



Education Is Power

By Thomas E. Wilson,
Ph.D.

Last week we began the process of enumerating the characteristics of an educated person. Space did not permit the complete listing of characteristics commonly assumed to be possessed by a person who considers himself educated.

Since being self-reliant was the last characteristic considered, it naturally follows that the educated person must also possess a great deal of "common sense." Until recently the wise use of "common sense" was called "using mother-wit." It dealt with using your money wisely, with treating your employer fairly, with knowing how to "make friends and influence people," etc.

Being educated also involves the gathering of useable knowledge and using it in a way that will benefit mankind. Being curious about many things and taking steps to satisfy that curiosity in a legitimate fashion may also be considered as important.

An educated person must be changeable as well as flexible. He must realize that methods of doing things change from time to time, and that he must also be flexible enough to adjust to the necessary changes.

Willingness to accept constructive criticism seems to be an important attribute of an educated person. Since no one is perfect, it appears that we all need help from time to time. Not only should we be willing to accept constructive criticism, but we should also be able to give criticism in a constructive way.

Knowing how and being willing to deal lightly with trivial matters seem to be important to the educated person. Not attaching too great a value to unimportant matters is a virtue not to be overlooked. It sometimes becomes necessary to become involved with matters that can be dealt with quickly and easily. This too seems to be a characteristic of an educated person.

An educated person develops a "tough skin." He is undaunted by small talk about himself and can "take it on the proverbial chin" when necessary. He learns to respect the opinion of others even though these opinions may not be the same as his own. He is careful of the feelings of others especially when their opinions differ from his own. He listens well for any clues that may be used to help the individual.

Finally, the educated person is an active person. He is active mentally, physically, etc. He remains active throughout most of his life. He does not allow himself to become stagnant in his thinking, his activities, etc.

It is to be noted that nowhere in these two columns has anything been said concerning an enormous amount of formal schooling being a characteristic of an education person. Opinions may vary on this point, however it is the opinion of this writer that formal schooling does add to the assets of the educated person, and is one of many things necessary for one to become educated. In my opinion, if one can make his own way to a legitimate vocation and behave as outlined in these two columns, he is an educated person. This is not meant in any way to discount the value of formal schooling, but to point out that a person may become educated in several ways.

*If a man empties his purse
into his head, no man can
take it away from him.*

*An investment in knowledge
always pays the best interest.*



Benjamin L. Hooks

FCC
Commissioner

Death Comes to George W. Lee

When I was a boy in Memphis, Tennessee, I lived a few doors from a funeral parlour. Like most youngsters my age, I was deathly afraid of dead people, yet I had a morbid interest in them.

It took me a long time to lose my fear of the dead, but the fear was not personal because I had not experienced it in my family or among friends, or someone I knew personally died, death took on another meaning. With each death, I agonized and my life seemed to be personally diminished.

But only after the death of my father, Feb. 1973, and that of my mother, three weeks later did all the loneliness, numbness, the emptiness that only those of us who have had loved ones die could know, assail me.

I recall what one of my old teachers once said: "The older one gets, the more he discovers he has more friends on the other side (death) than on this side (living)." I dwell on this subject, dreary as it is, because a few days ago when I was in Chattanooga, depressing word came that one of my oldest and most trusted friends, Lt. George W. Lee had died.

He was a man in his 80's and had lived a long, good, useful and fruitful life. Yet I felt this strange sense of anguish, of breavement and loneliness, coupled with an acute sense of loss over his death.

For I thought of all the things I would like to have sat down and talked with him about -- of his boyhood and being raised in Mississippi in the late 1800's; of his life as an Army officer in World War I, when black Army officers were certainly not treated with respect.

I would liked to have heard him tell of his early years in Memphis, of the wide open, bawdy days of Beale Street when the likes of Louis Armstrong and W. C. Handy (the Father of the Blues) and other musical and entertainment giants strode the scene and every storefront had its own little story to tell.

