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# Quotes by Burke, Edmund

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The Right Honourable Edmund Burke (January 12, 1729 July 9, 1797) was an Anglo-Irish statesman, author, orator and political philosopher, who served for many years in the British House of Commons as a member of the Whig party. He is chiefly remembered for his support of the American colonies in the struggle against King George III that led to the American Revolution, as well as for his strong opposition to the French Revolution. The latter made Burke one of the leading figures within the conservative faction of the Whig party (which he dubbed the "Old Whigs"), in opposition to the pro-revolutionary "New Whigs," led by Charles James Fox. Burke also published philosophical work on aesthetics and founded the Annual Register, a political review. In his day he was considered one of the finest parliamentary orators in Britain.

Never despair, but if you do, work on in despair.

- Burke, Edmund

Under the pressure of the cares and sorrows of our mortal condition, men have at all times, and in all countries, called in some physical aid to their moral consolations -- wine, beer, opium, brandy, or tobacco.

- Burke, Edmund

Mere parsimony is not economy. Expense, and great expense, may be an essential part in true economy.

- Burke, Edmund

Frugality is founded on the principal that all riches have limits.

- Burke, Edmund

When the leaders choose to make themselves bidders at an auction of popularity, their talents, in the construction of the state, will be of no service. They will become flatterers instead of legislators; the instruments, not the guides, of the people.

- Burke, Edmund

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.

- Burke, Edmund

Example is the school of mankind, and they will learn at no other

- Burke, Edmund

It is the nature of all greatness not to be exact.

- Burke, Edmund

Passion for fame: A passion which is the instinct of all great souls.

- Burke, Edmund

No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear.

- Burke, Edmund

The objects of a financier are, then, to secure an ample revenue; to impose it with judgment and equality; to employ it economically; and, when necessity obliges him to make use of credit, to secure its foundations in that instance, and for ever, by the clearness and candor of his proceedings, the exactness of his calculations, and the solidity of his funds.

- Burke, Edmund

Flattery corrupts both the receiver and the giver.

- Burke, Edmund

The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again: and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered.

- Burke, Edmund

When ever a separation is made between liberty and justice, neither is safe.

- Burke, Edmund

When bad men combine, the good must associate; else they will fall, one by one, an

unpitied sacrifice in a contemptible struggle.

- Burke, Edmund

Ambition can creep as well as soar.

- Burke, Edmund

A people who are still, as it were, but in the gristle, and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood.

- Burke, Edmund

Young man, there is America, which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage men and uncouth manners.

- Burke, Edmund

Nothing turns out to be so oppressive and unjust as a feeble government.

- Burke, Edmund

The great must submit to the dominion of prudence and of virtue, or none will long submit to the dominion of the great.

- Burke, Edmund

Great men are the guideposts and landmarks in the state.

- Burke, Edmund

People will not look forward to posterity who will not look backward to their ancestors.

- Burke, Edmund

In this choice of inheritance we have given to our frame of polity the image of a relation in blood; binding up the constitution of our country with our dearest domestic ties; adopting our fundamental laws into the bosom of our family affections; keeping inseparable and cherishing with the warmth of all their combined and mutually reflected charities, our state, our hearths, our sepulchres, and our altars.

- Burke, Edmund

To innovate is not to reform.

- Burke, Edmund

People crushed by laws, have no hope but to evade power. If the laws are their enemies, they will be enemies to the law; and those who have much to hope and nothing to lose will always be dangerous.

- Burke, Edmund

Bad laws are the worst form of tyranny.

- Burke, Edmund

In effect, to follow, not to force the public inclination; to give a direction, a form, a technical

dress, and a specific sanction, to the general sense of the community, is the true end of legislature.

- Burke, Edmund

Laws, like houses, lean on one another.

- Burke, Edmund

There is but one law for all, namely that law which governs all law, the law of our Creator, the law of humanity, justice, equity -- the law of nature and of nations.

- Burke, Edmund

The true danger is when liberty is nibbled away, for expedience, and by parts.

- Burke, Edmund

Liberty must be limited in order to be possessed.

- Burke, Edmund

The people never give up their liberties, but under some delusion.

- Burke, Edmund

The effect of liberty to individuals is that they may do what they please: we ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risk congratulations.

- Burke, Edmund

We must not always judge of the generality of the opinion by the noise of the acclamation.

- Burke, Edmund

Nobility is a graceful ornament to the civil order. It is the Corinthian capital of polished society.

- Burke, Edmund

In the weakness of one kind of authority, and in the fluctuation of all, the officers of an army will remain for some time mutinous and full of faction, until some popular general, who understands the art of conciliating the soldiery, and who possesses the true spirit of command, shall draw the eyes of all men upon himself. Armies will obey him on his personal account. There is no other way of securing military obedience in this state of things.

- Burke, Edmund

In doing good, we are generally cold, and languid, and sluggish; and of all things afraid of being too much in the right. But the works of malice and injustice are quite in another style. They are finished with a bold, masterly hand; touched as they are with the spirit of those vehement passions that call forth all our energies, whenever we oppress and persecute.

