

The Basic Outcome story

This is the Basic Outcome story. The idea came to me from people on Basic Income internet discussions talking about the need for people to write short stories about what life would be like if there was a Basic Income. I began thinking about this and when I had thought about it enough, I began writing this. I do not think it is exactly what these people had in mind.

Ruthie Kazurdle woke up one fine morning in alternative time line number DFL70709102-C614 for planet Nearth. It was the twentieth year of the Basic Income revolution.

For breakfast she popped down her last nutrition bar from the nutritional cooperative, then carded one of her last water credits into the meter. She waited for some water to gurgle up so she could wash down the nutribar, brush her teeth, and wash her face.

She slipped out of her subsidized flat on the thirty seventh floor of the Van Parijs economic housing complex and zipped down to the Basic Income office, next door to the housing complex office. After a brief wait, only one hour, she was able to speak to a case worker about the basic problem she was having with her income.

“My roomie Angie Bajanji! She’s disappeared. She hasn’t been home for a week an’ I can’t find out nothing about her. She’s never gone this long an’ always says where she’s going. She took her travel bag and some clothes but all her other stuff is still there; her books, a trunk, this crystal ball statue thingee...”

The hard working case worker did a quick check on Angie’s file and confirmed that, yes indeed, Angie seemed to have dropped out of sight in the past few days. However, the housing complex’s security friendly force had already noted this and did not believe there was cause for concern.

Ruthie had a cause for concern. “The rent is due tomorrow. Without her paying half I don’t have money to cover it myself an’ I can’t get my B.I. adjusted ’til October cuz the deadline was last week an’ I don’t get my paycheque ’til next week

an’ I’m only gettin’ ten hours a week now an’...”

“Now, now,” said the caring case worker. “If Angie doesn’t come back you can just find another room mate. If you really have to, you can apply for an adjustment in your rent.”

Said Ruthie; “But I like Angie! So she’s got all these funny ideas, but she don’t snore or steal stuff. An’ it’s already past the deadline so I won’t get no increase ’til October.”

Said case worker; “Well then, you might have to make some arrangements to get through until October. You can apply for assistance at the nutricooperative.”

Snarked Ruthie: “Ya, so houseplex is gonna let me pay my rent in mystery cans for three months?”

The case worker smiled sympathendingly and the conversation petered out. Ruthie had to get to work.

She carded onto the standsyt line. The responder flashed out that she had only three trips left on her account. A light drizzle fell on her as she rode around to her job at Goldbrick nugatory products marketing associates, 62 Milton Friedman avenue.

“Welcome, production associate number RK503”, boomed out the monitor as Ruthie popped into her seat. “You are just in time for your exciting two hour shift at the flobnetz order reordering station. We regret to inform you that your one AM shift next Saturday has been cancelled due to a slowdown in demand. However, we are able to increase your base

pay rate to 47 metamins per hour from 45.”

“Smooch my Bacon!” Squawked Ruthie as she settled into the routine.

She took a box of flobnetzes™ off the stack and spilled the packets onto the work table. Each packet had to be zipped opened and the red topped flobnetzes separated from the blue topped ones. Then they had to be put onto the flats on her right in alternating red and blue rows. When a flat was complete a sensor would bleep and a robotic arm would swoop in to remove the flat. Another flat popped up beneath it.

Ruthie worked, trying to keep up a rate of at least a flat per minute while avoiding broken bones from the swoop of the robo arm. About every ten minutes she used up a box of flobnetzes and put the loose packets back in the box and send the box manually down a chute.

Just a little while after her mind had become totally numb her shift ended with a loud beep. She gathered up her coat and pack and made way for the next shift. The helpful monitor informed her as she headed out the door that her next pay deposit would be in her account this Friday at eight A.M.

It was now raining. However, the distance was short and she was going to get wet anyway, so Ruthie decided to save the Standsyt fare and walk fast. She deployed her trusty umbrella and began to trot down the street.

Soon she arrived at her local nutritional cooperative at 73 Soylent street. After some negotiation she emerged with a small bag of nutribars and mystery cans, and a small basket of some even more mysterious fresh fruitlike objects.

The nutricoop workers had assured her they were the latest thing in genetic modification technology and perfectly safe to eat; called pisconutquatzes™. They would keep for years and each could provide a day’s requirement of all essential nutrients. They had to be boiled for two hours to be made tender but could be crunched raw. The nutricoop packers cautioned Ruthie to only take one a day and discontinue use if they made her nauseous or if she broke out in fish scale like patches on her skin.

Ruthie’s next goal was to reach the Roddenberry material transfer corporation at number 12 Segal lane, where her room mate Angie Bajanji worked. The rain began again just as she arrived there, panting from the run.

“So, you’re Angie’s room mate, Ruthie?” said Furd Burffle, head of employee relations for that facility. “Well, Angie has chosen to go out on a special assignment for us. She will not be back for at least a month.”

Furd leaned forward, looking concerned. “She sent three months rent to your joint account at the housing cooperative. Thirty two hundred megamins. It never got to you?”

Ruthie shook her head.

“Well, wait here a minute. I’ll look into this.” He strode purposefully toward the next room. “By the way, “ he said, “ stay out of that chamber”. He gestured to the large purple pear shaped compartment at the centre of the room.

After a minute, Ruthie looked for amusement in the sparse industrial room. She pulled out one of the pisconutquatzes and tried eating it. She found it tough chewing and not really good tasting.

Furd Burffle did not come back as quickly as she expected. On impulse she decided to throw the pisconutquatz at the purple pear shaped chamber to see if it bounced off.

It did so reasonably well and Angie was able to catch it and continued her new game for a few minutes. Then she hit a touchscreen to the side of a door in the chamber.

With a beeping noise, two doors opened in the chamber, so Ruthie could see right through it to the far wall. It had smooth translucent white inner walls, and a raised, round, metal platform in the centre.

Since she had nothing better to do, Ruthie decided to toss the pisconutquatz through the doors and see if she could hit the far wall and

bounce it back. It stopped half way through and hovered in air over the platform.

“Hey, that’s cool!” thought Ruthie. She walked into the chamber and plucked the pisconutquatz out of the air.

The doors abruptly closed. “Hey, Furd?” Shouted Ruthie. The walls of the chamber brightened and a burbling noise began.

“Yes, you’ve gone somewhere”.

Ruthie observed her new surroundings; another purple pod much like what she just left but much larger. The doors were open and the speaker was standing just outside. Behind him were levipallets of goods, obviously waiting to be moved into the pod.

“Hi! I’m Randy Brump. I work with Furd. Welcome to the Demogrant zone.”

“The D zone?” Ruthie looked around again. “Holy crap! Yer not gonna, like, shoot me, are ya?”

“No. Not unless you are going to start telling us the planet is heating up, meat is bad for us, and capitalism is the best possible system.” Randy snickered. “Come. Your friend Angie is here.”

Ruthie followed him through a cavernous warehouse full of levipallets of goods lined up in front of rows of purple teleportation pods. She said; “So these are, like, teleporters? I heard about this stuff but I never knew they...I can get back, right?”

Randy smiled; “ Yes, you can go back in a little while. We’re on a break right now. What we do here is ship stuff into the NIT zone that they can’t make there anymore. Keeps them going.”

“You said NIT zone? What’s that” Asked Ruthie.

“Negative Income Tax Zone. Where the NIT-wits still think they really got a Basic Income.”

