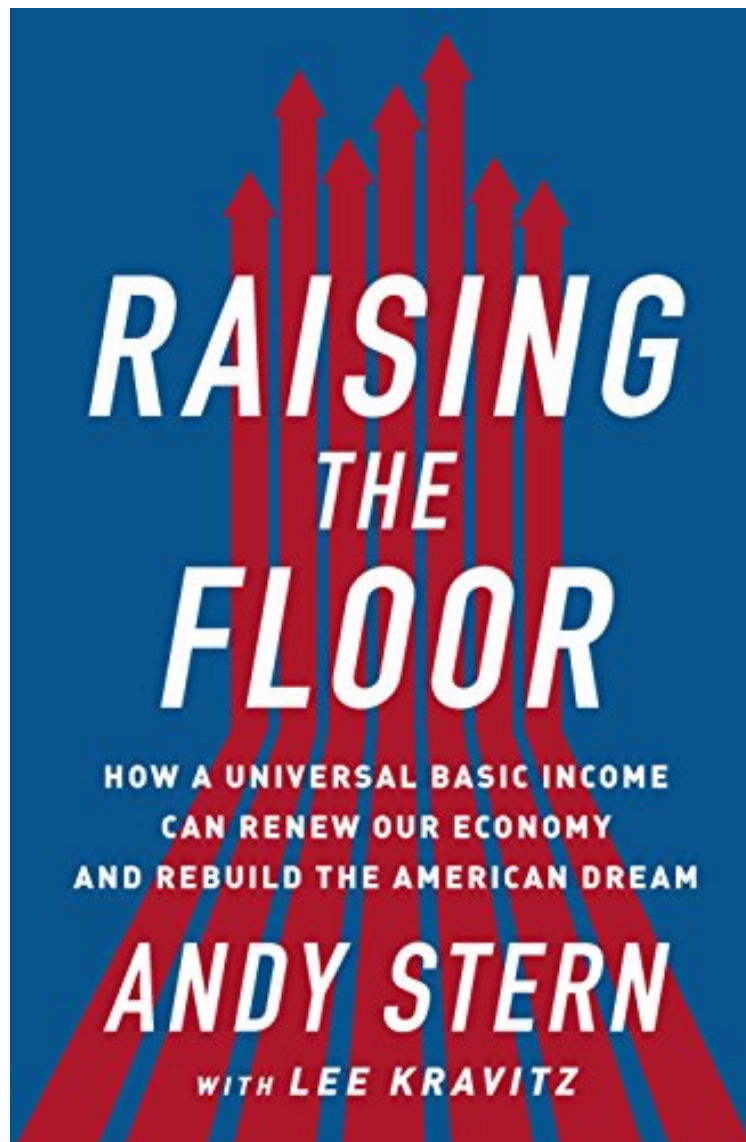


[Library ebook] Raising the Floor: How a Universal Basic Income Can Renew Our Economy and Rebuild the American Dream

## **Raising the Floor: How a Universal Basic Income Can Renew Our Economy and Rebuild the American Dream**

*Andy Stern*

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**Andy Stern : Raising the Floor: How a Universal Basic Income Can Renew Our Economy and Rebuild the American Dream** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Raising the Floor: How a Universal Basic Income Can Renew Our Economy and Rebuild the American Dream:

12 of 13 people found the following review helpful. Stern has given us a groundbreaking analysis of the catastrophic

disappearance of work in America and a radical solution

By Michael J. Bader

Andy Stern, former President of the Service Employees International Union, has always been a visionary. When I worked as a consultant to SEIU in the early years of the millenium, he asked our interdisciplinary team of change agents to help him re-envision the way a union Local operates, to help empower leaders and to shift from defense to offense, to view their mission as broader and bolder than collective bargaining. He was looking for a paradigm change because he could see that the union movement was shrinking and would be even more imperiled in the future. He anticipated future trends and was open to radical new ideas. He even led his union OUT of the AFL-CIO because of it. He takes this sensibility into his new book, *Raising the Floor*. The argument he makes is simple but compelling. With the rapid explosion of technological progress and the digitalization of work, we are faced in the near future the possibility that upwards to 47% of current jobs will be eliminated. He discusses at length the uncoupling of wages and jobs from economic growth (stagnant wages and the "jobless recovery"), the meteoric rise of so-called contingent work (freelance, temp, 1099, piecework, entrepreneurial, etc.) to currently constitute 34% of today's workforce, and the race to the bottom for American workers as a result of globalization as even college graduates nowadays are no longer able to expect a "wage premium" by virtue of their degree. Automation is taking away jobs or components of jobs of the skilled as well as the unskilled, the college grad as well as the high school dropout.. The trend is gaining speed so that we are at an "inflection point" of seeing a progressive and catastrophic loss of jobs, the demeaning of work, and the descent of millions of Americans into economic insecurity and frank poverty. Traditional liberal solutions like a stronger safety net and/or raising the minimum wage are insufficient holding actions. He argues for a Universal Basic Income--a cash payment to each and every American regardless of what they do -- or don't do--for it as the only thing that makes sense in a world in which the traditional employer-based job is disappearing and freelance contingent work is becoming the (unreliable) norm. He spells out how it would work and begins to sketch out how to get it enacted. It appeals to conservatives because it gets rid of welfare as we know it (read the book for details) and liberals because it goes a long way to ending poverty. It also points toward a new American Dream in which, because one has basic economic security needs met, one can pursue ones dreams and passions in both private and public life, more freely.

