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*In Favour of a Social Europe,
the Developing Countries,
more Humane and
Environment-Friendly Globalisation*

ELECTRONIC VIVANT- EUROPE

N° 7 (June 2004)

1. WHAT VIVANT BELIEVES

**More freedom to act than the liberals!
More social security than the socialists!**

The Enlightenment, Liberalism and the French Revolution have given us a taste for Freedom. We have no wish to return to the pre-industrial age.

Socialism has helped us understand the importance of social justice for all.

Freedom and social security are reliable values: acquired rights we have no wish to go without.

The 20th Century presents us with a new challenge. Do the old political currents possess a political vision and a philosophy fit for this new century?

Vivant's Programme has such a vision, for it is a programme built up around the individual, and indispensable for strengthening what has already been gained and for continuing to evolve towards new paths...

In short, it is a **humanistic, democratic, progressive programme for tomorrow's Europe.**

*Politics is the art of living together,
of making available what the greatest number needs.*

In this case, can politics bring happiness, more happiness, to everyone?

Personal happiness is not a product of politics; everyone retains responsibility for his/her own. But in order to attain this happiness sufficient opportunities and means must be available. It is these opportunities that Vivant wants to see more of.

At Vivant we want everyone to feel both free and liberated. We do not want our life space to be circumscribed by complicated inscrutable laws and regulations. We want social security to be real and applicable to all.

Will all that make us happier?

Vivant wishes at least to create conditions which will satisfy basic needs and enable individuals to reach their potential. And that is the stuff of politics.

If the State is democratically invested with the rôle of REDISTRIBUTING WEALTH IN ANOTHER WAY, by guaranteeing to everyone an UNCONDITIONAL BASIC INCOME, there is every chance that our countries, as well as developing countries, will give priority to policies aimed at satisfying the needs of their populations, namely:

PHYSICAL NEEDS such as:

- food
- housing
- warmth
- health care
- clean air and drinking water
- freedom to travel;

MORAL NEEDS such as:

- security-serenity in life
- freedom of expression and choice of job, and work (personal choice of flexibility)
- happiness, joy, leisure, affection
- appreciation and personal fulfilment
- education
- justice
- participation in decision-making.

The primary aim of this philosophy is thus to allow people to attain a better quality of life. Too many people are still frequently faced with the same old problems, namely:

- how to satisfy hunger?
- how to find shelter?
- how to keep warm?
- how to get health care?
- etc...

The first thing such people need to be given, in order to benefit from life, is a bit more money. If we strengthen social security, more people will feel good. And, financially, it's possible – as we shall show below.

Vivant's philosophy is humanistic and realistic. It aims to bring about a new kind of political, economic and social behaviour which is concerned with the environment and which guarantees the future in the short term, the medium term and the long term.

This philosophy seeks to help people become autonomous, creative, cooperative citizens, imaginatively active and responsible, through the effects of a new organisation of society in tune with our Age.

To do that, are needed:

- social security which is stronger, more reliable and more equitable than that which exists today;
- individual freedom which is as great as possible for every one **of us and respectful of humankind and nature.**

That implies just and simplified legislation allowing:

1. Wealth distribution to take care of basic needs

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Art. 25

“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.”

In a society where robots manufacture our products and where food is produced in large quantities by a very small number of farm workers, it is not logical not to provide an automatic minimal income, a “Basic Income” to everyone. If the right to life is recognised how can one refuse the right to survive? Certain politicians have understood this for several decades: they have introduced the “minimum means of subsistence” (in France *Revenu Minimum d’Insertion* introduced by Michel Rocard). A vital income is therefore an acquired right in Belgium and France, but in practice too many are still excluded and this allowance limits individual freedom and the dignity of those who receive it.

THE ALLEGORY OF THE PATRIARCH

Once upon a time, long ago, there was a patriarch who owned fertile lands. One day he gathered together all the members of his large family and gave the following talk:

“My children, if our lands are to yield corn in abundance, they must be cultivated. And I need your hands for that. I need tillers, sowers, reapers, gleaners, winnowers, millers, etc... Share the work between you: one shall sow; another will bake bread; I will reward you according to your labour and we shall all benefit from what the lands yield.”