- Burke, Edmund

Manners are of more importance than laws. Manners are what vex or soothe, corrupt or

purify, exalt or debase, barbarize or refine us, by a constant, steady, uniform, insensible operation, like that of the air we breathe in.

- Burke, Edmund

The tyranny of a multitude is a multiplied tyranny.

- Burke, Edmund

A nation is not conquered which is perpetually to be conquered.

- Burke, Edmund

Spain: A whale stranded upon the coast of Europe.

- Burke, Edmund

They defend their errors as if they were defending their inheritance.

- Burke, Edmund

He that wrestles with us strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper. This amicable conflict with difficulty helps us to an intimate acquaintance with our object, and compels us to consider it in all its relations. It will not suffer us to be superficial.

- Burke, Edmund

Good order is the foundation of all great things.

- Burke, Edmund

Parliament is not a congress of ambassadors from different and hostile interests; which interests each must maintain, as an agent and advocate, against other agents and advocates; but parliament is a deliberative assembly of one nation, with one interest, that of the whole; where, not local purposes, not local prejudices ought to guide, but the general good, resulting from the general reason of the whole. You choose a member indeed; but when you have chosen him, he is not a member of Bristol, but he is a member of parliament.

- Burke, Edmund

Our patience will achieve more than our force.

- Burke, Edmund

Patience will achieve more than force.

- Burke, Edmund

To make us love our country, our country ought to be lovely.

- Burke, Edmund

If the people are happy, united, wealthy, and powerful, we presume the rest. We conclude that to be good from whence good is derived.

- Burke, Edmund

By gnawing through a dike, even a rat may drown a nation.

- Burke, Edmund

I have never yet seen any plan which has not been mended by the observations of those who were much inferior in understanding to the person who took the lead in the business.

- Burke, Edmund

You can never plan the future by the past.

- Burke, Edmund

A disposition to preserve, and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman.

- Burke, Edmund

Circumstances give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing color and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind.

- Burke, Edmund

Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

- Burke, Edmund

Magnanimity in politics is not seldom the truest wisdom; and a great empire and little minds go ill together.

- Burke, Edmund

I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power.

- Burke, Edmund

Those who have been once intoxicated with power, and have derived any kind of emolument from it, even though but for one year, never can willingly abandon it. They may be distressed in the midst of all their power; but they will never look to anything but power for their relief.

- Burke, Edmund

Applaud us when we run, Console us when we fall, Cheer us when we recover.

- Burke, Edmund

A populace never rebels from passion for attack, but from impatience of suffering.

- Burke, Edmund

People must be taken as they are, and we should never try make them or ourselves better by quarreling with them.

- Burke, Edmund

Nothing is so fatal to religion as indifference which is, at least, half infidelity.

- Burke, Edmund

In the groves of their academy, at the end of every vista, you see nothing but the gallows.

- Burke, Edmund

Restraint and discipline and examples of virtue and justice. These are the things that form the education of the world.

- Burke, Edmund

When ancient opinions and rules of life are taken away, the loss cannot possibly be estimated. From that moment, we have no compass to govern us, nor can we know distinctly to what port to steer.

- Burke, Edmund

Early and provident fear is the mother of safety.

- Burke, Edmund

An event has happened, upon which it is difficult to speak, and impossible to be silent.

- Burke, Edmund

Whilst shame keeps its watch, virtue is not wholly extinguished in the heart; nor will

moderation be utterly exiled from the minds of tyrants.

- Burke, Edmund

Slavery is a weed that grows on every soil.

- Burke, Edmund

Society is indeed a contract. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

- Burke, Edmund

It is the interest of the commercial world that wealth should be found everywhere.

- Burke, Edmund

Whenever our neighbor's house is on fire, it cannot be amiss for the engines to play a little on our own.

- Burke, Edmund

We must all obey the great law of change. It is the most powerful law of nature.

- Burke, Edmund

A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.

- Burke, Edmund

Superstition is the religion of feeble minds.

- Burke, Edmund

Taxing is an easy business. Any projector can contrive new compositions, any bungler can add to the old.

- Burke, Edmund

To tax and to please, no more than to love and to be wise, is not given to men.

- Burke, Edmund

Toleration is good for all, or it is good for none.

- Burke, Edmund

There is a limit at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue.

- Burke, Edmund

Tyrants seldom want pretexts.

- Burke, Edmund

Kings will be tyrants from policy, when subjects are rebels from principle.

- Burke, Edmund

What ever disunites man from God, also disunites man from man.

- Burke, Edmund

If you can be well without health, you may be happy without virtue.

- Burke, Edmund

The yielding of the weak is the concession to fear.

- Burke, Edmund

It is, generally, in the season of prosperity that men discover their real temper, principles, and designs.

- Burke, Edmund

If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free. If our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed.

- Burke, Edmund

And having looked to government for bread, on the very first scarcity they will turn and bite the hand that fed them. To avoid that evil, government will redouble the causes of it; and then it will become inveterate and incurable.

