

88 QUOTATIONS



Adlai Stevenson

(1900-1965)

Adlai Ewing Stevenson II was one of the most articulate and witty political figures in American history since Benjamin Franklin. The graceful and scholarly Stevenson was revered by liberals and became the most admired Democrat, influencing the young John F. Kennedy. In 1952 and 1956 he ran for President of the United States against Dwight Eisenhower, who in the public mind had defeated the Nazis and won World War II. During his campaigns Stevenson was caricatured as an “Egghead” intellectual, a stereotype then associated with academics sympathetic to Communism. In the movie *Dr. Strangelove* he is the model for the liberal President of the United States when a nuclear war ignites and is portrayed as a weakling. To the contrary, in real life Adlai Stevenson prevailed in an eloquently forceful confrontation with the Soviet ambassador to the United Nations over the Cuban missile crisis—televised worldwide.

ORDER OF TOPICS: education, autobiographical, Nature, earth, America, freedom, Democracy, newspapers, common people, the melting pot, race, politics, political correctness, entitlement, materialism, Communism, government, foreign policy, character, wisdom, aging, advice, religion:

EDUCATION

Ignorance is stubborn and prejudice dies hard.

Nothing in this universe baffles man as much as man himself.

Man’s knowledge of things will begin to be matched by man’s knowledge of self.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL

Eggheads unite! You have nothing to lose but your yolks.

A funny thing happened to me on the way to the White House.

It's hard to lead a cavalry charge if you think you look funny on a horse.

Never run against a war hero.

The best reason I can think of for not running for President of the United States is that you have to shave twice a day.

The relationship of the toastmaster to speaker should be the same as that of the fan to the dancer. It should call attention to the subject without making any particular effort to cover it.

I remember my father telling me the story of the preacher delivering an exhortation to his flock, and as he reached the climax of his exhortation, a man in the front row got up and said, "O Lord, use me. Use me, O Lord—in an advisory capacity!"

NATURE

A beauty is a woman you notice; a charmer is one who notices you.

Nature is indifferent to the survival of the human species, including Americans.

Nature is neutral. Man has wrested from nature the power to make the world a desert or to make the deserts bloom. There is no evil in the atom; only in men's souls.

EARTH

We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable reserves of air and soil; all committed, for our safety, to its security and peace; preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work and the love we give our fragile craft.

AMERICA

There is a new America every morning when we wake up.

The struggle between faith and fear will decide the destiny of our nation.

In America any boy may become President, and I suppose it's just one of the risks he takes.

America is much more than a geographical fact. It is a political and moral fact, the first community in which men set out in principle to institutionalize freedom, responsible government, and human equality.

It was always accounted a virtue in a man to love his country. With us now it is something more than a virtue. It is a necessity.

When an American says that he loves his country, he means not only that he loves the New England hills, the prairies glistening in the sun, the wide and rising plains, the great mountains, and the sea. He means that he loves an inner air, an inner light in which freedom lives and in which a man can draw the breath of self-respect.

Who shall say that the American dream is ended? For myself, I believe that all we have done upon this continent is but a prelude.

We Americans are suckers for good news.

FREEDOM

A hungry man is not a free man.

A free society is one where it is safe to be unpopular.

All progress has resulted from people who took unpopular positions.

The sound of tireless voices is the price we pay for the right to hear the music of our own opinions.

Because we believe in the free mind we are also fighting those who, in the name of anti-Communism, would assail the community of freedom itself.

DEMOCRACY

Self-criticism is the secret weapon of democracy, and the candor and confession are good for the public soul.

They pick a president, and then for four years they pick on him.

NEWSPAPERS

The sources of information are the springs from which democracy drinks.

Newspaper editors are men who separate the wheat from the chaff, and then print the chaff.

A free society means a society based on free competition and there is no more important competition than competition in ideas, competition in opinion. This form of competition is essential to the preservation of a free press.

Our press may make a million mistakes without doing itself permanent harm so long as its proprietors are steadfast in their adherence to truth.

Accuracy is to a newspaper what virtue is to a lady, but a newspaper can always print a retraction.

Those who corrupt the public mind are just as evil as those who steal from the public purse.

COMMON PEOPLE

I have learned that in quiet places, reason abounds, that in quiet people there is a vision and purpose that many things are revealed to the humble that are hidden from the great.

Man...generally cannot read the handwriting on the wall until his back is up against it.

THE MELTING POT

I profoundly believe that there is on this horizon, as yet only dimly perceived, a new dawn of conscience. In that purer light, people will come to see themselves in each other, which is to say they will make themselves known to one another by their similarities rather than by their differences.