“And here is the D zone where they became communists an’ did the Demogrant thing an’ aren’t

Ruthie looked down at herself and noticed she was becoming a cloud of sparking, oscillating particles. “Oops! Think I’m goin’ somewhere...” she said aloud to herself.

Then she disappeared.

free an’ they’re poisoning the environment an’ gonna start a war on us again any day and, um....” Ruthie bit her lip.

Randy and Ruthie passed through a sliding door into a large cafeteria space with glass walls on two sides looking out into a sunny green park of shady trees.

After thinking enough, Randy said “Yeah, that’s one version of history. Actually, we’ve been doing pretty good here since the Basic Income wars. So called.”

He slid into a bench seat and laid his blablet™ device on the table. “You should talk to Bard Wonkle. She was involved in all that shlomp back then. We just about had a real war ’til they let us try it this way.”

“I’d like to just find my friend Angie...” said Ruthie as she slid in across from him and started gnawing pensively on her pisconutquatz.

“She’ll be here in a minute,” he said, tapping on his blablet. “Try some real D zone food. It’ll be lots better than that...object.”

A tray of snack items dropped down and Ruthie and Randy selected a few. The tray levitated back up to the ceiling and resumed its circuit of the room.

Randy chomped on his chow a little, then tapped on his blablet a bit, and finally said; “Bard will be here in a bit, too. It’s kind of inconvenient that you accidentally came over

like this. We have to make sure it doesn't cause you any problems back in NITville."

Ruthie said; "I need to get back home before five o'clock. The housing office will close. I need to get a reduction on my rent if I can't find Angie."

"Don't worry about that. Furd has found the money that was supposed to have been sent." Randy looked closer at his blablet. "Also some more money Angie sent into your account. You and Angie good friends?"

"Yeah, pretty good friends." Angie said as she sat down beside Ruthie.

Said Ruthie; "Angie, I was worried about you. You disappeared. Some people thought you were getting audited by the So-Pros. Also, rent is due."

Still staring into his blablet, Randy reported; "Ruthie. Your pack and bags are also waiting for you back in the NIT zone. Get them from Furd. He wants to talk to you before you go. Important."

"I don't understand 'NIT zone' " whined Ruthie.

"That's what we still call it here in what they call 'the D zone' back there. The old 'Basic Income Wars' politics. Seems like a long time ago now. Pleased to meet you, Ruthie Kazurdle, I'm Bard Wonkle." Bard dropped herself onto the bench beside Randy.

Said Ruthie; "Uh, hi, Bard. Pleased ta meetcha..."

Angie said "hello" to Bard and then said to a bewildered Ruthie; "I'm not going to worry about the So-Pros for awhile; gonna stay here. I sent the money in my account over to yours, so you'll be okay for awhile. It's 5800 megamins, total."

"I don't think the So-Pros will bother you unless they realize where I've really gone. They know I work at Roddenberry and that usually makes 'em discreet. If they do audit you I don't think it will be for long. You're not somebody with much to audit."

Bard and Randy looked sideways at each other. Randy resumed tapping his blablet.

Said Ruthie to Angie; "So, like, you've gone communist now? You've gone the.., here! Where...uh, they have no civil rights an' they threw out capitalism an' all this terrible stuff goes on an' people are starvin' to death because they don't get Basic Income and..."

Said Angie; "Well, sorry, Ruthie, but...yeah! And not sorry and no, no, no, and no."

Said Bard; "Well, there's way too much to say here, but to start; there are not too many real communists anymore. Almost nobody still thinks communal ownership of all means of production is a good idea."

"What we've got here is Socialism. Socialism, defined right, means 'the organization of society and economy to meet the needs of the whole population, not of any class or interest group.' How do you argue with that unless you are deluded or evil? Even conservative people, if they're not mentally unbalanced, admit they really want that."

Angie; "Its really pretty good here, Ruthie. That's what it's all about, isn't it? Being able to live well? There they only give you just enough for each month and you have to calculate it every month. Then, if there is a change you have to wait three months for the change to kick in. Or, if you go over one month you get it clawed back and yer left with no money. You can never get ahead!"

"I've talked with other people where I'm living now, who have come over from NITville. Here, everybody gets the Demogrant and its the same every month for everybody. It's enough to live on; you don't have to do anything else if you don't want to. And everything else you really need, health care, transit, it's free or cheap and it's good. They say that, here, they don't have to worry anymore. They don't have to be chasing around all the time, applying for stuff. They have so much time..."

"Now I can get back to work on my thesis. Remember I talked about it? '*Labor Force Participation in Hunter-Gatherer Economies*'. It's really hard to research."

Ruthie; “If nobody needs to do any work, how does the economy work?”

Bard made a snicker-gurgle noise out of her throat. “Geez, once upon a time that was what the whole Basic Income thing was supposed to be about. Automation was going to make everyone obsolete. So, we needed a BI, or Universal Basic Income, or Basic Income Guarantee, or whatever, so everybody could go off and work on their theses instead, and not starve to death.”

Bard waved for the levitray™ to drop by again. “Here in D zone, we can’t get much more automated than we are right now. Everybody’s got all the work they want, and everything they need. We produce all we need, and send enough over to NITwitville to keep them alive, too. We trade with the outer territories.”

“It’s amazing how much easier it is to run things when you don’t have to worry about whether some sleazoids are able to make their fifty to a hundred percent profit off everything. Pareto optimality; everyone makes enough to make work worthwhile for them, nobody makes so much that it unbalances things. This may be a little over your head, Ruthie.”

Ruthie: “But you need capitalism so things get run efficient!”

Bard took a nibblie off the levitray, said “Says who?” and bit a piece out of it.

Bard chewed for a minute. There was a dramatic silence around the table. Angie was absorbed in cutting a piece off Ruthie’s pisconutquatz.

Bard resumed; “Says who? The capitalists. So, Angie, how efficient was it back in ‘NITwit version of Basic Income’ country, and how is it here in the D zone?”

Angie spat a piece of pisconutquatz into her hand and slapped it into the receptacle. “Like I said, everything works a lot better here, Ruthie. Everything is easier; transit, you have these movatubes™ and they’re almost free; housing, units are bigger; food, a lot better and cheaper.”

She pointed to the pisconutquatz. “That is the kind of flirzak we’re getting at the Nutri-coop now? Blerch! Gragh!” She stuck out her tongue and reached for her glass of juice.

For the first time, Ruthie took a deep bite out of the pastry she had taken from the levitray. She slowly chewed it, savoring its quality.

Said Bard; “These are the kind of debates we had back in the days before the big breakdown. ‘Oh, we need BI in order to protect capitalism, to justify it’ Pfft!”

“No, we needed a BI so we could move on from capitalism, create a post capitalist world.”

“Basically, the capitalist, class hegemony preservers wanted a Negative Income Tax. The anti capitalists wanted a Demogrant. We had the ferzoodles who thought these were just different ways of administering a BI, rather than totally different philosophies about it, coming from totally different ideas about society. You had even bigger ferzoodles who thought political left wing and right wing had become obsolete. ‘No left or right, just forward’. They got a surprise...”

“Their minds couldn’t evaluate different ideas. They had this ‘All Ideas are of equal merit, everything is okay’ mentality. The thought control system encourages this. Today, to these kinds of people, the D-zone is still the left/socialist hellhole and the right/populist one at the same time. And their narrative also conflates us with the old ‘L’ zone, Randland, the libertarians.”

“L zone? Randland?” Puzzled Ruthie.