I would liked to have heard him tell of the days of the tough Jim Crow laws in Memphis and how

he not only survived to partake of the fullness of the fruits of civil rights, but was also able to lead that fight which made possible the ushering the of a new era of freedom and equality.

Lt. Lee was one of those early pioneer leaders who did not give in to despair. He was a Lieutenant in World War I, he was a splendid writer, having written three books and many, many magazine articles. He was a great orator and spoke all over this country. He was an inventive businessman, having been a manager of Atlanta Life Insurance Co. (Ga.), one of the largest black firms in the nation, for many years, and a director of that company in his latter years.

He was a great fraternal man, having served until his death as chairman of the educational department of the Independent Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks, perhaps the largest single fraternal order blacks have. But in addition to that and towering over all of these accomplishments was the fact George W. Lee was as consummate politician.

He was born, bred and died a Republican. He started attention conventions in 1920 and attended every GOP National Convention from then until his death. Indeed, at the time of his death, he was enroute to the Republican Convention in Kansas City.

When I first came back to Memphis to practice law in 1949, I worked closely with Lt. Lee. And even though I am a Democrat, I can appreciate the fact that he stayed in the GOP and fought to keep it from completely abandoning the principles of Lincoln and becoming a racist all-white conservative party that had nothing of any meaning to say to blacks.

And so we can say to our black brothers who are Republicans to always fight the good fight of faith as Lt. George W. Lee did. Never yield to expediency. Never compromise. George W. Lee will leave a void in Memphis and in this nation that will be difficult if not impossible to fill.

He spent more than 80 years fighting the cause of the downtrodden, the disenfranchised, the despised and disinherited. For he recognized more than most, that if the little people do not have a right to express grievances and to make advances, it will be but a matter of time before big folks, black or white, would also be unable to do so.

So hail and farewell to George W. Lee, a man whose pride impelled him to use the "Lieutenant" sobriquet as a formal part of his name to keep bigoted whites from calling him by his first name. He was a great matchless leader and a personal inspiration in my life.

BAYARD RUSTIN The Politics of Voting

The largest political group in the United States is now made up of non-voters. Recent estimates are that 70 million qualified voting age Americans will not vote on November 2. Less than half of the possible electorate may take part in this presidential election. Seventy percent of the eligible voters could easily choose either to vote against the winner or not to vote at all. As has often been pointed out, this low participation is a disgrace to American democracy. What is sometimes forgotten is that low voting participation weakens our democratic system and lessens our ability to respond to social problems.

The declining voting participation has itself become a political issue. It was the real issue in the recent congressional debate on national postcard registration. The voting participation issue reflects two different conceptions of what a democracy is about. According to one way of thinking, voting is a privilege which must be acquired by the voters' initiative. The other conception is that voting is a right and that the government as a responsibility to encourage voters to register.

The opponents of postcard voter participation allege without much foundation that postcard registration will lead to voting fraud, but what they really fear is that it will lead to increased voting. There has been no indication of voting fraud in those states that do have postcard registra-

tion. In fact, the national postcard registration bill, which would affect only registration for federal elections, contains careful provisions to insure honesty. The restrictive registration laws which actually discourage people from voting are a form of political cheating.

It is no accident that some politions oppose postcard registration, for they have an interest in low voter participation. The largest increase in turnout would be among blacks, Southwesterners, and people with little formal education.

The postcard registration bill will not be enacted this year largely because of the threat of a presidential veto. Even as passed by the House, the bill was not all that might be desired. The effect of postcard registration will be limited unless the government mails the postcards to every household. Nonetheless, the House killed this provision because of the extensive lobbying of state and local election officials who feared the additional paperwork. Congress was badly mistaken in listening to those officials for two reasons. First, the concern should be not to make the lives of registration officials comfortable, but to make registration easier. Second with few exceptions, election officials have rarely made an equally intensive effort to change state registration laws.

The debate about reforming our election laws
RUSTIN (Continued to page 5.)