

# Learned Hand Quotes

*Men, Law, Justice, Liberty, Political, Believe, Freedom, Mind, Doubt, Thinking,  
May, Way, Government, Life, Past, Community, Democracy, Winning, Judging,  
Art*

Words are not pebbles in alien juxtaposition.

~Learned Hand

Words are chameleons, which reflect the color of their environment.

~Learned Hand

We accept the verdict of the past until the need for change cries out loudly enough to force upon us a choice between the comforts of inertia and the irksomeness of action.

~Learned Hand

Justice is the tolerable accommodation of the conflicting interests of society, and I don't believe there is any royal road to attain such accommodation concretely.

~Learned Hand

In america, there are two tax systems: one for the informed and one for the uninformed. Both are legal

~Learned Hand

The hand that rules the press, the radio, the screen and the far-spread magazine, rules the country.

~Learned Hand

In the end it is worse to suppress dissent than to run the risk of heresy.

~Learned Hand

The spirit of liberty is the spirit which is not too sure that it is right; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women.

~Learned Hand

Life is made up of constant calls to action, and we seldom have time for more than hastily contrived answers.

~Learned Hand

The language of the law must not be foreign to the ears of those who are to obey it.

~Learned Hand

If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: thou shalt not ration justice.

~Learned Hand

A society in which men recognize no check upon their freedom soon becomes a society where freedom is the possession of only a savage few.

~Learned Hand

The mid-day sun is too much for most eyes; one is dazzled even with its reflection. Be careful that too broad and high an aim does not paralyze your effort and clog your springs of action.

~Learned Hand

Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.

~Learned Hand

No doubt one may quote history to support any cause, as the devil quotes scripture; but modern history is not a very satisfactory side-arm in political polemics; it grows less and less so.

~Learned Hand

The mutual confidence on which all else depends can be maintained only by an open mind and a brave reliance upon free discussion.

~Learned Hand

Life in a great society, or for that matter in a small, is a web of tangled relations of all sorts, whose adjustment so that it may be endurable is an extraordinarily troublesome matter.

~Learned Hand

The use of history is to tell us what we are, for at our birth we are nearly empty vessels and we become what our tradition pours into us.

~Learned Hand

Skepticism is my only gospel, but I don't want to make a dogma out of it.

~Learned Hand

Seldom, if ever, does wisdom come, shall we punish it if it comes late?

~Learned Hand

Every smallest step of modern industry depends upon a cooperation whose maintenance and regulation is the very stuff of law.

~Learned Hand

We may win when we lose, if we have done what we can; for by so doing we have made real at least some part of that finished product in whose fabrication we are most concerned: ourselves.

~Learned Hand

There is no surer way to misread any document than to read it literally.

~Learned Hand

I shall ask no more than that you agree with Dean Inge that even though counting heads is not an ideal way to govern, at least it is better than breaking them.

~Learned Hand

If a community decides that some conduct is prejudicial to itself, and so

decides by numbers sufficient to impose its will upon dissenters, I know of no principle which can stay its hand.

~Learned Hand

The aim of law is the maximum gratification of the nervous system of man.

~Learned Hand

No doubt one may quote history to support any cause, as the devil quotes the scripture.

~Learned Hand

The art of publicity is a black art.

~Learned Hand

What to an outsider will be no more than the vigorous presentation of a conviction, to an employee may be the manifestation of a determination which it is not safe to thwart.

~Learned Hand

The spirit of liberty is the spirit that is not quite sure it is right.

~Learned Hand

Right knows no boundaries, and justice no frontiers; the brotherhood of man is not a domestic institution.

~Learned Hand

The fathers who contrived and passed the Consitution were wise in their generation; as time passes, we come more and more to realize their powers of divination.

~Learned Hand

Life is made up of a series of judgments on insufficient data, and if we waited to run down all our doubts, it would flow past us.

~Learned Hand

You cannot raise the standard against oppression, or leap into the breach to relieve injustice, and still keep an open mind to every disconcerting fact, or an open ear to the cold voice of doubt.

~Learned Hand

The public needs the equivalent of Chevrolets as well as Cadillacs.

~Learned Hand

Reputation, like a face, is the symbol of its possessor and creator, and another can use it only as a mask.

~Learned Hand

It is enough that we set out to mold the motley stuff of life into some form of our own choosing; when we do, the performance is itself the wage.

~Learned Hand

Liberty is so much latitude as the powerful choose to accord to the weak.

~Learned Hand

All discussion, all debate, all dissidence tends to question and in consequence, to upset existing convictions; that is precisely its purpose and its justification.

~Learned Hand

What seems fair enough against a squalid huckster of bad liquor may take on a different face, if used by a government determined to suppress political opposition under the guise of sedition.

~Learned Hand

We lose the forest for the trees, forgetting, even so far as we think at

all, that we are trustees for those who come after us, squandering the patrimony which we have received.

~Learned Hand

Convention is like the shell to the chick, a protection till he is strong enough to break it through.

~Learned Hand

A self-made man may prefer a self-made name.

~Learned Hand

The spirit of liberty is the spirit of him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned ... .

~Learned Hand

The successful competitor, having been urged to compete, must not be turned upon when he wins.

~Learned Hand

There is nothing sinister in so arranging one's affairs as to keep taxes as low as possible.

~Learned Hand

Our common law is the stock instance of a combination of custom and its successive adaptations.

~Learned Hand

We prate of freedom; we are in deadly fear of life, as much of our own American scene betrays.

~Learned Hand

Since we are men, we will play the part of Man.

~Learned Hand

A government of laws without men is as visionary as a government of men without laws.

~Learned Hand

Here I am an old man in a long nightgown making muffled noises at people who may be no worse than I am.

~Learned Hand

We shall succeed only so far as we continue to undertake "the intolerable labor of thought" that most distasteful of all our activities.

~Learned Hand

Today in America vast concourses of youth are flocking to our colleges, eager for something, just what they do not know.

~Learned Hand

Those of us who have come to years of discretion and more, must often take to retrospect, and seek to appraise the outcome of our lives.

~Learned Hand

It was not the violence of our enemies [in World War I] that would undo us, I thought, but our own spiritual weakness, the shallowness of our convictions.

~Learned Hand

Life is not a thing of knowing only--nay, mere knowledge has properly no place at all save as it becomes the handmaiden of feeling and emotions.

~Learned Hand

For, when all is said, as my friend George Rublee likes to put it, the only success is to be a success as a person; and it is still not too late for that.



~Learned Hand

Tyranny is tyranny, no matter what its form; the free man will resist it if his courage serves.

~Learned Hand

We all have our prayer-wheels which we set up on the steppes. The indifferent winds come and carry most of them away to gasp out their little lives in the desert, for few reach heaven.

~Learned Hand

There is no fury like that against one who, we fear, may succeed in making us disloyal to beliefs we hold with passion, but have not really won.

~Learned Hand

The condition of our survival in any but the meagerest existence is our willingness to accommodate ourselves to the conflicting interests of others, to learn to live in a social world.

~Learned Hand

For myself it would be most irksome to be ruled by a bevy of Platonic Guardians, even if I knew how to choose them, which I assuredly do not.

~Learned Hand

The apathy of the modern voter is the confusion of the modern reformer.

~Learned Hand

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