“Not many Libertarians anymore. This was the idea that all government is evil, people can look after themselves better without one. They came up with their own version of Demogrant to make this idea work. People could use it to buy their own health care, education and so on, from private firms.”

“The small minority who benefitted from that

went back to NIT zone after it collapsed. We rescued the survivors and brought them into the D zone.”

“But the worst thing going on back then was all the ‘bait and switch’. Politicians would talk about how they were going to establish a Basic Income ‘pilot’ in a local area. They would build support for it by talking like Demogrant. Then when it got implemented it turned out like NIT or something similar. Not enough to live on, to own your own life, not have to sell yourself.”

Ruthie asked; “So how did the D zone get started.”

Bard chewed her cookie and thought for a moment. “It was pretty hard. We were going up against a ruling class with command of a state and a near infinite ability to manage perception. But that has been overcome time and again in history when political and economic systems have become too obsolete and unworkable. The ruling class and its stooges are always incompetent flurks.”

“But how did it happen? We had help from some of the outer powers on the planet, who had already developed non capitalist forms of organization. They always faced aggression from the old order, the Managerium. Supporting us, helping us build this zone, was a good way of curbing the Managerium.”

“The Managerium did everything to suppress us and the outer powers. But they could not start a real war. They had obsolete military technology. They couldn’t get anyone to fight.”

“So, that’s a lot different from the history they taught you in school, Ruthie?”

Ruthie looked woefully uncomfortable; “But history can’t all be just made up stuff.”

“Most of history is a mutually agreed on set of lies” piped up Randy, clearly pleased with his own sagacity.

Said Angie; “So here is what they taught us in school; The rich people got an ‘enlightened self interest’. They gave us a Basic Income and we

were all real grateful and happy. The Guidance Council was created to run the new system.”

“Hold outs from the old managerium allied with the barbarians in the outer territories to try to prevent a BI and overthrow the guidance council. Lots of populist misfits and Communists also rose up to stop us from having a BI. They tried to start a phoney version of it called a Demogrant. They were all defeated and banished to the D zone. Blah, blah, blah.”

“Right, Ruthie?” asked Bard.

Ruthie savoured her tasty Demogrant fruit pastry and looked down, frowning.

“I detect some slight skepticism, Angie” said Bard.

Said Randy, looking up from his blablet to Ruthie; “The teleporters are back in operation. You can go back to NIT zone now. You are also welcome to stay here but if you stay awhile and then go back you’ll have some problems with the So-Pro and...some other people.”

Ruthie stood up; “I can’t live here. There are no... Well, everybody knows there’s no rights... it’s not a good place. That’s what everybody says, all the news... I can’t be against what everybody says...I can’t let anyone know I came here.”

Angie said to Ruthie; “Why? You don’t have any attachments back there. I’ve been here a week. I’ve met lots of people who came over. None of them want to go back.

Randy Brump interjected; “Listen, Ruthie; she’s right. I’ve been here five years. This system works better. Difference is; back there you always get barely enough. Here, you don’t have just enough, you have plenty. You don’t have to keep applying for everything.”

“But the best thing; everybody gets the

Demogrant. It doesn't create this conflict between those paying and those taking out. So nobody is putting you down for getting it. There's no opposition to keeping it at a livable level."

"It's just cheap and easy to live. Everything is cheap and good quality. Everything works well; public transit is mostly free and incredible...They've just created an incredible system over here. I don't know how..."

Ruthie suddenly shrieked and put her hands to her ears. "I can't be in a wrong place and think wrong things!"

"Okay", said Bard. "Rand, you better take her back to the pods. Furd will get her on her way."

Said Angie; "Don't worry about my stuff, Ruthie. Furd is making arrangements. You know how to come back over anytime you decide to. Ruthie, remember you got a friend here. We've been through some stuff together. You can find me through the centre for new arrivals, 7 Tobin place."

"Ya, ya, I'll remember, Angie," said a distraught Ruthie as she followed Randy back to the teleporters.

Ruthie reached the housing complex office a few minutes before it closed. There was a lineup. The resident relations worker scowled. She would not be seeing Ruthie before closing time and would be staying late.

"Its always backed up around here on rent days," the tired rental worker 62 said when she finally punched Ruthie's case number into her monitor. "Everybody's got problems, everybody needs adjustments. Lately it's gettin' worse; it's slowing down and people are..."

Said Ruthie; "There was fifty eight hundred put in my account by Angie Bajanji. It got held up. Furd Burffle at her job sez he got it fixed."

Worker 62 leaned forward into the monitor and scowled. "Yeah, it's there. Somebody has a flag on it. Strange..."

"So, you want to pay the full month's rent? Sixteen fifty megamin?"

Ruthie nodded.

Worker 62 tapped her monitor. "It's done? So are you looking for a new roomie?"

Ruthie nodded.

"Hey Snerx," Worker hollered into the next cubicle,

"Is Floop still around?"

"Hey" yelled sharp eared Floop, jumping up from a seat in the waiting room.

Worker 62; "This is Floop Looper. She's looking for a new roomie. She's not cleared through roomatch, but...shlormp!"

Floop sat down next to Ruthie. "Just one big question. You don't cook those nooliburgers from Cheapfixomart, do you? The stuff that smells like coyote meat?"

Ruthie; "Yeah, they're real gross. But I crunch dweezilnuts a lot. I watch panzilmanian rock videos. Got headphones. I got a big collection of frog dolls. Just rubber dolls, all different... They sit on my shelves."

"Panzilmanian rock....headphones...frogs...'
Floop processed this.

Officer Blootus Bonk of the Social Protection Police, the "SoPros" kicked open the door to the housing office and stormed in, Toosler™ at the ready.

"SOCIALPROTECTIONPOLICEACTIONEVERY
B O D Y D R O P T O T H E
FLOORMOVEASIDECOMPLYWITHALLORDER
SDONOTINTERFERE"

Of the four people still in the waiting room, one dropped to the floor screaming and urinating on the floor. The others looked up briefly and resumed staring into their blablets, or at the floor.

“The door was open, testicle brains.” said the weary housing worker.

Bonk levelled his toosler at Floop. “ONTHEFLOORNOW!ONTHEFLOORNOW! ONTHEFLOORNOW!”

Floop flipped. She covered her face and screamed “Don’t toozle me! Don’t toozle me!”

Worker 62; “Here’s Ruthie Kazurdle, here. Thats who you’re after, obviously.”

Bonk looked at the Basic Income worker 113 from the office next door, who had stuck her head in the housing office door, and now nodded in confirmation.

Boomed out the housing worker supervisor, district office 19, as she strode out of her office; “Bonk! Tooze anybody in here and I will file a complaint under chapter 36, paragraph 11, section D! As well, I will make a chapter 13 report under clause 9c of the protocol on use of force in code tangerine situations on economic housing directorate properties!”

Floop fled out of the office. The Supervisor walked between Bonk and Ruthie.

Bonk hesitated, then put the toosler away. “I’m just doing my job, Ma’am...”

Worker 47 wheeled a mop and bucket out of the maintenance closet. Worker 29 grabbed her client by the feet and pulled her to where she was less likely to get walked over, as she babbled hysterically.

“...help if these guys were less dramatic...” mumbled worker 47 to worker 29.

The office’s official psychological councillor knelt over the floored housing client, declaiming; “DO-YOU-NEED-A-SED-A-TIVE!?”