And it was so, and the family lived in harmony, everyone satisfying one’s hunger with the fruit of one’s labour.

Until the day when mechanisation had advanced and the patriarch acquired a tiller-sower, a combine harvester and other machines too.

The family came to see him:

“We no longer have to till the soil, nor sow, nor reap. Give us work so that, as before, we may earn the bread we eat.”

“How can you still be of use to me?” replied the patriarch. “My machines do the tilling and the reaping, and better and more quickly than you ever did; they don’t fall ill and I have yet to see them in a bad mood. Our lands yield 50% more than they did when you were working them.”

“Give us work so that we may feed our children, or we shall all die, for it is our work that gives us the means to live.”

The patriarch was a wise man, such as we should like to see today. He declared unto them:

“There was a time when I needed your hands so that our lands should yield grain, which our mills should grind so that the flour should be made into bread. At that time, I said unto you, I shall reward you according to your work. And it was good thus.

“But now our lands yield half as much again as when you worked them. Do you think I am so foolish as to continue to allow you to share our wealth according to work you no longer have to perform? Could I eat all the bread on my own? Shall I condemn my children to death? Should we return to the old system where you worked yourselves to death to produce less bread than today? Should I destroy my machines so that you should replace them? Rather, I declare this :

“The old equation of Work = Bread no longer holds. We simply share the wealth which costs us no effort to produce. Thus, my children, you will live freely. You who used to till yet so love to paint, give yourself up to your art and your paintings, which will beautify our homes; you who used to reap yet work with wood so well, make pieces of furniture for your pleasure and for ours.”

Jean-Claude Hubaut

(taken from “The Divine Condition” Ch. 2)

2. Individual freedom

We live today in a society of services and small industry, where small businesses must be given vital strength. These new “bosses” are not like those of big corporations. The difference between entrepreneur and employee should be merely one of choice of rôle. Yet today the differences, on the level of risk and responsibility, are huge.

The Vivant model aims at giving greater security to the self-employed entrepreneur, for the self-employed becomes the employee of her/his company and starts paying taxes only when the company makes a profit as a result of hiring an employee.

2.3. Social Security

We must therefore redesign the system of financing social security in tune with the type of society that is dawning . Since we wish to retain what has already been won, the State should provide a guarantee in those cases where small entrepreneurs might not be able to furnish this security to their employees.

2. POSITIVE CONSEQUENCES OF THE BASIC INCOME

1. Rationalisation and simplification of the present social security system with the corollary of reduced administrative costs.

2. Guaranteed subsistence for all – including those who are today excluded: parents at home, artists, self-employed, etc... The Basic Income is a better way of fighting insecurity, for it prevents it. And it does not preclude earnings from work.

3. Individualisation of social security: The Basic Income is given to the individual without regard to his/her family or personal situation, whom one lives with, what responsibilities one has, etc. Society was characterised, earlier, by stable employment usually given to the father of the

family; today society is one of unstable employment with an increased female workforce, in which all family members claim financial and psychological independence. The Basic Income represents a policy better adapted to such a society and recognises the undeniable dignity of each individual.

4. Recruitment incentives: Being able to receive both the Basic Income and a salary encourages the creation of jobs of low financial worth, but of high social value: the district nurse, the social welfare officer, home help for the incapacitated, etc.

5. Abolition of the unemployment trap: When welfare allowances are conditional, those out of work must find a job that is financially attractive before letting go of their unemployment benefit and taking up work again. When the Basic Income is unconditional and can be added to salary, even low salaries can give an acceptable total sum. Finding work and taking it up again is no longer penalised.

6. Reduction of the cost of labour and, in consequence:

- employers can more easily increase salaries,
- taking up a second activity is facilitated,
- firms will regain their competitiveness, above all internationally, without having to relocate,
- the addition of new activities, requiring the hiring of new staff, will no longer be hindered,
- better conditions for exporting will lead to improvement in the trade balance,
- job creation will occur without the need for State intervention.

3. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE VIVANT PROGRAMME

1. There are no more unemployed, for registering as such is abolished. The notion of being “out of work” disappears. Whether one works or not, everyone will be entitled to a Basic Income, whereas today to work is one of the essential conditions for entitlement to a pension, to sickness insurance and to social recognition.

