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Quotes by Ehrenreich, Barbara

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There seems to be no stopping drug frenzy once it takes hold of a nation. What starts with an innocuous HUGS, NOT DRUGS bumper sticker soon leads to wild talk of shooting dealers and making urine tests a condition for employment -- anywhere.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

The secret of the truly successful, I believe, is that they learned very early in life how not to be busy. They saw through that adage, repeated to me so often in childhood, that anything worth doing is worth doing well. The truth is, many things are worth doing only in the most slovenly, halfhearted fashion possible, and many other things are not worth doing at all.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Natural selection, as it has operated in human history, favors not only the clever but the murderous.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Exercise is the yuppie version of bulimia.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

When the Somalians were merely another hungry third world people, we sent them guns. Now that they are falling down dead from starvation, we send them troops. Some may see in this a tidy metaphor for the entire relationship between north and south. But it would make a whole lot more sense nutritionally -- as well as providing infinitely more vivid viewing -- if the Somalians could be persuaded to eat the troops.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

The feminist anti-pornography movement, no less than the feminist movement of a century ago, encourages the assumption that male and female sexuality, and possibly morality, are as unlike as yin and yang.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Upscale people are fixated with food simply because they are now able to eat so much of it without getting fat, and the reason they don't get fat is that they maintain a profligate level of calorie expenditure. The very same people whose evenings begin with melted goats cheese... get up at dawn to run, break for a mid-morning aerobics class, and watch the evening news while racing on a stationary bicycle.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

That's free enterprise, friends: freedom to gamble, freedom to lose. And the great thing -- the truly democratic thing about it -- is that you don't even have to be a player to lose.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

A free-enterprise economy depends only on markets, and according to the most advanced mathematical macroeconomic theory, markets depend only on moods: specifically, the mood of the men in the pinstripes, also known as the Boys on the Street. When the Boys are in a good mood, the market thrives; when they get scared or sullen, it is time for each one of us to look into the retail apple business.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

We who officially value freedom of speech above life itself seem to have nothing to talk about but the weather.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

From the point of view of the pharmaceutical industry, the AIDS problem has already been solved. After all, we already have a drug which can be sold at the incredible price of \$8,000 an annual dose, and which has the added virtue of not diminishing the market by actually curing anyone.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Personally, I can't see why it would be any less romantic to find a husband in a nice four-color catalogue than in the average downtown bar at happy hour.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Anyone who has invented a better mousetrap, or the contemporary equivalent, can expect to be harassed by strangers demanding that you read their unpublished manuscripts or undergo the humiliation of public speaking, usually on remote Midwestern campuses.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

There is the fear, common to all English-only speakers, that the chief purpose of foreign languages is to make fun of us. Otherwise, you know, why not just come out and say it?

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

The label of liberalism is hardly a sentence to public ignominy: otherwise Bruce Springsteen would still be rehabilitating used Cadillacs in Asbury Park and Jane Fonda, for all we know, would be just another overweight housewife.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Marriage is socialism among two people.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Someone has to stand up for wimps.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Considering the absence of legal coercion, the surprising thing is that men have for so long, and, on the whole, so reliably, adhered to what we might call the breadwinner ethic.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Given the cultural barriers to intersex conversation, the amazing thing is that we would even expect women and men to have anything to say to each other for more than ten

minutes at a stretch. The barriers are ancient -- perhaps rooted, as some paleontologist may soon discover, in the contrast between the occasional guttural utterances exchanged in male hunting bands and the extended discussions characteristic of female food-gathering groups.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Upscale young men seem to go for the kind of woman who plays with a full deck of credit cards, who won't cry when she's knocked to the ground while trying to board the six o'clock Eastern shuttle, and whose schedule doesn't allow for a sexual encounter lasting more than twelve minutes.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

No culture on earth outside of mid-century suburban America has ever deployed one woman per child without simultaneously assigning her such major productive activities as weaving, farming, gathering, temple maintenance, and tent-building. The reason is that full-time, one-on-one child-raising is not good for women or children.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Take motherhood: nobody ever thought of putting it on a moral pedestal until some brash feminists pointed out, about a century ago, that the pay is lousy and the career ladder nonexistent.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