One of the waiting clients called out “I’ve got a fingernail painting class at seven o’clock. Am I going to get seen soon?”

A manacled Ruthie Kazurdle was walked to the door by officer Bonk of the SoPros, with the housing worker supervisor following close behind, declaring thusly; “I will interview this person at the earliest opportunity after release from custody as to her treatment while in custody. If there is any noncompliance with procedural directives regarding handling of class 3f detainees in code tangerine situations I will be filing a form 17g complaint to the district social police oversight board, with copies to ...”

“...respect muh authority” grumbled Bonk as the elevator door closed on he and Ruthie Kazurdle.

Down the hall, worker 62 sauntered into the basic income office and the cubicle of BI worker 113. “So what was the point to that?”

“What do you mean, point?” huffed BI worker 113. “Those are the police. You don’t support our police?”

“We’re gonna get a rule established around here. We work with the real police when they are doing real police stuff. We don’t flag people for this political shratz.”

“What are you, a populist? You working for the D zone?”

“Ever hear the phrase, ‘snitches get switches’?”

“Are you threatening me?”

Housing Authority worker 62 leaned close to Basic Income worker 113. “Yeah! Want to keep trying to have the last word?”

She didn’t.

Later that evening, at the Social Protection Police office at 1933 Dogberry street, chief inquisitory specialist class 3 Torkie Mada peered down her nose at a defiant Ruthie Kazurdle, still in cuffs.

“So, this Angie Bajanji just sent 5800 metamin into your account because she likes you?”

Said Ruthie; “Angie’s gone away somewheres working for the teleport company. She asked me to hold the money in case her account gets ‘inactive’ an’ seized. An’ thats my story an’ I’m stickin’ to it!”

Said Torkie to Blootus Bonk; “I think her handcuffs need tightened up a little”.

Bonk looked down. “Um, uh, that could cause some trouble with the housing directorate. Gotta do things real legal there.”

Torkie sniffed. “Something...done about all this interference with police.”

Torkie pointed her finger at Ruthie. “Well, I know that you are now working as an agent for the D zone. This money was to be used to help undermine our freedom and superior way of life. I have contacted Roddenberry teleportation services, employer of this Angie Bajanji, who has...”

“No, we haven’t. And you haven’t contacted anybody. I found you, here, now, you popped up little ass picker.” So said Furd Burfle, strolling in the door.

Behind him strode Bard Wonkle. Ruthie blinked very hard.

Out on the street, the four stood under an awning that gave protection from the drizzle.

Furd said; “Cold drizzle in June. And they’re still trying to tell us the atmosphere is heating up.”

Furd looked at Ruthie; “This is rebound from all the stupid weather modification they’ve been doing. Then they’ll use all that as another way to convince people they have to accept a declining

Behind Bard came a man in a slick suit waving his ID on his blablet.

“Site security!” Squawked Torkie, hitting the intranet monitor. “unidentified personnel at A9...”

“I am security! Snappler, ICU482, special interventions.” He waved his credentials in her face and then tapped his blablet at the security monitor, cancelling the security alert.

“This is a declared level 4 external affairs complication. I need Ms. Kazurdle to come with me.”

He turned to officer Bonk and jerked his thumb. “Hey, you cartoon! Get those cuffs off her. Now!”

Bonk growled, but jumped to comply.

Bard said to Ruthie; “I was worried you might have some problems like this. We have it fixed for now but I can’t be sure you won’t have more complications in future. We need to talk outside.”

Once they were alone, Torkie snarled to Bonk; “I’d really like to know what the hell’s goin’ on here!”

“Scumbags not respecting muh authority. And we gotta pay taxes to keep ‘em breathin’.”

living standard. Bastards!”

Ruthie looked at the rain spattering the pavement.

Bard said; “I’ve noticed people in the zone are losing their fear of enforcers.”

Snappler grunted. “Gettin’ edgier..”

Bard asked; “Ruthie gonna be alright here?”

Snappler said; “She needs to lay low for awhile. Or come over to D zone. The guidance council is having trouble with their finances again; also think they are losing control of the narrative. Looking for scapegoats; someone who is turning popular opinion against... ‘Basic Income Capitalist Freedom.’ Besides their own smarkin’ selves!” He took a long, deep drag on his Cansavigen™.

Bard; “They’re getting into these situations more often. Last one was two years ago. Less, I think. Do you want us to shut down personnel teleport for awhile?”

Snappler; “No, we need to keep sending people over for technical training, for business. But be security conscious. Watch how you send money around. Don’t use Twaddler™ for organizing. Don’t be obvious about things. I think your people are getting too sloppy and overconfident. Remember these people are still dangerous.”

Bard; “I hear you. It’s getting to a point... As for Ruthie, I can’t tell her what to do. She is clear to come over if she wants. She has friends now in ‘The D’. She seems to have no attachments here.”

“Stay tight” said Snappler. He doused his cansav and strolled back toward the So-Pro office.

“Keepin’ it tight...”, replied Bard, and turned toward Ruthie.

“Well, you heard. You can come over. You can stay here, but there could still be problems for you.”

Ruthie was perturbed. “I don’t get it. You’re supposed to be against BI guidernance council, but you cooperate with each other.”

“The BIGC hates our guts. But they’re very dependent on us. They’d collapse without our goods shipments and tech help. The people who run things for them, more and more, they know their system isn’t working and they’re getting in line with us.”

“So, why don’t you just bring ‘em down?”

“That’d be a really dangerous thing to do. Especially for people like you, Ruthie. In the last big disruption, twenty years ago, supply systems broke down, water and power became unreliable. People couldn’t get food and started moving around, foraging. They called it ‘looting’. Police panicked and started shooting people.”

“All capitalism is about is using most people like a herd, to create a revenue for an owner class, a rentier class. These people aren’t rulers because they are super geniuses. What makes them powerful is that they really can’t do anything or make anything themselves and they know it. So they will do anything to stay in control and make the rest of us provide everything for them.”

“Think about it. What could be harder to fight than people who would not know how to live if they lost control, who think they might as well be dead then? They control their herd mostly by psychological means, creating a false narrative. But they would likely try to kill everybody, take everyone and every thing down with them, if they thought they were going down.”

“Yet their system really doesn’t work. We have an alternative that does. So what we are working at is taking their system apart piece by piece and replacing it with ours. This can take decades, generations. But it’s better than killing millions of people, destroying most of civilization, putting it back to grandma’s times, and not sure what we will end up with after it all.”

Bard sighed and flashed Ruthie a slightly jaded smile; “So, is that enough strain on your brain for one day?”

Ruthie’s brain strained. After a minute’s silence, she said; “How’d you guys come up with Demogrant?”

“Well, it started a long time ago when people started thinking about how a post capitalist society and economy would work, and how to transition to one. That is, rather than just, ‘lets

storm The Bastille again and maybe we'll get it right this time.' They didn't use the words 'Basic Income', 'Demogrant', 'NIT' back then. That all came later."

"What was needed was something that didn't just lead us back into the original problem with capitalism. Everybody had this gun to their heads; 'work or starve', even though there was never any need to keep everybody working all the time. This is the idea of a BI; everybody doesn't just stop working, but it removes the coercion from people's lives, so they can start to be free people."

"The problem was, this idea became a kind of plaything for philosophers; people who wanted to bat around ideas like 'reciprocity'. This is hard to explain; like if A is disabled and unable to contribute to society, he makes B worse off because B has to work harder to make up A's contribution. Like, all of society is not a big organism, much more productive than the sum of all its parts, meaning all of us. Everybody gets far more from society than they could ever put in. Technology makes that more so all the time."

