

## Thomas Paine – Quotes on Taxes

To argue with a person who has renounced the use of **reason** is like administering medicine to the dead.

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A **Constitution** is not the act of a Government, but of a people constituting a government, and a government without a constitution is a power without right.

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What is called a **republic**, is not any particular form of government ... it is naturally opposed to the word monarchy, which means arbitrary power.  
(The United States as is Texas a republic)

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**Politics and self-interest** have been so uniformly connected, that the world, from being so often deceived, has a right to be suspicious of public characters.

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When men yield up the privilege of **thinking**, the last shadow of liberty quits the horizon.

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It is not because a part of the government is elective, that makes it less a despotism, if the persons so elected, possess afterwards, as a parliament, unlimited powers. **Election, in this case, becomes separated from representation, and the candidates are candidates for despotism.**

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Taxes were not raised to carry on **wars**, but that wars were raised to carry on taxes.

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A body of men holding themselves **accountable to nobody** ought not to be trusted by anybody.

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He who dares not offend cannot be honest.

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**It is the duty of every man, as far as his ability extends, to detect and expose delusion and error.**

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No country can be called free which is governed by an absolute power;  
and it matters not whether it be an absolute royal power or an absolute legislative power,  
as the consequences will be the same to the people.

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The greatest **tyrannies** are always perpetuated in the name of the noblest causes.

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When all other **rights are taken away**, the right of rebellion is made perfect. (War of 1776)

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A constitution defines and limits the powers of the government it creates. It therefore follows, as a natural and also a logical result, that the governmental **exercise of any power not authorized by the constitution is an assumed power, and therefore illegal.**

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Reason obeys itself; and **ignorance submits to whatever is dictated to it.**

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These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman.

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**Our greatest enemies, the ones we must fight most often, are within.**

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You cannot undermine police authority and then complain about rising crime.

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I prefer peace. But if trouble must come, let it come in my time,  
so that my children can live in peace.

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Men who look upon themselves born to reign, and others to obey, soon grow insolent; selected from the rest of mankind their minds are early poisoned by importance; and the world they act in differs so materially from the world at large, that they have but little opportunity of knowing its true interests, and when they succeed to the government are frequently the most **ignorant and unfit** of any throughout the dominions.

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He that would make his own liberty secure, must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.

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Moderation in temper is always a virtue; but moderation in principle is always a vice.

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Some people can be **reasoned into sense**, and others must be **shocked** into it.

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When extraordinary power and extraordinary pay are allotted to any individual in a government, he becomes the center, round which every kind of **corruption** generates and forms.

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Arms discourage and keep the invader and plunderer in awe,  
and preserve order in the world as well as property...  
Horrid mischief would ensue were the law-abiding deprived of the use of them.

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An avidity to **punish** is always dangerous to liberty.  
It leads men to stretch, to misinterpret, and to misapply even the best of laws.

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When a man has so far **corrupted and prostituted the chastity of his mind**, as to [profess] things he does not believe, he has prepared himself for the commission of every other crime.

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The World is my country, all mankind are my brethren, and to do good is my religion.

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Government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil; in its worst state, an intolerable one.

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The mind once **enlightened** cannot again become dark.

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The strength and power of despotism consists wholly in the fear of resistance.

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Men should not petition for rights, but take them.

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It is always to be taken for granted, that those who oppose an **equality** of rights never mean the exclusion should take place on themselves.

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Those who expect to reap the blessings of freedom must,  
like men, undergo the fatigue of supporting it.

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It has been the political career of this man to begin with **hypocrisy**,  
proceed with arrogance, and finish with **contempt**.

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(1830) There are two distinct classes of men -  
those who pay taxes and those who receive and live upon taxes.

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The accumulation of great wealth is, in many instances,  
the effect of paying too little for the labor that produced it, the consequence of which  
is that the working people perish in old age and the employer abounds in affluence.

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It is not in numbers, but in unity, that our great strength lies.