No matter that patriotism is too often the refuge of scoundrels. Dissent, rebellion, and

all-around hell-raising remain the true duty of patriots.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Heads of state are notoriously ill prepared for their mature careers; think of Adolf Hitler (landscape painter), Ho Chi Minh (seaman), and our own Ronald Reagan.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

My Turn is the distilled bathwater of Mrs. Reagan's life. It is for the most part sweetish, with a tart edge of rebuke, but disappointingly free of dirt or particulate matter of any kind.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Those Romans who perpetrated the rape of the Sabines, for example, did not work themselves up for the deed by screening Debbie Does Dallas, and the monkish types who burned a million or so witches in the Middle Ages had almost certainly not come across Boobs and Buns or related periodicals.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

If men were equally at risk from this condition -- if they knew their bellies might swell as if they were suffering from end-stage cirrhosis, that they would have to go nearly a year without a stiff drink, a cigarette, or even an aspirin, that they would be subject to fainting spells and unable to fight their way onto commuter trains -- then I am sure that pregnancy would be classified as a sexually transmitted disease and abortions would be no more controversial than emergency appendectomies.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Surely there must be some way to find a husband or, for that matter, merely an escort, without sacrificing one's privacy, self-respect, and interior decorating scheme. For example, men could be imported from the developing countries, many parts of which are suffering from a man excess, at least in relation to local food supply.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Thus will the fondest dream of Phallic science be realized: a pristine new planet populated entirely by little boy clones of great scientific entrepreneurs free to smash atoms, accelerate particles, or, if they are so moved, build pyramids -- without any social relevance or human responsibility at all.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

In sci-fi convention, life-forms that hadn't developed space travel were mere prehistory -- horse-shoe crabs of the cosmic scene -- and something of the humiliation of being stuck on a provincial planet in a galactic backwater has stayed with me ever since.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

It seems to me that there must be an ecological limit to the number of paper pushers the earth can sustain, and that human civilization will collapse when the number of, say, tax lawyers exceeds the world's total population of farmers, weavers, fisherpersons, and pediatric nurses.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

So why do people keep on watching? The answer, by now, should be perfectly obvious: we love television because television brings us a world in which television does not exist. In fact, deep in their hearts, this is what the spuds crave most: a rich, new, participatory life.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

In economics, we borrowed from the Bourbons; in foreign policy, we drew on themes fashioned by the nomad warriors of the Eurasian steppes. In spiritual matters, we emulated the braying intolerance of our archenemies, the Shite fundamentalists.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

If that's how it all started, then we might as well face the fact that what's left out there is a great deal of shrapnel and a whole bunch of cinders (one of which is, fortunately, still hot enough and close enough to be good for tanning).

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

America is addicted to wars of distraction.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Personally, I have nothing against work, particularly when performed, quietly and unobtrusively, by someone else. I just don't happen to think it's an appropriate subject for an ethic.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Some of us still get all weepy when we think about the Gaia Hypothesis, the idea that earth is a big furry goddess-creature who resembles everybody's mom in that she knows what's best for us. But if you look at the historical record -- Krakatoa, Mt. Vesuvius, Hurricane Charley, poison ivy, and so forth down the ages -- you have to ask yourself: Whose side is she on, anyway?

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

The one regret I have about my own abortions is that they cost money that might otherwise have been spent on something more pleasurable, like taking the kids to movies and theme parks.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

A child is not a salmon mousse. A child is a temporarily disabled and stunted version of a larger person, whom you will someday know. Your job is to help them overcome the disabilities associated with their size and inexperience so that they get on with being that larger person.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Imagine spending four billion years stocking the oceans with seafood, filling the ground with fossil fuels, and drilling the bees in honey production -- only to produce a race of bed-wetters!

- Ehrenreich, Barbara

Crime seems to change character when it crosses a bridge or a tunnel. In the city, crime

is taken as emblematic of class and race. In the suburbs, though, it's intimate and psychological -- resistant to generalization, a mystery of the individual soul.

- Ehrenreich, Barbara



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