"This isn't totally over your head is it, dear?"

"No," said Ruthie, "I think I know what you mean."

"So, the way the BI movement developed...A few people were working out how a BI would work, started developing the Demogrant model; a flat payment to everybody, enough to live on, no conditions. But they were mostly drowned out by all these people who didn't know what they were talking about. They just wanted an endless floating discussion to gratify their egos."

"It was like every flake could come up with his or her own idea of a BI, which helped to discredit the idea for most people. 'Oh, well, all ideas are of equal merit, and they're all okay.' Twinkle, twinkle..."

"Really, you don't go with a single half baked idea, and think that's all you need to change everything. BI had to be considered in relation to everything else. I mean, if you are going to build a successful movement for something like that you have to have a real understanding of the society you're operating in, and to know exactly what it is you are trying to

change."

"So, economic conditions kept getting worse. It got obvious that something better than the old welfare state was needed. Real, serious ideas for a BI started to break through the stupid noise. But the thing with the capitalist class is that whenever a demand for reform starts to rise, they come up with their own reform to pre-empt...I mean to draw people away from reforms which might reduce their power."

"So, they got one of their brainiac economists to come up with Negative Income Tax. It's really just 'welfare state two point zero'. It's still just a minority getting and the majority paying in to support the minority. So the minority who took from NIT were a bit better off, but still stigmatized. The people just a little better off still have to pay taxes for it and could be made to feel like they're being taken advantage of."

Said Ruthie; "But most people supported NIT when it was started. There were... experiments about it. They had a referendum about it. People were happy with it because nobody's income could fall below the minimum."

"Ah, yeah. You give people more money and their lives get better. They're happier. But now, this is breaking down. The minimum has not kept up with the cost of living because the 'tax payers' did not want to pay any more tax. Yet now there are more people drawing NIT than paying into the tax system."

"So, NIT is a great way to hammer down the incomes and standard of living of the general population. That was what the Capitalist class wanted, so they could extract more from their human herd. But the capitalist class always takes too much out of the system, wastes a lot of it, and not enough is put back in to keep things going."

"This gets to why Basic Income really doesn't make any sense except as a Left issue,

within the frame of socialism. But back before the disruption, we couldn't get The Left to buy into the Demogrant. They'd go; 'we just need to make good jobs for everybody'. But there will never, ever, be enough 'good jobs' for everybody. You don't want to get into doing 'make work'. That's why the Demogrant.

"So we had a hard time of it during The Breakdown and Disruption, trying to get the Demogrant idea across. 'Oh, that's not practical. There's not enough money for it'. But they had to spread around some whoopies to get broad support, and they finally let us have a small zone where we could try out a Demogrant. And you know we had help from the outer powers."

Ruthie; "Yabut, where did you get the money to pay for the Demogrant?"

"The same way every society gets money for everything; from the surpluses generated by economic activity. It's just that in D zone all the surplus goes back to improving lives and building productivity, so things improve. In NIT, in capitalism, it's like I said; most of the surplus output of the economy gets wasted or sat on by an incompetent elite."

"So, we've been able to run the experiment that should have been run. It's worked even better than we expected. Of course the capitalists are threatened by a good example of an alternative to them. But they have become dependant on us. But then,...they've always been dependant on the non capitalist parts of society to bail them out of their..."

"But there are still hard line factions in the ruling class who would like to wipe us out. Or, take us over and suck us dry. So we keep up alliances with the Outer Powers and we've built a good defence system."

"What should really worry you, Ruthie, is that most of the ruling class think their problem is only that they have had to keep all you 'economically unjustified' people alive, and invent jobs for you. They only want the 'high value' part of the population. The more moderate ones look for

ways to reduce your birth rate and life expectancy and get you to accept less and less. The more extreme ones just want to kill all of you. They probably would if they could get away with it,...if we let them get away with it."

"Yes, Ruthie, these people really are like that. Me and my friends spend a lot of time dealing with them."

Ruthie; "What do you do?"

Bard thought for a moment. "I am kind of like, part saleswoman and part intermediary. Some people in NITville think I'm a 'spy' or an 'agent of influence'. I never hide what I do. But I have to be careful. These people need what I can get for them. They need lines of communication back to D zone."

Ruthie noticed that a car had pulled up beside them and was waiting there. It was the type that still required a human pilot behind the tinted windows. The passenger door popped open.

"So, I hope I haven't totally blown out your brain cells, Ruthie."

"No, my brain cells are okay. Gettin' rejigged a little, I guess. I still don't know if I want to come over."

"Make sure she gets home, Furd. Cheeriew." Bard popped into the car.

"Bye, Bard." said Ruthie.

Ruthie was silent a moment. Furd checked his blablet.

"Furd... If things are really so much better in D zone, why don't everybody go there?"

"One word; propoganda. Control information, control narrative, control people's perception of reality."

He thought a moment. "But it isn't that simple. For most people, to leave what they

are familiar with is a big break. People have ties; family ties, emotional ties, ties of friendship.”

“But of course, we can’t have the whole NIT zone decide in mass to move over to D zone. We prioritize people who’ve got themselves onto these bastard’s sweetheart list. Like you.”

“We work to bring about reforms over here and break down the oligarchy.”

An autotaxi pulled up beside them.

“This is paid for. If you want to come over, you have my secured bladdress. If you log in like this,” he showed her on his blablet “they won’t be able to monitor us.” If you’re coming, do it quietly. Best not to tell anyone, just go. Don’t show up at the Teleport with six suitcases. We’ll send a car to pick you up.”



A few days later, Ruthie sat in the waiting room of her local Basic Income office.

Someone walked in. “Anyone want to trade a basket of pisconutquatzes for a can of something good? She held up the basket.

There were no takers.

“Started turnin’ into a fish yet?” jested someone.

“The science of genetic modification, enhancing human nutrition!” intoned a mock voice.

“Ruthie Kazurdle! Door 7!” Squawked the squawk box.

Ruthie sat down in the claustrophobic interview booth and waited for the BI worker to appear beyond the plexiglass. The plastic chair was wobbly.

Finally the worker slipped through her door, focused on the blablet in front of her.

Said Ruthie; “Look, I need a change in my BI for the next quarter. I don’t have a roomie now to split the rent with. That money from Angie isn’t going to make up for it.”

The worker ignored her and read her blablet. Eventually she said; “You’ve got extra income that isn’t from employment. It has to be deducted one hundred percent.”

“That ain’t fair. It puts me even further out than if I never got the money at all. She sent it to me to help me. I don’t have a roomie to split the rent

with. Cancha just put it off until next quarter?”

The worker stared into space and monotoned; “Maybe you can find a new room mate and get more work hours.”

“Even that isn’t going to help much. I can’t wait three months to get my BI back up. And it’s hard to find roomies now. There is a lot of vac..vacat...vacantries, now. But they won’t bring the rent down. And they’re cuttin’ back hours and pay where I work.”

“The nutricooperative will be able to assist you.”

“Yah, I know where the nooterconglobberative is at, ya spurzelin’ shlorp! I sez I need enough money to get through the frap-shnazzlin’ quarter!”

“No tolerance for abuse!” Sneered the worker in a tone both bored and contemptuous. She hit the button on her desk and slipped out of the booth.

