income turns this around, the community letting each person know that his/her conscience and ability to create social capital are important and are given the space they need to develop. No price can be put on this realization – but a Basic Income is an enormous step in the right direction.

C. The World as a Work of Art

1. Environmental Effects of Basic Income

A Basic Income is the concrete expression of our respect for one another. It is a logical consequence of the right to live. This respect for each other's lives is only one aspect of life in general. By "subsidizing" free time, a Basic Income might enable people to learn to "slow down", to take more care of each other and of the planet.

Vivant takes an integrally environmental view of society. It is a view that does not stop at nature conservation, but goes much further – for in virtue of the fact that humans exist, they cannot leave nature alone. If you fence off an area of nature in the inter-

ests of conservation, you are already interfering in nature. The fence would not exist if humans were not there. By their mere presence, humans are changing nature continuously. Non-intervention is impossible. But this human intervention in nature, the cultivation of nature, does not have to come down to exploiting or plundering nature. Vivant's central environmental principle is that a "green", or ecological, natural environment is strictly impossible unless our social fabric develops according to environmental principles. By showing greater respect for each other, people gain greater respect for nature. As long as society stakes people against each other, as long as we do not unconditionally accept people's right to a decent life, society will never develop a respect for nature.

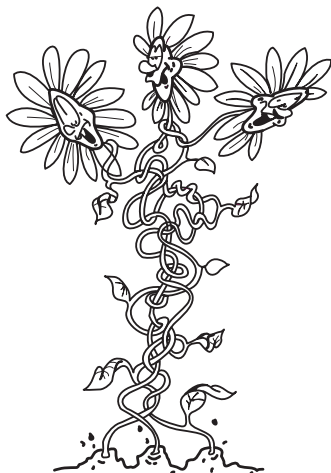
2. Society as an Open Work of Art

Vivant connects the concept of art with the environment. In a sense, art is the future of humanity. But there is no sense in producing art in a society and a world that are not sensitive to art.

Authentic individual art only blossoms if the whole of society appears as an open work of art, a work of art produced by people working together in a democratic society.

Art is open, creative, unfinished. So are Vivant's aims. We do not know how the forms of property or economics are going to develop in the future. But we do know that only people who are free can come up with good solutions. That means people in a democratic society, people who are aware that their right to live is entirely recognized.

3. A Basic Income for the Rainforests?



Is it possible to protect the tropical rainforests without a Basic Income? Is it possible to have a "green" attitude to nature without holding to environmental principles for society itself? Does not nature itself need a "Basic Income" to grow, just like human beings? A Basic Income is the first step. Only if people treat each other with respect will they treat nature with respect, and stop destroying the rainforests. In the end it is all a question of the same respect for life.

That's it, folks! We had to get this off our chest. It's high time to go and water the plants...

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Basic Income:** Main point of Vivant's programme. A Basic Income is an unconditional monthly income that is granted by right (so you don't have to apply for it) to each member of the community based on law. It is a kind of foundation stone – your income from work is simply added on top of the Basic Income.

- **Work:** What people do for others, every effort by which the welfare of others is increased. There are four kinds of work:

- **Paid work:** Corresponds to the time you put in. A calculable part of every product and of every service is made up of such paid work.

- **Intellectual work:** Determining the way to organize paid work, searching for technological innovations in the production process, developing new ideas, etc., are all examples of intellectual work. Intellectual work has to do with ideas, but is nonetheless work.

- **Care work:** This is mostly housework for the benefit of others. Housework enables people to participate effectively in the production process. Paid work also often includes some care work, such as the commitment and care you bring to the quality of your work.

- **Production of social capital:** You also contribute to producing trust in the community. It is especially this type of social capital that constitutes the fundament of the whole economy. Without social capital other forms of work become impossible. Social capital is self-generating – trust produces trust. When people notice that their right to exist is questioned, social capital quickly evaporates.

- **Taxes:** Money with which the State provides a Basic Income and all the public services. From motorways to health care, from policemen to teachers, from courts of justice to public transport – to pay for all these things the State treasury needs money. That money comes from the taxes that we all pay.

Today individuals are taxed mostly on the work they carry out. Vivant wants to eliminate this type of taxation and replace tax on work by tax on consumption, or social VAT. Only those who earn more than €1,240 (BEF 50,000 or \$1,116) per month, still pay tax on their income from work. By simply eliminating most of the other taxes presently in existence, the whole tax system becomes cheaper and more transparent.

- **Democracy:** In a true democracy, everybody directly participates in decisions on all tricky issues. Only then is the power in the hands of the people themselves. Today political parties are the ones in power. This situation is called "particracy".

Could it ever become possible to totally eradicate unemployment? Could we restore an atmosphere of trust in our community, in place of the distrust that is now becoming increasingly dominant? Could freedom be made consonant with justice, equality and solidarity?

The answer is YES on all three counts.

But to do this we have to break through our traditional mindset. Perhaps we could even speak of a "Second Enlightenment". In any case our current modes of thought are in need of revision. And the sooner the better.

One of the key factors of this revision is the introduction of a decent Basic Income for everybody. This is much more than a slogan. In this manifesto, members of Vivant pursue an enquiry into the central arguments in favour of such a Basic Income. It leads them to a consideration of the fundamental human rights, the right to work for example.

It is not the aim of this manifesto to show the feasibility or explain the financing of a Basic Income in figures, but rather to bring its immense power to light. There is indeed only one condition attendant on the introduction of a Basic Income: that it be decided on together by the members of the community, by democratic vote and in solidarity with one another.

For a Basic Income is granted by all of us to each other.

