

# Fact-Checking: Thomas Jefferson Quotes

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"When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe ." -- Thomas Jefferson **TRUTH**

"The democracy will cease to exist when you take away from those who are willing to work and give to those who would not." -- Thomas Jefferson **FALSE**. This exact quotation has not been found in any of the writings of Thomas Jefferson. It bears a very vague resemblance to Jefferson's comment in a prospectus for his translation of Destutt de Tracy's Treatise on Political Economy: "**To take from one, because it is thought that his own industry and that of his fathers has acquired too much, in order to spare to others, who, or whose fathers have not exercised equal industry and skill, is to violate arbitrarily the first principle of association, the guarantee to every one of a free exercise of his industry, and the fruits acquired by it.**"

"It is incumbent on every generation to pay its own debts as it goes. A principle which if acted on would save one-half the wars of the world." -- Thomas Jefferson **TRUE**

"I predict future happiness for Americans if they can prevent the government from wasting the labors of the people under the pretense of taking care of them." -- Thomas Jefferson **TRUE**

"My reading of history convinces me that most bad government results from too much government." -- Thomas Jefferson **FALSE**. This quotation has not been found in any of the writings of Thomas Jefferson. It bears some slight resemblance to a statement he made in a letter to John Norvell of June 14, 1807: "**History, in general, only informs us what bad government is.**"

"No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms [**within his own lands or tenements**]." – Thomas Jefferson **MISQUOTE**. Also interesting to note, while the sentence appears in the second and third draft of the Virginia Constitution, this sentence does not appear in the Virginia Constitution as adopted.

"The strongest reason for the people to retain the right to keep and bear arms is, as a last resort, to protect themselves against tyranny in government." Thomas Jefferson **FALSE**. This quotation has not been found in any of the writings of Thomas Jefferson.

"The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants." -- Thomas Jefferson **TRUE**

"To compel a man to ~~subsidize with his taxes~~ **furnish contributions of money** for the propagation of ideas which he disbelieves and abhors is sinful and tyrannical." -- Thomas Jefferson **MISQUOTE that significantly changes the intention.**

Thomas Jefferson said in 1802:

"I believe that banking institutions are more dangerous to our liberties than standing armies. If the American people ever allow private banks to control the issue of their currency, first by inflation, then by deflation, the banks and corporations that will grow up around the banks will deprive the people of all property - until their children wake-up homeless on the continent their fathers conquered." **FALSE** See <http://www.snopes.com/quotes/jefferson/banks.asp>. Additionally damning – the Oxford English Dictionary's earliest citation for the word "deflation" (as related to currency) dates only to 1920.

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**AND, an interesting actual quote from Jefferson that was omitted from this list:**

**“Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should ‘make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,’ thus building a wall of separation between Church & State.”**