Ruthie got up and turned around as the security goon pulled open the door. “You touch me an’ I will make a complaint under chapter 42, selection Z an’ report a protocol under tangerent situations an’ clause B4”

“You’re barred from this office for thirty, er, ah, seven, days.” snivelled the insecure security goon.

Ruthie ran to the housing office next door. The goon followed her, stuttering as he tried

to think of what else she was barred from doing.

“I need to see the supervisor”, gasped Ruthie.

“She’s here;” said the housing office supervisor as she followed the goon in the door. “Go into my office. I’ll be there in a minute.”

She leaned down to the security officer’s level, her face inches from his, and began a whispered but frank exchange of views.

Soon after, in HOS’s office, after Ruthie had explained her latest problems, she said; “Yes, that’s one of the problems with this stupid Negative Tax system we have. If you have a variable income, unpredicted problems, it really destabilizes your life.”

“Normally, we could just overlook this. But the So-Pros have a ‘monitor’ order out on you. That scares some social work people around here. For others, it’s an invitation...”

She shook her head. “NIT is a great way to set people against each other. And control people. Those who are taking out against those who are paying in. Wish they’d thought this out better when they set this up, back during the breakdown and disruption.”

“Somebody did.” said Ruthie, shyly.

HOS glanced at her quizzically, then shrugged and said; “what I can do is reduce rent by twenty percent due to special circumstances. If you still can’t make it I can treat it as a late payment under form 76B. You’ll have to go to the tribunal and show how you can get caught up in arrears. It’ll get you through this quarter. Then we’ll see where we’re at. Can you get some more income?”

Ruthie thought a moment. “I don’t know. At work, they keep cuttin’ back everybody’s hours. They give us a small increase in hourly rate so it looks better.”

“That’s going on all over. You gotta find some kind

of second job to give you more income. Try the temp places. But the big thing is you gotta find a new roomie. I know someone; Zoomie Whacker. She’s also having troubles with the So-Pro idiots. So she’s a leper. But the two of you can look after each other. Sound good?”

Ruthie nodded.

“Alright. I’ll let her know. Get you two together”.

After some ritual signing of forms, they came out into the lobby. Berzinda Squank had just arrived. She immediately jumped up shouting “Hey, everybody. This is Ruthie Kazurdle. She’s a flirxin’ populist agent from the D zone! She don’t want us to have Basic Income anymore!”

“Blow the scene, Ruthie!” Said HOS.

Ruthie blew.

“Great going, Berzinda” said HOS.

“They don’t want us to have a BI. We’ll go back to what it was before the disruption. No health care, people couldn’t afford to live...”

“Around here we do not attack people because of what somebody else says about them.”

“But the So-Pros know about her. These people are working for the D zone and spreading fake news and disrupting the economy so there isn’t enough work and everything goes wrong and ...”

“Put a cork in it or leave now. It could take you quite some time to get that bigger unit you want.”

Berzinda decided to cork it.

Shortly after, Ruthie arrived back at work at Goldbrick nugatory products marketing associates. They discovered they did not have enough staff on the flobnetz order disordering station and sent her over there.

She quickly learned the new routine from the supervisor. She took flats of flobnetzes off a rack, removed the lids and stacked them. Then she took the flobnetzes, in rows of alternating red and blue tops, and put them into packets. She zipped the packets shut.

The empty packets arrived in boxes which slid down a chute as she needed them. She put three blue topped, and three red topped, flobnetzes in each packet. The packets went back in the box. When the box was full she put it on an automated trolley which showed up exactly when needed.

When a flat was empty a robotic arm swooped in and picked it up, narrowly missing Ruthie each time. She had to empty at least one flat per minute.

Toward the end of the shift the supervisor returned and called a short break. She announced that she needed at least most of them to put in an extended shift.

Ruthie put up her hand to volunteer. So did the other flobnetz packagers except one, who protested that she had to pick up her little boy from the child mind cooperative before four o'clock or pay overtime charges.

"Okay, Hoddie," said The Supe, "You go. The rest, I need you to do another hour."

"So, this brood sow for more useless eaters gets to shirk work and make it back though the NIT?"

Said The Supe; "What is it with you, Albert? Are there some kind of medications you're forgetting to take?"

Snarfi Hooze jumped up, shrieking; "This man is a racist, misogynistic, populist, from D zone... attacking Basic Income...."

Albert; "Yeah, really tolerant of other people's opinions. Fraxing leftists are ruining the planet with

this Negative Income Tax..."

Supe shouted; "Both a' ya, shut up! Hoddie, I'll sign you out in a minute."

She grabbed Albert by the arm and danced him toward the station office.

Snarfi ranted; "Disgusting populists from D zone, trying to take our Basic Income away from us!"

"I gotta work and pay into the income tax system so these leftists can sit back and do nothing," bellowed Albert as he was stuffed through the door.

Barked Supe; "Albert, shut up and get in there. Snarfi, shut up! Rest of you, keep working."

"you're suppressing my freedom of speech! I don't want to work just so bums can sit back and take from NIT!"

Another order disorderer jumped up. "You're a hypocrite! You're drawing NIT benefit, too."

"That's different! I want to work more. I used to pay into the NIT until the leftists ruined the economy. Paying people to not work..."

Supe pulled the door shut. Ruthie and the other flobnetz disorderers were left with only muffled screams from Albert passing the walls of the office.

Then Snarfi started up again; "These racist right wing bastards all have something wrong with their brains. They are influenced by agents from the D zone..."

"And they say all you 'left' people are for the D zone!"

The monitor flashed and boomed "Work is not being put through. Is the supervisor on the floor?"

"They don't want us to have basic income so

we starve like before the disruption..”

“Shut up and sit down, Snarfi! You’re about as bad as him.”

“Nobody’s right if everybody’s wrong...” said a third disorderer.

“Gotta go! I need The Supe to sign me out.” whined Hoddie.

“I think they’re firing him this time.”

“I really don’t like hearing that kind of frapz. Even with NIT and work, I’m not making it. Can’t get enough hours. Who does that fat bastard think he is?”

“Pathetic misogynist...probably rapist...”panted Snarfi.

“Aw, shaddup, Snarfi. You sound like you just want to fight with people. Like you get off on it.”

“You’re a pacifist who won’t let us take on the right wing populists. We need to destroy the D zone and end this threat to freedom...”

“But nobody’s right if everybody’s...” snivelled the third disorderer.

The monitor boomed again; “Supervisor for flobnetz disordering floor report immediately...”

Ruthie sat quietly at her workstation and listened, her brain cells buzzing.

After putting Albert in the care of the plant security, Supe emerged from the office and said with a shudder; “yeesh, these days...Where is it all coming from?”

“Ya, Hoddie, I’ll sign you out. Rest of ya, get back

to work, show’s over.”

“I wanna know right now if that disgusting anti BI, populist misogynist, has been removed from this workplace!”

“Snarfi, if you don’t stopper up the septic tank between your ears and get to work, you’ll be the next politics maniac who gets fired outta here. Everyone back to work! C’mon, c’mon!”

Boomed the monitor; “Supervisor for flobnetz disordering floor re...”

“Yah, here’s a report!” Growled Supe as she punched the monitor, silencing it.

The extended shift continued in grim silence.

At the end, Supe checked the crew’s times off on her blablet.

Ruthie Kazurdle,RT503?”

“Yes,” answered Ruthie.

“You were in the reordering station. You aren’t supposed to be sent over here to the disordering station. So now you know the big secret.” Supe chuckled, rolling her eyes.

