Utopia for Realists: How We Can Build the Ideal World

Rutger Bregman

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A history of utopian thinking and a pragmatic manifesto for today, suffused with facts, success stories, and lively anecdotes, and advocating for a universal basic income, a 15-hour workweek, and open borders

Two-thirds of Americans report that they would take two extra weeks of vacation above two extra weeks of salary, and half of all business professionals report that their jobs offer no "meaning or significance." And after working all day at jobs we hate, we buy things we don't need. In UTOPIA FOR REALISTS, Dutch historian and journalist Rutger Bregman reminds us it needn't be this way. A manifesto full of intentionality and pragmatism, Bregman's book centers on three central utopic ideas: a 15-hour workweek, a "universal basic income", no strings attached, and open borders throughout the globe. Though the claims might seem fanciful at first, UTOPIA FOR REALISTS provides numerous examples of successful experiments with "free money", such as Mincome in 1970s Canada, and experiments in giving homeless people a financial foundation. The theory among detractors is that free money will make people be lazy and work less. But in fact, employment is necessary for virtually everyone's happiness.

As for the workweek, global studies show again and again that a shorter workweek contributes to lower stress, lower environmental impact, fewer work mistakes or accidents, lower gender inequality, and lower wealth inequality. Although the ideas here may sound impossible to some, Bregman argues that change begins with an idea--and we must be at the ready when we can no longer sustain our hyperproduction and consumption. In UTOPIA FOR REALISTS, Bregman shows us the most unrealistic economic system is the one we're already living in.

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