

Lewis H. Lapham

Quotes

*People, Money, Children, Government, War, Country, Art, World, Self, Men,
Forever, United States, Thinking, Death, Mean, New York, Democracy, Broken,
Opportunity, Stories*

Leadership consists not in degrees of technique but in traits of character.

~Lewis H. Lapham

I know no other way out of what is both the maze of the eternal present and the prison of the self except with a string of words.

~Lewis H. Lapham

I never can pass by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York without thinking of it not as a gallery of living portraits but as a cemetery of tax-deductible wealth.

~Lewis H. Lapham

People may expect too much of journalism. Not only do they expect it to be entertaining, they expect it to be true.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The substitution of meaning accounts for the grasping of misers as well as the extravagance of spendthrifts. Karl Marx well understood this peculiar transformation of flesh into coin.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Dissent is what rescues democracy from a quiet death behind closed doors.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The survival of American democracy depends less on the size of its armies than on the capacity of its individual citizens to rely... on the strength of their own thought.

~Lewis H. Lapham

It isn't money itself that causes the trouble, but the use of money as votive offering and pagan ornament.

~Lewis H. Lapham

America is about class. To pretend that it isn't is very ignorant. No society has ever existed without some kind of a ruling class.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Anti-utopianism continues to suffuse our culture...Today few imagine that society can be fundamentally improved, and those who do are seen as at best deluded, at worst threatening.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Unlike every other nation in the world, the United States defines itself as a hypothesis and constitutes itself as an argument.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The future is an empty canvas or a blank sheet of paper, and if you have the courage of your own thought and your own observation you can make of it what you will

~Lewis H. Lapham

The supply of government exceeds demand.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The leading cause of death is birth.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Of what does politics consist except the making of imperfect decisions, many of them unjust and quite a few of them deadly?

~Lewis H. Lapham

Unlike any other business in the United States, sports must preserve an illusion of perfect innocence.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Wars might come and go, but the seven o'clock news lives forever.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Never in the history of the world have so many people been so rich; never in the history of the world have so many of those same people felt themselves so poor.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The world goes on as before, and it turns out that nobody else seems to notice the unbearable lightness of being.

~Lewis H. Lapham

At this late stage in the history of American capitalism I'm not sure I know how much testimony still needs to be presented to establish the relation between profit and theft.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Most American cities show to their best advantage when seen from a height or from a distance, at a point where the ugliness of the buildings dissolves into the beauty of an abstraction.

~Lewis H. Lapham

I sometimes think that the American story is the one about the reading of the will.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Democracy is a difficult art of government, demanding of its citizens high ratios of courage and literacy, and at the moment we lack both the necessary habits of mind and a sphere of common reference.

~Lewis H. Lapham

History is not what happened 200 or 2,000 years ago; it's a story about what happened 200 or 2,000 years ago.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The rich, like well brought up children, are meant to be seen, not heard.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The state of perpetual emptiness is, of course, very good for business.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Construed as a means instead of an end, history is the weapon with which we defend the future against the past.

~Lewis H. Lapham

As many as six out of ten American adults have never read a book of any kind, and the bulletins from the nation's educational frontiers read like the casualty reports from a lost war.

~Lewis H. Lapham

When we talk about the foreign, the question becomes one of us versus them. But in the end, is one just the opposite side of the other?

~Lewis H. Lapham

His administration apparently means to define itself as a television program instead of a government...I don't know if it can please both its sponsors and its intended audience.

~Lewis H. Lapham

If you wear a suit, you can talk to anybody.

~Lewis H. Lapham

What kind of people do we wish to become, and how do we know an American when we see one? Is it possible to pursue a common purpose without a common history or a standard text?

~Lewis H. Lapham

Seeking the invisible through the imagery of the visible, the Americans never can get quite all the way to the end of the American dream.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Youth as glimpsed by its elders is a story that comes from afar, showing itself as either lovely to look at or a torment to endure.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Love of country follows from the exercise of its freedoms, not from pride in its fleets or its armies.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The American press is, and always has been, a booster press, its editorial pages characteristically advancing the same arguments as the paid advertising copy.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The pose of innocence is as mandatory as the ability to eat banquet food and endure the scourging of the press.

~Lewis H. Lapham

If we could let go of our faith in money, who knows what we might put in its place?

~Lewis H. Lapham

In the garden of tabloid delight, there is always a clean towel and another song.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The days of my youth I remember as nearly always in need of explanation, and not as much fun as advertised in the promotions for board games and breakfast cereal.

~Lewis H. Lapham

We are a people captivated by the power and romance of metaphor, forever seeking the invisible through the image of the visible.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Recollections of early childhood bear comparison to fairy tales, and ... youth remains an unknown country to whose bourn no traveler returns except as the agent of a foreign power.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Democracy is born in dirt, nourished by the digging up and turning over as much of it as can be brought within reach of a television camera or subpoena.

~Lewis H. Lapham

[For American consumer society], the country's reserves of ignorance constitute a natural resource as precious as the Mississippi River or the long-lost herds of buffalo.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Now that Mr. Carter has made a book of his diary, an adoring memoir entitled *Keeping Faith*, the notes read like a collection of letters sent from scout camp.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The American oligarchy increasingly has less in common with the American people than it does with the equivalent oligarchies in Germany or Mexico or Japan.

~Lewis H. Lapham

The practice of our democracy depends on a sense of, and knowledge of, history in the same way that playing in the World Series requires a bat and a ball.

~Lewis H. Lapham

Power broken into a thousand pieces can be hidden and disowned.

~Lewis H. Lapham

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