

# Henry Steele Commager Quotes

*Government, Men, War, People, Absence, Past, Philosophy, Long, Thinking,  
Liberty, Patriotic, Running, College, Decision, Tangled, Indulge In, Young, Eye,  
Patterns, Cherish*

Education is essential to change, for education creates both new wants and the ability to satisfy them.

~Henry Steele Commager

A free society cherishes nonconformity. It knows from the non-conformist, from the eccentric, have come many of the great ideas.

~Henry Steele Commager

Men in authority will always think that criticism of their policies is dangerous. They will always equate their policies with patriotism, and find criticism subversive.

~Henry Steele Commager

The Bill of Rights was not written to protect governments from trouble. It was written precisely to give the people the constitutional means to cause trouble for governments they no longer trusted.

~Henry Steele Commager

Censorship always defeats its own purpose, for it creates in the end the kind of society that is incapable of exercising real discretion.

~Henry Steele Commager

History is organized memory, and the organization is all important!

~Henry Steele Commager

Change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change.

~Henry Steele Commager

If our democracy is to flourish, it must have criticism; if our government is to function it must have dissent.

~Henry Steele Commager

The Americans who framed our Constitution felt that without freedom of religion no other freedom counted.

~Henry Steele Commager

History is a jangle of accidents, blunders, surprises and absurdities, and so is our knowledge of it, but if we are to report it at all we must impose some order upon it.

~Henry Steele Commager

We should not be surprised that the Founding Fathers didn't foresee everything, when we see that the current Fathers hardly ever foresee anything.

~Henry Steele Commager

The greatest danger that threatens us is neither heterodox thought nor orthodox thought, but the absence of thought.

~Henry Steele Commager

America was born of revolt, flourished in dissent, became great through experimentation.

~Henry Steele Commager

We should not forget that our tradition is one of protest and revolt, and it is stultifying to celebrate the rebels of the past ... while we silence the rebels of the present.

~Henry Steele Commager

To yearn for a single, and usually simple, explanation of the chaotic materials of the past, to search for a single thread in that most tangled of all skeins, is a sign of immaturity.

~Henry Steele Commager

Its awfully hard to be the son of a great man and also of a half-crazy woman.

~Henry Steele Commager

Every effort to confine Americanism to a single pattern, to constrain it to a single formula, is disloyalty to everything that is valid in Americanism.

~Henry Steele Commager

Whether history will judge this war to be different or not we cannot say. But this we can say with certainty: A government and a society that silences those who dissent is one that has lost its way.

~Henry Steele Commager

In the long run [censorship] will create a generation incapable of appreciating the difference between independence of thought and subservience.

~Henry Steele Commager

And we wonder what can be that 'philosophy of education' which believes that young people can be trained to the duties of citizenship by wrapping their minds in cotton wool.

~Henry Steele Commager

The American people...have a stake in non-conformity. For they know that the American genius is non-conformist.

~Henry Steele Commager

Our best people don't go into politics.

~Henry Steele Commager

The greatest danger we face is not any particular kind of thought. The greatest danger we face is absence of thought.

~Henry Steele Commager

It is probably safe to say that over a long period of time, political morality has been as high as business morality.

~Henry Steele Commager

What every college must do is hold up before the young the spectacle of greatness.

~Henry Steele Commager

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