Stern has done us a big favor with this book. I never really bought into the "automation will be the death of us" line until reading Stern's arguments and evidence carefully. Now I believe it. And I didn't really ever understand the mechanics of a Universal Basic Income, thinking it bizarrely unreasonable and political kryptonite until reading Stern's analysis how its appeal to the Right as well as the Left. Now I think it' should be at the top of our progressive agenda. Kudos to Stern and this terrific, readable, persuasive book!

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. An important book on an important topic. You are going to debate UBI -- and you will be smarter if you read this book first.

By Mark Twain

This is a good book by a great man on a very important topic. Your children will study Andy Stern as the most important labor leader in the 20th century. Cesar Chavez got the postage stamp, but Andy built a far bigger, stronger, and better labor union. He was not afraid to make enemies in doing this -- and he has acquired more than a few here in Southern California. This is the book that anyone who knows him would expect him to write on universal basic income: methodical, impassioned, with a clear point of view.

1. If you know the debate, you can just read Chapter 8, which is worth the price of the book. The first 2/3 of the book is prelude to this -- not a great structure. Andy probably made his kids wait for dessert, although in this case, chewing through seven chapters of broccoli is worth it.
2. Tasty though the veggies are, the prelude makes arguments that are not vital to the solution. Will technology create more jobs or wipe out more? Is employment becoming more fractured and contingent? Does college matter or not? There are intelligent people who support UBI on both sides of these debates. You may have a view, but you don't need one to engage in the UBI discussion, which attracts adherents and detractors left and right, optimist and pessimist, globalist and nationalist, labor market traditionalists and radicals, etc.
3. The book makes a stronger case for basic income than for universal basic income. Why, precisely, should the children of Bill Gates get \$1,000 per month from taxpayers? "Because it is too complicated to do it any other way" is not a super convincing answer.
4. As you might expect, Andy is at his best campaigning for bold new ideas. He runs a close second best when making the moral case for his policy. Third would be economics, which he uses instrumentally: a crutch not a flashlight. Fourth, by quite a bit, is technology, where he is easily gobsmacked (not always without reason, but always uncritically).
5. Like many public figures who have taken a deeply personal beating or ten, he really cannot write about himself, which is too bad. He has had a consequential and interesting life, played a key role in shaping Obamacare, built SEIU into America's biggest union, depending on how you keep score, and had the huevos to break with his mentor and split the AFL-CIO for good reason. Will unions take up the cause of UBI? Will Democrats? How does someone go from the Simpson Bowles commission on entitlement reform, to proposing a multi-trillion dollar entitlement? WTF was the point of the fight with UNITE? Waiting for the memoir.....

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. The Universal Basic Income time is coming

By David Mills

Andy Stern first reviews the personal and professional journey that has led him to this point, as a labor leader and more recently an investigator of the effect of modern technology on the American work force. The chart on page 30 really tells it all: The wages of the median American household has been FLAT since the mid 1970s while productivity has climbed! Chapter by chilling chapter, he details the trends. People no longer can depend on regular jobs, they work as freelancers, but here they compete with people from foreign countries

who (with much lower costs of living) can charge much less. A college education no longer means a useful career, more and more of our children cannot pay back college loans. Automation will wipe out most jobs within decades. Currently popular politicians - Trump, Sanders, are popular simply because people know that they are getting poorer while only the top few per cent are getting richer. He proposes a Universal Basic Income (UBI) of about \$1000 per month for each adult, total cost of \$2.7 trillion. This would be partly paid for by replacing every existing antipoverty program (food stamps, etc.), for a total of \$1 trillion. He says that the solutions currently proposed, e.g., minimum wages, college support, will be helpful only in the short term; in the long run, only a UBI will work as a structural solution to the problem of the lack of work for the average person in the digital age.

p.p1 {margin: 0.0px 0.0px 0.0px 0.0px; font: 12.0px 'Times New Roman'} p.p2 {margin: 0.0px 0.0px 0.0px 0.0px; font: 12.0px 'Times New Roman'; min-height: 15.0px } Raising the Floor confronts America's biggest economic challenge-the fundamental restructuring of the economy and the emerging disruptive technology that threaten secure jobs and income. Andy Stern convincingly shows why it is time to consider a universal basic income as the nation's twenty-first-century solution to increasing inequality. In 2010, troubled by watching families chase the now-elusive American Dream, Andy Stern began a five-year journey to investigate how technology will impact jobs and the future of work. Stern, formerly the head of the nation's most influential and fastest-growing union, the Service Employees International Union, investigated these issues with a wide range of CEOs, futurists, economists, workers, entrepreneurs, and investment bankers who are shaping the future. The sobering assessment that emerged from his research-across the political spectrum, from libertarians at the CATO Institute to the leaders of the progressive left-is that this time is different: there will be meager benefits that come with full-time work and fewer good jobs overall. Facing such a challenging moment, Stern's solution is fittingly bold: to establish a universal basic income by eliminating many current government programs and adding new resources. At once vivid, provocative, and pragmatic, Raising the Floor will spark a national conversation about creating the new American Dream.

"[Stern] does a solid job of making his case without waxing too wild-eyed....This is a book eminently worth talking about." --Kirkus s