- Burke, Edmund

The arrogance of age must submit to be taught by youth.

- Burke, Edmund

Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites; in proportion as their love to justice is above their rapacity; in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption; in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves.

- Burke, Edmund

It is a general popular error to suppose the loudest complainers for the public to be the most anxious for its welfare.

- Burke, Edmund

All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter.

- Burke, Edmund

Among a people generally corrupt, liberty cannot long exist.

- Burke, Edmund

I thought ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a

look that threatened her with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of sophists, economists and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is gone forever.

- Burke, Edmund

The first and simplest emotion which we discover in the human mind, is curiosity.

- Burke, Edmund

Custom reconciles us to everything.

- Burke, Edmund

It is undoubtedly the business of ministers very much to consult the inclinations of the people, but they ought to take great care that they do not receive that inclination from the few persons who may happen to approach them.

- Burke, Edmund

Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants. Men have a right that these wants should be provided for by this wisdom.

- Burke, Edmund

If any ask me what a free government is, I answer, that, for any practical purpose, it is what the people think so, and that they, and not I, are the natural, lawful, and competent judges of this matter.

- Burke, Edmund

There is a courageous wisdom; there is also a false, reptile prudence, the result not of caution but of fear.

- Burke, Edmund

What is it we all seek for in an election? To answer its real purposes, you must first possess the means of knowing the fitness of your man; and then you must retain some hold upon him by personal obligation or dependence.

- Burke, Edmund

Education is the cheap defence of nations.

- Burke, Edmund

Contempt is not a thing to be despised.

- Burke, Edmund

I cannot conceive how any man can have brought himself to that pitch of presumption, to consider his country as nothing but *carte blanche*, upon which he may scribble whatever he pleases.

- Burke, Edmund

Certainly, Gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication

with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him; their opinions high respect; their business unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs, and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own. But his unbiased opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. These he does not derive from your pleasure, no, nor from the law and the Constitution. They are a trust from Providence, for the abuse of which he is deeply answerable. Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

- Burke, Edmund

Tell me what are the prevailing sentiments that occupy the minds of your young men, and I will tell you what is to be the character of the next generation.

- Burke, Edmund

I venture to say no war can be long carried on against the will of the people.

- Burke, Edmund

To please universally was the object of his life; but to tax and to please, no more than to love and to be wise, is not given to men.

- Burke, Edmund

But a good patriot, and a true politician, always considers how he shall make the most of the existing materials of his country. A disposition, to preserve, and an ability to improve,

taken together, would be my standard of a statesman. Everything else is vulgar in the conception, perilous in the execution.

- Burke, Edmund

[Society] is a partnership in all science, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

- Burke, Edmund

Politics and the pulpit are terms that have little agreement. No sound ought to be heard in the church but the healing voice of Christian charity. The cause of civil liberty and civil government gains as little as that of religion by this confusion of duties. Those who quit their proper character to assume what does not belong to them are, for the greater part, ignorant both of the character they leave and of the character they assume.

- Burke, Edmund

A conscientious man would be cautious how he dealt in blood.

- Burke, Edmund

Fraud and prevarication are servile vices. They sometimes grow out of the necessities, always out of the habits, of slavish and degenerate spirits. It is an erect countenance, it is a firm adherence to principle, it is a power of resisting false shame and frivolous fear, that assert our good faith and honor, and assure to us the confidence of mankind.

- Burke, Edmund

The true danger is when liberty is nibbled away, for expedients, and by parts.

- Burke, Edmund

That the greatest security of the people, against the encroachments and usurpations of their superiors, is to keep the Spirit of Liberty constantly awake, is an undeniable truth.

- Burke, Edmund

Men are qualified for civil liberty in exact proportion to their disposition to put moral chains upon their own appetites, in proportion as their love to justice is above their rapacity, in proportion as their soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption, in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and good, in preference to the flattery of knaves. Society cannot exist, unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters.

- Burke, Edmund

The distinguishing part of our Constitution is its liberty. To preserve that liberty inviolate seems the particular duty and proper trust of a member of the House of Commons. But the liberty, the only liberty, I mean is a liberty connected with order: that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them. It inheres in good and steady government, as in its substance and vital principle.

- Burke, Edmund

In all forms of government the people is the true legislator.

- Burke, Edmund

I did not obey your instructions. No. I conformed to the instructions of truth and Nature, and maintained your interest, against your opinions, with a constancy that became me. A representative worthy of you ought to be a person of stability. I am to look, indeed, to your opinions, but to such opinions as you and I must have five years hence. I was not to look to the flash of the day. I knew that you chose me, in my place, along with others, to be a pillar of the state, and not a weathercock on the top of the edifice, exalted for my levity and versatility, and of no use but to indicate the shiftings of every fashionable gale.

- Burke, Edmund

Justice is itself the great standing policy of civil society; and any eminent departure from it, under any circumstances, lies under the suspicion of being no policy at all.

- Burke, Edmund

All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing

- Burke, Edmund





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