RACE

It will be helpful in our mutual objective to allow every man in America to look his neighbor in the face and see a man, not a color.

What is more difficult, to think of an encampment on the moon or of Harlem rebuilt?

POLITICS

An independent is someone who wants to take the politics out of politics.

A politician is a statesman who approaches every question with an open mouth.

Man does not live by words alone, despite the fact that sometimes he has to eat them.

Let us talk sense to the American people. Let us tell them the truth, that there are no gains without pain.

He is the kind of politician who would cut down a redwood tree, then mount the stump and make a speech for conservation.

I have been thinking that I would make a proposition to my Republican friends—that if they will stop telling lies about the Democrats, we will stop telling the truth about them.

Nixon is finding out there are no tails on an Eisenhower jacket.

The Republicans stroke platitudes until they purr like epigrams.

Words calculated to catch everyone may catch no one.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

The free mind is not a barking dog, to be tethered on a ten-foot chain.

The first principle of a free society is an untrammled flow of words in an open forum.

Most of us favor free enterprise for business. Let us also favor free enterprise for the mind.

You will find that the truth is often unpopular and the contest between agreeable fancy and disagreeable fact is unequal.

Only men who confuse themselves with God would dare to pretend in this anguished and bloody era that they know the exact road to the promised land.

I believe that if we really want human brotherhood to spread and increase until it makes life safe and sane, we must also be certain that there is no one true faith or path by which it may spread.

ENTITLEMENT

We have confused the free with the free and easy.

MATERIALISM

The New Dealers have all left Washington to make way for the car dealers.

It is odd that one of the keys to abundance should have been handed to civilization on a platter of destruction.

With the supermarket as our temple and the singing commercial as our litany, are we likely to fire the world with an irresistible vision of America's exalted purpose and inspiring way of life?

COMMUNISM

Communism is the corruption of a dream of justice.

Communism knows no God, and cannot satisfy the hungry heart.

Communism is the death of the soul. It is the organization of total conformity—in short, of tyranny—and it is committed to making tyranny universal.

Many of the world's troubles are not due just to Russia or Communism. They would be with us in any event because we live in an era of revolution—the revolution of rising expectations.

GOVERNMENT

A diplomat's life is made up of three ingredients: protocol, Geritol and alcohol.

It seems to me that government is like a pump, and what it pumps up is just what we are, a fair sample of the intellect, the ethics and the morals of the people, no better, no worse.

Public confidence in the integrity of the Government is indispensable to faith in democracy; and when we lose faith in the system, we have lost faith in everything we fight and spend for.

FOREIGN POLICY

Hunting scapegoats is not a foreign policy.

Peace is the one condition of survival in this nuclear age.

On this shrunken globe, men can no longer live as strangers.

Saskatchewan is much like Texas, except it's more friendly to the United States.

The early years of the United Nations have been difficult ones, but what did we expect? That peace would drift down from the skies like soft snow?

After four years at the United Nations I sometimes yearn for the peace and tranquility of a political convention.

It is not possible for this nation to be at once politically internationalist and economically isolationist. This is just as insane as asking one Siamese twin to high dive while the other plays the piano.

The contest with tyranny is not a hundred-yard dash. It is a test of endurance.

CHARACTER

Laws are never as effective as habits.

Flattery is all right so long as you don't inhale.

It is often easier to fight for one's principles than to live up to them.

You can tell the size of a man by the size of the thing that makes him mad.

Courage to do the right thing in public office is often at the price of the office.

WISDOM

A wise man who stands firm is a statesman, and a foolish man who stands firm is a catastrophe.

A wise man does not try to hurry history. Many wars have been avoided by patience, and many have been precipitated by reckless haste.

On the plains of hesitation lie the blackened bones of countless millions who at the dawn of victory lay down to rest, and in resting died.

AGING

Nothing so dates a man as to decry the younger generation.

There was a time when a fool and his money were soon parted, but now it happens to everybody.

What a man knows at fifty that he did not know at twenty is, for the most part, incommunicable.

ADVICE

Don't be afraid of being out of tune with your environment, and above all pray God that you are not afraid to live, to live hard and fast. To my way of thinking it is not the years in your life but the life in your years that count in the long run. [echo of Lincoln]

RELIGION

There is a spiritual hunger in the world today—and it cannot be satisfied by better cars on longer credit terms.

Some of us worship in churches, some in synagogues, some on golf courses—yet we are all children of the same Judaic-Christian civilization, with much the same religious background basically.