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A long habit of not thinking a thing wrong gives it a superficial appearance of being right.

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I have always strenuously supported the right of every man to his own opinion, however  
different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of  
himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it.

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Reputation is what men and women think of us; character is what God and angels know of us.

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**Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a crime.**

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A **constitution** is not the act of a government, but of a people constituting a government; and  
government without a constitution is power without a right. All power exercised over a nation,  
must have some beginning. It must be either delegated or assumed. There are not other sources.

All delegated power is trust, and all assumed power is usurpation.

Time does not alter the nature and quality of either.

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**Government** is best which governs least.

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The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. I love the man that can smile in trouble, that can gather strength from distress and grow brave by reflection.

'Tis the business of little minds to shrink; but he whose heart is firm, and whose conscience approves his conduct, will pursue his principles unto death.

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A nation under a well regulated government, should permit none to remain uninstructed. It is monarchical and aristocratical government only that requires ignorance for its support.

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Rights are not gifts from one man to another, nor from one class of men to another. It is impossible to discover any origin of rights otherwise than in the origin of man; it consequently follows that rights appertain to man in right of his existence, and must therefore be equal to every man.

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It is never to be expected in a revolution that every man is to change his opinion at the same moment. There never yet was any truth or any principle so irresistibly obvious that all men believed it at once. Time and reason must cooperate with each other to the final establishment of any principle; and therefore those who may happen to be first convinced have not a right to persecute others, on whom conviction operates more slowly. The moral principle of revolutions is to instruct, not to destroy.

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To take away (voting) is to reduce a man to slavery.

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The trade of governing has always been monopolized by the most ignorant and the most rascally individuals of mankind.

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We still find the **greedy hand of government** thrusting itself into every corner and crevice of industry and grasping at the spoil of the multitude. Invention is continually exercised to furnish new pretenses for revenue and taxation. It watches prosperity as its prey and permits none to escape without a tribute.

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Government is not a trade which any man or body of men has a right to set up and exercise for his own emolument, but is altogether a trust, in right of those by whom that trust is delegated, and by whom it is always resumable. It has of itself no rights; they are altogether **duties**.

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When it shall be said in any country in the world my poor are happy;  
neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my  
streets of beggars; the aged are not in want; the taxes are not oppressive;  
the rational world is my friend, because I am a friend of its happiness:  
When these things can be said, there may that country boast its Constitution and its Government.

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Beware the greedy hand of government thrusting itself into every corner and crevice of industry.

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It is easy to see that when republican virtue fails, slavery ensues.

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It is the madness of folly, to expect mercy from those who have refused to do justice;  
and even mercy, where conquest is the object, is only a trick of war;  
the cunning of the fox is as murderous as the violence of the wolf.

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That there are men in all countries who get their living by war,  
and by keeping up the quarrels of Nations is as shocking as it is true.

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Reason and Ignorance, the opposites of each other, influence the great bulk of mankind.  
If either of these can be rendered sufficiently extensive in a country,  
the machinery of Government goes easily on.  
Reason obeys itself; and Ignorance submits to whatever is dictated to it.

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Government ought to be as much open to improvement as anything which appertains to man,  
instead of which it has been monopolized from age to age,  
by the most ignorant and vicious of the human race.  
Need we any other proof of their wretched management, than the excess of debts and taxes with  
which every nation groans, and the quarrels into which they have precipitated the world?

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The burden of the national debt consists not in its being so many millions, or so many hundred  
millions, but in the quantity of taxes collected every year to pay the interest.  
If this quantity continue the same, the burden of the national debt is the same  
to all intents and purposes, be the capital more or less.

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The more acquisitions the government makes abroad,  
the more taxes the people have to pay at home.

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The continual whine of lamenting the burden of taxes, however successfully it may be practiced in mixed governments, is inconsistent with the sense and spirit of a republic.

If taxes are necessary, they are of course advantageous,  
but if they require an apology, the apology itself implies an impeachment.  
Why, then, is man imposed upon, or why does he impose upon himself?