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# Quotes by Galbraith, John Kenneth

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An important antidote to American democracy is American gerontocracy. The positions of eminence and authority in Congress are allotted in accordance with length of service, regardless of quality. Superficial observers have long criticized the United States for making a fetish of youth. This is unfair. Uniquely among modern organs of public and private administration, its national legislature rewards senility.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

When people put their ballots in the boxes, they are, by that act, inoculated against the feeling that the government is not theirs. They then accept, in some measure, that its errors are their errors, its aberrations their aberrations, that any revolt will be against them. It's a remarkably shrewd and rather conservative arrangement when one thinks of it.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

There are few ironclad rules of diplomacy but to one there is no exception. When an official reports that talks were useful, it can safely be concluded that nothing was accomplished.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

In economics the majority is always wrong.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

In economics, hope and faith coexist with great scientific pretension and also a deep desire for respectability.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

In the usual (though certainly not in every) public decision on economic policy, the choice is between courses that are almost equally good or equally bad. It is the narrowest decisions that are most ardently debated. If the world is lucky enough to enjoy peace, it may even one day make the discovery, to the horror of doctrinaire free-enterprisers and doctrinaire planners alike, that what is called capitalism and what is called socialism are both capable of working quite well.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The enemy of the conventional wisdom is not ideas but the march of events.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

More die in the United States from too much food than from too little.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The great dialectic in our time is not, as anciently and by some still supposed, between capital and labor; it is between economic enterprise and the state.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

It would be foolish to suggest that government is a good custodian of aesthetic goals. But, there is no alternative to the state.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The contented and economically comfortable have a very discriminating view of government. Nobody is ever indignant about bailing out failed banks and failed savings and loans associations. But when taxes must be paid for the lower middle class and poor, the government assumes an aspect of wickedness.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Among all the world's races, some obscure Bedouin tribes possibly apart, Americans are the most prone to misinformation. This is not the consequence of any special preference for mendacity, although at the higher levels of their public administration that tendency is impressive. It is rather that so much of what they themselves believe is wrong.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

In any great organization it is far, far safer to be wrong with the majority than to be right alone.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

All of the great leaders have had one characteristic in common: it was the willingness to confront unequivocally the major anxiety of their people in their time. This, and not much else, is the essence of leadership.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Much literary criticism comes from people for whom extreme specialization is a cover for either grave cerebral inadequacy or terminal laziness, the latter being a much cherished aspect of academic freedom.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

There is something wonderful in seeing a wrong-headed majority assailed by truth.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Meetings are a great trap. Soon you find yourself trying to get agreement and then the people who disagree come to think they have a right to be persuaded. However, they are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Money is a singular thing. It ranks with love as man's greatest source of joy. And with death as his greatest source of anxiety. Over all history it has oppressed nearly all people in one of two ways: either it has been abundant and very unreliable, or reliable and very scarce.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Money differs from an automobile or mistress in being equally important to those who have it and those who do not.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Once the visitor was told rather repetitively that this city was the melting pot; never before in history had so many people of such varied languages, customs, colors and culinary habits lived so amicably together. Although New York remains peaceful by most standards, this self-congratulation is now less often heard, since it was discovered some years ago that racial harmony depended unduly on the willingness of the blacks (and latterly the Puerto Ricans) to do for the other races the meanest jobs at the lowest wages and then to return to live by themselves in the worst slums.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

It is a far, far better thing to have a firm anchor in nonsense than to put on the troubled seas of thought.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Any consideration of the life and larger social existence of the modern corporate man begins and also largely ends with the effect of one all-embracing force. That is organization -- the highly structured assemblage of men, and now some women, of which he is a part. It is to this, at the expense of family, friends, sex, recreation and sometimes health and effective control of alcoholic intake, that he is expected to devote his energies.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Man, at least when educated, is a pessimist. He believes it safer not to reflect on his achievements; Jove is known to strike such people down.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

We all agree that pessimism is a mark of superior intellect.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

We now in the United States have more security guards for the rich than we have police services for the poor districts. If you're looking for personal security, far better to move to the suburbs than to pay taxes in New York.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

There are times in politics when you must be on the right side and lose.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Politics is not the art of the possible. It consists in choosing between the disastrous and the unpalatable.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Nothing is so admirable in politics as a short memory.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

In the United States, though power corrupts, the expectation of power paralyzes.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Few can believe that suffering, especially by others, is in vain. Anything that is disagreeable must surely have beneficial economic effects.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

All successful revolutions are the kicking in of a rotten door. The violence of revolutions is the violence of men who charge into a vacuum.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Of all classes the rich are the most noticed and the least studied.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

There is an insistent tendency among serious social scientists to think of any institution which features rhymed and singing commercials, intense and lachrymose voices urging highly improbable enjoyment, caricatures of the human esophagus in normal and impaired operation, and which hints implausibly at opportunities for antiseptic seduction as inherently trivial. This is a great mistake. The industrial system is profoundly dependent on commercial television and could not exist in its present form without it.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The real accomplishment of modern science and technology consists in taking ordinary men, informing them narrowly and deeply and then, through appropriate organization,

arranging to have their knowledge combined with that of other specialized but equally ordinary men. This dispenses with the need for genius. The resulting performance, though less inspiring, is far more predictable.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Increasingly in recent times we have come first to identify the remedy that is most agreeable, most convenient, most in accord with major pecuniary or political interest, the one that reflects our available faculty for action; then we move from the remedy so available or desired back to a cause to which that remedy is relevant.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

There is certainly no absolute standard of beauty. That precisely is what makes its pursuit so interesting.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

We can safely abandon the doctrine of the eighties, namely that the rich were not working because they had too little money, the poor because they had much.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

By all but the pathologically romantic, it is now recognized that this is not the age of the small man.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

There's a certain part of the contented majority who love anybody who is worth a billion

dollars.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Total physical and mental inertia are highly agreeable, much more so than we allow ourselves to imagine. A beach not only permits such inertia but enforces it, thus neatly eliminating all problems of guilt. It is now the only place in our overly active world that does.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

People who are in a fortunate position always attribute virtue to what makes them so happy.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Wealth, in even the most improbable cases, manages to convey the aspect of intelligence.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The conspicuously wealthy turn up urging the character building values of the privation of the poor.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Wealth is not without its advantages and the case to the contrary, although it has often been made, has never proved widely persuasive.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

One of the greatest pieces of economic wisdom is to know what you do not know.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

Clearly the most unfortunate people are those who must do the same thing over and over again, every minute, or perhaps twenty to the minute. They deserve the shortest hours and the highest pay.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

In the choice between changing one's mind and proving there's no need to do so, most people get busy on the proof.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The Metropolis should have been aborted long before it became New York, London or Tokyo.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The traveler to the United States will do well to prepare himself for the class-consciousness of the natives. This differs from the already familiar English version in being more extreme and based more firmly on the conviction that the class to which the speaker belongs is inherently superior to all others.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

In all life one should comfort the afflicted, but verily, also, one should afflict the comfortable, and especially when they are comfortably, contentedly, even happily wrong.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth

The man who is admired for the ingenuity of his larceny is almost always rediscovering some earlier form of fraud. The basic forms are all known, have all been practiced. The manners of capitalism improve. The morals may not.

- Galbraith, John Kenneth





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