Vivant considers that the OBLIGATION TO WORK is out of date.

Our farmers and factories have become so productive that society can afford to abolish the obligation to work. If, today, the poor are still with us, *it is only because wealth is ill distributed.*

2. Social security for all citizens, not only for those who have worked, but also for those who have officially worked too little, or never.

The rights to an income, to elementary health care and to shelter will become constitutional rights, so that none need fear for the future.

3. There will be no more serious poverty, for all citizens will receive an income whether they work or not. In addition, free board and lodging will be available for anyone in difficulties.

Vivant thinks that a social material modicum should be a **definitive social right** like other democratic rights.

4. Personal fulfilment: artists who want to do art, sports enthusiasts who want to devote themselves to sport, parents who want to spend more time with their children... Vivant will make it easier.

Studies will be accessible free to people of any age.

The Basic Income will be the same in case of interruption of employment, be it voluntary or involuntary. The fear of losing one's job will be diminished. This will increase the employee's autonomy at work. People will more easily seek a job that they appreciate: thus many more people will find pleasure in their work.

5. To earn a lot of money through hard work again becomes officially possible, without trickery or suffering disapproval.

Tax on income from labour is today so high that it is no longer possible to become rich through hard work.

With Vivant, those who work a lot will earn a lot.

Tax on labour is abolished for low and medium incomes.

(No tax below € 1,250 net, Basic Income included.)

6. Services will become cheap. Those who offer individual services in their neighbourhood will be able to do so at a low price and thus, with the Basic Income, have a comfortable income level, which is not taxed up to €1,250.

Income tax, social charges and any other taxation of such services being abolished, the concept of "working black" no longer applies at this level.

The population will therefore be able to buy such services.

7. Vivant will abolish social exclusion, which is the major cause of criminality.

Since everyone will have a basic income, the need for money can no longer be a reason or a pretext for petty thefts and break-ins. For Vivant, no criminality can be tolerated. The police and judicial services will efficiently and responsibly fight what criminality is left.

8. With Vivant, there will be no more "favours". Rights will be the same for everyone, and the laws clear. The support of political friends will no longer be necessary.

Subsidies to companies are abolished. The role of the State in the economy will just be to put in place the system described above. Politicians will no longer be in a position to grant favours to companies or individuals; and there will be fewer opportunities for corruption.

9. For pensions, we are in favour of the distribution system and against the capitalisation system (favoured by PRL, CVP, VLD and Vlaams Blok), precisely in order to avoid what is called asset inflation – *financial bubbles*.

In the Vivant model, those who are working, and those who are not, both finance the pensions, through their consumption, in real time.

Of course, people remain free to save and try to create a supplementary pension for themselves. The need for this will diminish when our basic pensions can rise and when people feel happier about the future.

10. Vivant is in favour of a new socio-economic policy.

It is opposed to a Welfare State that keeps citizens in an **assistance trap**. On the contrary, it is in favour of their having greater freedom to decide for themselves about their lives – professionally, for their families, culturally, religiously, etc...

4. THE ENVIRONMENT

Pollution is one of the biggest problems of our time. The increasing prosperity of the rich countries and the continual increase of the population over the last hundred years have brought about large

changes in the nature and the environment of the whole world. These changes are taking place at an increasing rate, cause inestimable damage and jeopardise future generations' quality of life more and more. In order to redress the situation, more is needed than a few ecological measures. Since the ecological equilibrium is a planetary problem, measures must be applied on a world scale.

Mentalities therefore have to change radically. Life in society must evolve to allow the environment to heal and to become able to support our necessary activities in the future. **This is what is called durable development.** In the meantime, before mentalities have changed, and in order to avoid the worst, the environment must be treated as a “**rare commodity**” in economics. **In other words, a price based on durable development must be affixed to the use of raw materials, air, water, the earth and space.** A rational politics of the environment must be elaborated by the specialists in collaboration with the people concerned, i.e. the population. Vivant supports safeguard measures such as environment tax, energy tax, tax on CO₂ emissions and on traffic, levied according to the principle that the polluter pays. As far as possible, these levies and taxes will be integrated into the VAT system (STC).