“Not really a big secret” said Ruthie.

“What’s really stupid about it; they couldn’t keep track of how many units they were putting through so they got out of balance and had to put on extra people and shifts here. It’s like they can’t even plan.”

Soon after, Ruthie stood on the standsyt as it took her home, looking troubled, staring down at the track slipping under the moving platform. When she reached an uncrowded stretch and there was no

one near her, she took out her blablet and logged into Furd Burffle’s security wall.

In a few minutes Furd called her back.

She looked around to be sure there was still no one near her, and installed the ear piece.

“Hello, Furd?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. Look, if I come over, can I take my collection of frog dolls with me? It’s pretty big... yeah, just rubber dolls....Okay, I don’t have much

else. One suitcase... just time to get home and pack up.”

“Okay. How about the corner of Nixon and Croll? ...eight o’clock? Yeah, okay.”

Ruthie smiled. “Yeah, thanks, Furd!”

Two days later, Ruthie stood in a new apartment in the D zone, beside Angie Bajaj and the cohousing collectives organizer, Raddie Roofer.

“This place is like a palace compared to where we were living!” said Ruthie. “We still gonna live together?”

Raddie said; “Angie’s already moved into the one just like it next door. What do you need to live together for? Angie’s cooking might start to smell funny or she might start bringing a boyfriend in for the night.”

Angie laughed. “Yeah, Ruthie, I can visit you and the frogs any time.”

Ruthie;” Can you get your stuff over...?”

“Randy Brump just told me it’s all waiting for me at the teleport centre. As soon as you were safely over here they could go pick it up. The crystal ball trophy didn’t get cracked. Good omen. ”

Raddie; “So, you want the place, Ruthie?”

Ruthie slowly pirouetted to take in a three sixty degree view of her new home. “I can really afford this?”

Raddie; “ Of course. Most housing is social here. It’s rent geared to income; twenty percent. They explained this to you at New Arrivals Centre?”

Ruthie; “So, I get 1200 a month DEX and that makes the rent....?” Her eyes crossed.

Angie completed it for her; “240 DEX. Utilities all

included. The Throughput Tax is also built in.”

Raddie said; “ When you get a job and your income goes up, it increases your rent by twenty percent of your pay. Don’t worry, we have a system for taking it off your pay automatically. It isn’t like with that NIT where you spend hours calculating it every month and get clobbered every time there’s a change in your....”

“There’s also a deposit of 1000 DEX. You’re getting a startup grant of 2400 DEX as soon as I put through the residency documents for you.”

“You’ve registered for Demogrant, right? They’ve set up a D-bank account for you?”

Ruthie flashed the icon on her blablet. “They say it’ll be active tomorrow.”

Raddie said; “They’ve scrubbed that, have they? Got rid of the snoopware? Twaddler? Florkbook?”

“I don’t know what they did. Ran some kind of diaglostics on it. They put some new stuff in.” Said Ruthie, frowning.

Raddie; “You’ll get the first Demogrant deposit tomorrow. The startup, probably the day after if I file your residence docs today. We can do that right away. You can buy some furniture. Some clothes, too.”

Ruthie; “Yeah, I want this place.”

They followed Raddie out the door and she closed and locked it. “You’re coming at the right time, before the rush. There’s a new crisis coming in NITwit land and they’ve started attacking people again, turning them on each other. Well, you know, you were just there.”

Ruthie; “Ya, I know.”

“We still have a surplus of units. We have really advanced modular construction techniques now. We can build ‘em quick, cheap, good. We’ve started cranking up production again because we know the next wave is coming. But we won’t be able to keep totally ahead of it.”

“Like the old joke; ‘last person leaving NIT zone please turn out all the lights’” Roofie smiled at Ruthie.

They walked in silence for a moment.

Ruthie said; “What kinds of taxes do I gotta pay here?”

Raddie; “The throughput tax is on just about everything; it’s from three to 12 percent. It can be added on or included in the price. The throughput is to make sure the cost of government is built into all prices, to simplify planning.”

“Other than that, nothing. There is no income tax at all here. That never was a good idea. When you get rich, Ruthie, you can pay the wealth tax; that’s the tax on net worth over the minimum.”

Raddie suddenly turned right and the other two had to back up a step to follow her.

“This is the new rec room. It isn’t fully equipped yet.” Roofie delivered a quick tour of the room.

Ruthie suddenly asked; “How much is a DEX worth in metamins?”

Angie answered; “No way to even compare. Bard was telling me they stopped doing trade with currency. They’re using ah... a kind of barter now. In other words, you can’t exchange DEX for metamins.”

They went back into the corridor.

Ruthie asked; “Am I going to be able to find some work here?”

Roofie said; “Contrary to what you have been told in NITville, there is plenty to do here. You do have to show up and do the job, not just goof off. Also, the idea that technology creates unemployment is a crock. Never happened since the stone age. Capitalism is what creates unemployment.”

“Of course, people work a lot fewer hours than in the old industrial age, current average about 20 hours a week. They earn less from work, which flips out what’s left of the old time labor union guys. They’re still locked into this ‘claw it back from the bosses’ mentality. But what matters to real people is what they’re getting altogether, and what it costs them to live.”

“And of course, what matters to the small businesses which create all the jobs is to have labor they can afford. Also, to get taxed only on actual profits. This is one reason why we have such strong manufacturing here.”

“We have all this artisanal production now. Lots of good, original stuff, really cheap. You’ll discover this when you go shopping for clothes and furniture, Ruthie. You can stop dressing like a NITlander.” She smiled apologetically to Ruthie.

Ruthie smiled shyly and looked down at her clothes.

Another quick shift of directions as Roofie turned into her office and the others followed.

“We do have rich people here. A lot, actually. They just aren’t allowed to manipulate government, or act above the law. If they do try, they get taken down really fast.”

Roofie smiled at Angie; “So, is that acceptable in theory to an economist like you?”

Angie said; “I’m not really that kind of economist. But I am puzzled about how you manage the money supply? How do you prevent inflation?”

“What do we need inflation for? It really boggles the brains of people brought up in capitalism that the real purpose of taxes isn’t to raise revenues for government. The main aim is to eliminate unjustified wealth. This prevents inflation, speculation, philanthropy and other bad things. We issue whatever money we need. This way, it’s no problem to make sure there is just as much money circulating as is needed to cover all real economic activity. We expand or even contract as needed.”

Angie; “So, you run a centrally planned economy with market elements and a limited financial system?”

Roofie; “Actually, planning is pretty decentralized here. The science of planning has advanced a little from the days of the old Bolshlovia Confederacy. We’ve learned that sound planning requires good information, as in facts and data. Also, the participation of everyone effected, meaning a real democracy.”

“Economics is mostly about planning, not markets; always has been. Markets have a limited role in this system. We issue loans at zero interest, only for capital and infrastructure expansion. Everything else is illegal. In other words, markets and banking are really just part of planning.

“You do look bewildered. Should have asked Bard about this. She’s a real expert.”

Angie; “She was busy. This a bit over yer head, Ruthie?”

Ruthie held her hand over her head, looked up at it, and rolled her eyes.

Roofie sat at her desk, gestured the two to sit, and rummaged in her desk, pulling out various papers.

“You’re interested in employment, Ruthie? That greenhouse workers coop over on Lange street is expanding and looking for people. You have some experience in that field?”

