
Foreword: jobs and income: Sumner M. Rosen's lifetime commitment to true full employment, workplace democracy, and environmental sustainability

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Biographical notes: Mathew Forstater is Associate Professor and Director, Centre for Full Employment and Price Stability, Department of Economics, University of Missouri – Kansas City. Forstater has published widely on employment policy, political economy and the history of economic thought in academic journals and is co-editor of six books, including (with Pavlina R. Tcherneva) *Full Employment and Price Stability: The Macroeconomic Vision of William S. Vickrey* (Edward Elgar, 2004). His articles include 'Visions and scenarios: Heilbroner's worldly philosophy, Lowe's political economics, and the methodology of ecological economics' (*Ecological Economics*, Vol. 51, Nos. 1–2, pp.17–30, 2004); (with Warren Mosler) 'The natural rate of interest is zero' (*Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp.535–542, May 2005); 'Taxation and primitive accumulation' (*Research in Political Economy*, Vol. 22, pp.51–64, 2005); and 'Bones for sale: "development", environment and food security in East Africa' (*Review of Political Economy*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp.47–67, 2002).

This special issue of the *International Journal of Environment, Workplace and Employment (IJEWE)* on job and income guarantees is dedicated to the life and work of Sumner Rosen, who passed away peacefully in his home on 17 August 2005 at the age of 82. Rosen was a courageous warrior for economic and environmental sustainability; full employment and workplace democracy; living wages and the abolition of poverty; and human rights and social justice.

Rosen was born in Boston in 1923. He served in World War II, graduated *magna cum laude* and Phi Beta Kappa with a degree in economics from Harvard, and received a PhD from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for his 1959 doctoral dissertation on *Labor in Turkey's Economic Development* (Rosen, 1959). He had a long and distinguished career as an academic, teaching social welfare policy at Columbia University's School of Social Work. Following his retirement from Columbia in 1993, Rosen redoubled his efforts, becoming Vice Chair of the National Jobs for All Coalition,

a research and advocacy organisation that has been committed since 1994 to restoring authentic full employment as a national and global policy priority. Rosen also was a founding member of The Five Borough Institute, a research and educational organisation devoted to implementing progressive public policies. Among his many important publications, Rosen's (1968; 1975) *Keynes without Gadflies* was included in an important collection of critical political economy, and his excellent edited volume, *Economic Power Failure* remains both a record of an important time and a relevant reference of progressive social analysis.

It is highly appropriate for this special issue of *IJEWE* to be dedicated to Rosen, for at least three reasons: *IJEWE*'s focus on not only employment, but also the workplace and the environment reflects Rosen's own agenda; Rosen was active in the struggle for full employment and economic justice around the globe, including both the United States and Australia, and served as a mentor to a number of the authors included in the symposium and the institutes with which they are affiliated, including the Center for Full Employment and Price Stability (C-FEPS) at the University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) and the Centre for Full Employment and Equity (CofFEE) at the University of Newcastle, Australia; and, finally, job and income guarantees were at the heart of Rosen's vision of a decent society.

One may make a distinction among supporters of full employment between those with a narrower agenda almost exclusively focused on the full employment goal and others who view full employment as the centerpiece of a social policy programme with a number of supplementary and complementary policy objectives. Rosen's long-time concern with not only the quantity, but also the quality of jobs, and his position that true economic prosperity must be environmentally sustainable, for example, clearly place him among the latter crowd. In a 1996 article in the *Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science*, Rosen (1996, p.33) argued that:

"The ecological imperative is relevant because it includes the conservation of community and human bonds; they need to be protected against the destructive effects of rapid economic change executed without regard to the livelihoods at stake and the risks posed to society by erosion or elimination of the basis of livelihood. While popular opinion often poses jobs and environmental protection in opposition to one another, more careful analysis supports the view that, as in conversion from military to civilian use, ecological values are fully consistent with steady job creation."

Rosen's emphasis on the individual and community in society and nature reflects his complex interdisciplinary analysis supporting the position that 'sustainable development' need not be an oxymoron.