“Oh, ya. I used to work for the city parks

department, in the nursery. Then they cut all that out,” said Ruthie, studying the paper Roofie handed her.

“Its food, not flowers, but I guess all the basic skills are the same. We are growing real food again, not manufacturing Frankenfood.”

Angie said “Cheap and abundant! Graaaack!” while holding her throat and sticking out her tongue.

Roofie slid Ruthie another slip. “Here is the local health centre. Number 3 Ostrom circle, just up the street from here. You should drop in and get registered.”

“We do health care right here, too. It’s mostly run through community clinics. The people are on salaries. Medicine, supplies, bought in bulk. None of this nonsense of doing everything by piece rates, just so some sleazoids can make profits off every little step.”

“So, you need a doctor you just go, and it’s free. It’s not like back there, where you pay the doctor if you can find one who takes medic-ass vouchers, then get reimbursed next quarter.”

Ruthie smiled again, and blipped the two slips into her blablat.

Roofie laid a larger document before her. “Here is the membership agreement, Ruthie. You need to understand you are joining a democratically run cohousing collective. Except I haven’t set it up yet. I just arrived. What I do is set them up, as soon as the places are inhabited.”

Ruthie examined the document. “The C.A. L’Hirondelle housing cooperative?”

Said Angie. “Who was or is C.A. L’Hirondelle?”

“Darned if I know,” said Roofie. “I think they’re running out of names for these places.”

“So, the thing with these housing collectives, Ruthie, is that the members run their buildings themselves. That doesn’t mean the residents are mopping the floors and doing repair work. There is a council. It sets policy for the building. It hires maintenance staff and contractors. It solves resident’s problems, problems among residents.”

“The council does not own the building. The government owns all the land in D zone, and holds the mortgage on these buildings. We do it this way because it was learned long ago that this is the only good way to operate affordable multi unit housing. It is also part of the main objective in D zone to build an authentic democracy.”

“There are always problems. New residents, especially ones recently arrived from NITzone, often don’t like it. It’s the ‘just let me pay the rent, give me everything and don’t bother me’ syndrome.”

“Also with new places, we get cliques trying to take over and run things for their own benefit. Then I have to intervene. The great thing about the system we’ve built here is that these ‘out for myself’ types don’t get anywhere. They usually wise up or else take themselves back over to NITzone.”

Angie said; “You know, Raddie, in all this talk about real democracy, something puzzles me. We know who is in control in the NIT zone; the guidance council. It’s all rich people, business people. They say they had to put limits on democracy because only technical experts are really capable of running Society and solving its problems. The big breakdown and disruption showed that people weren’t really able to govern in their own interest. There is a consultative assembly but it has no power.”

“Over here, you have all these assemblies and councils. But these democracy organizers like you are always in the background, can always intervene. The way the organizers operate is not very open. So, who is really in charge here.”

Raddie sighed and thought a moment. “Angie, if you’re asking if we have a real democracy here, the answer is ‘no’. There is currently no place on the planet, and very few times in history, when there was ever something like a real democracy.”

“History shows that it is a very powerful system of government but it’s always hard to establish. A democracy is always intensely opposed by oligarchic powers from within and without. Even the outer powers are uneasy about us, but they need us. This is why we need to maintain a good defence and security force, and good diplomacy.”

“You don’t just say, ‘yahoo, let’s have a democracy’. We have learned that it has to be built up in a logical way over decades or generations. Everybody thinks they would like to live in a democracy, until they actually have to. Then it becomes a big strain on a lot of people’s brain. There is a kind of infrastructure that has to be developed for it.”

“I put it this way; you won’t achieve real democracy until you have real socialism, which requires a real Demogrant, all of which requires abolition of capitalism. Whoever argues against that is a know nothing who could not correctly define any of those four terms, never mind explain the relations between them.”

Ruthie blinked and looked at Angie.

Angie said; “Yes, but I wouldn’t state it so... boldly...”

“Yes, I am bold. I believe strongly in what I am doing. A democracy organizer who doesn’t should not be doing it.”

“But if your question is, how is the government run here; we have a developing network of citizen’s assemblies working on a participatory and delegative system. Everyone is a member of their local assembly; these are the building blocks, the base. Lower assemblies send delegates to higher assemblies, who then report back. All the way up to the supreme assembly.”

“No general elections, no referendums, no ‘representatives’ crap, so no room for manipulation. Also, no ‘free press’ or ‘free speech’, so no misinformation. The prime rule

in the assemblies is; the facts are what they are, and there are no alternative realities.”

Raddie paused, looking around at Angie and Ruthie.

Angie blinked twice, popped her cheeks once, and said “umm...”

Raddie said; “So, how is freedom of speech, a free press, working back there in NIT zone?”

No answers.

“Here, when there is an issue, a committee studies it, determines the facts, reports on it. This is disseminated through the networks. So, good information means good planning and fact based decision making. This allows us to build and run efficient systems which provide all our needs. Most people from NIT zone take awhile to catch on to this. Especially the more ‘educated’ ones.”

“That reminds me”, she said, reaching behind her for another slip. “Next local assembly meeting is coming up Thursday. Otjivero district community hall, three Gramsci square. You have a vote. Ruthie can have a vote in a minute. Attendance is not compulsory.”

She found the information slip and laid it before Angie and Ruthie, who eagerly bleeped it into their blablets.

“There is a lot to learn about being a citizen of D zone. But they’ll set you up in the ‘new citizen’ training program.”

“All this is made possible by the Demogrant. People have the time and personal security to participate. But it cannot just run itself, not yet. The people have to fully educated to it, habituated to it.”

“So, who is really in control?” Asked Angie again.

“Things are really run by the fellowship of democracy organizers, of which am proudly a member. The final authority in this society is the council of seniors of the fellowship.”

“How are these seniors chosen?” Asked Angie.

“Well..., they choose themselves.”

There was a brief, awkward silence.

“You’re a scholar Angie. You can study us and all our flaws. Just remember what we have achieved.”

Angie shrugged; “Yes, you people have really built a system that works and makes a better life for people.”

“How is your research going, by the way?”

“I’ve been spending some time at the institute for Neopostallthat theory. They’ve cleared me to access their research stacks and there is some great stuff in there. I could get on with my paper now, but I think I want to alter the subject a bit.”

“Except, Bard has asked me to work on a special project for her. It’s kind of...semi-secret. So I’m gonna put the paper aside for a bit.”

“Whoo...You’re not doing some kind of ‘Department F’ work, are you?”

Angie chuckled “Nah, just some research stuff...”

Raddie nodded. Ruthie shifted in her chair, clicked her tongue, and turned back to the document before her.

Raddie; “Sorry Ruthie. I think we’ve been talking over you...You don’t have to sign right away. I can hold the unit...”

The two were silent for a few minutes while Ruthie solemnly read over the document. She picked up a pen and signed.

Raddie smiled, stood, held out her hand. “Welcome to the D-zone, Ruthie.”

Ruthie stood, smiled, shook hands, and said “Thanks, Raddie.”

Said Angie; “Come up to my unit. I have a treat for you. I’ll fry some pork chops. Real meat, grown by real farming. You won’t believe what you’ve been missing.”

Said Ruthie; “I don’t want to miss nothing!”

And that is the end of the Basic Outcome story. The moral is; don’t buy solutions from the people who are causing the problem.

I would love it for people to distribute this as widely as possible, especially in Basic Income and Left politics circles, so long as the content is not altered and the original source at burble.ca is given.