Rosen always emphasised the connection between full employment and workplace democracy. In what may be his last publication, an edited transcription of the opening speech given at the *Third Path to Full Employment Conference* organised and hosted by the Centre for Full Employment and Equity (CofFEE) at the University of Newcastle, Rosen articulated the issues at stake, namely that:

"... the realisation of full employment is critical if the working class is to be provided with strong protection against the risk of job loss, employer power in the work place, the insecurity that arises from rapid, incessant and systematic economic change, technological innovation, and changes in the organisation and geographic distribution of work." (Carlson *et al.*, 2002, p.17)

Rosen (1996, p.28) typically imparted his years of accumulated wisdom to those of us newer to the battle for economic justice with simple, but spot-on aphorisms, which he always humbly attributed to their source of origin. On the link between full employment and the workplace, he would remark that AFL-CIO President George Meany used to say that “the length of the list of demands inside the plant depend[s] directly on the length of the line outside”.

Rosen gave his keynote speech at the *CofFEE Conference* in Australia in December, 2001 (Carlson *et al.*, 2002; Rosen, 2002). He also served as a mentor and advisor to the Center for Full Employment and Price Stability (C-FEPS) at UMKC, and was an active participant in its activities from its founding in 1997 until the end of his life (Warner *et al.*, 2000; Rosen, 2000). Rosen (1993) was also a long-time colleague of Harvey (1989), and reviewed Harvey's 1989 book, *Securing the Right to Employment*, in a rare, exceptional book review article in *Monthly Review*.

Job and income guarantees were at the heart of Rosen's vision for economic and social justice; one might say that one or both may be viewed as a precondition for a decent society in the 21st century, certainly within the context of a contemporary capitalist economy. While in some ways, more recently, employment and income maintenance have been pitted against one another in a debate about which is ‘better’, Rosen came from a generation that saw the two as complements rather than substitutes (see *e.g.*, Lampman, 1976). Following World War II, with the lessons learned from the New Deal, and until the onset of the Reagan-Thatcher era, a variety of public service employment schemes and incomes policies were on the table, and it would have been virtually unthinkable in the period roughly from the mid-1960s through the late 1970s that one or both would not be a reality in the near future. In a 3 December 1966 reply to Senator Robert F. Kennedy's letter requesting suggestions for legislative ideas for the 90th US Congress, economist and author Robert L. Heilbroner wrote that “I have no doubt that some form of minimum income will become a reality within the next decade.” Many proposals from that time included both job and income guarantees of some sort, for example, ‘The Freedom Budget’ proposed by the A. Philip Randolph Institute (1966). The Freedom Budget included in its proposal a government-sponsored job guarantee for those willing and able to work, a guaranteed income for those who cannot or should not be working, and an increase in the minimum wage to lift the ‘working poor’ and their families out of poverty (A. Philip Randolph Institute, 1966).

Rosen (1996, p.41) proposed what he called ‘a new synthesis’ in the approach to work and income:

“Social policy creates a semantic dichotomy between earned income and transfer payments; the first ranks higher, the second is vulnerable, especially for those deemed the unworthy poor. This dichotomy needs to be healed. People at all economic levels and at each stage of life need and deserve freedom to choose what combination of work in the labor market and work outside best meets their needs and those of their families and communities.”

Both sides of the current debate reflected in this symposium would do well to consider Rosen's subtle insights gleaned over years of hard work at the forefront of the struggle for economic opportunity and prosperity for all. There is no doubt, however, about Rosen's insistence that job creation must be at the centre of progressive social policy. That said, it is also clear that Rosen's vision of public service employment is one that can serve as a vehicle for progressive social policy, including redefining

what constitutes valuable work, so that a Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) proposal that includes community service, education, and child-rearing and work in the home is virtually indistinguishable from the Job Guarantee (JG) with the necessary exceptions from a work requirement and a variety of activities that are regarded as valid employment (Forstater, 2001):

“The opportunity to get and hold paid work remains the preferred life destiny of most and deserves pride of place in our economic and social policies. The routes into and out of this role need to be multiplied. Alternative ways of meeting one’s responsibilities to self, family, and society by appropriate combinations of earnings and income support need to be treated as equally important in our continuing analysis and transformation of our labor market policies and programs.” 1996, pp.41–42)

Rosen was a remarkable role model for many heterodox social scientists and political activists – and he demonstrated, by living example and not empty rhetoric, that one could be both at the same time. Despite considerable political obstacles, he never lost hope for a better day ahead, and when any of us expressed pessimism, he would characteristically say, “E.F. Schumacher once wrote: ‘We never know when the winds of change will blow but when they do we must always have our sails at the ready’” (Rosen, 2002, p.181). Sumner spent many good years at the helm; he will be remembered fondly, and sorely missed.

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