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There Is No Such Thing As An Educated Person

REFLECTIONS by...

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I came across a profound quote by Eric Hoffer the other day that really hit home for me. The quote went something like this: "In times of change, learners inherit the earth, while the people who consider themselves educated find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists."

Hoffer's comment reaffirmed one of my own basic philosophical principals, for I take the position that there is no such thing on this earth as an "educated person".

In other words, as long as you are living and breathing, and as long as you experience life itself, you can never consider yourself "educated". Every single moment in your life is a new learning situation that you have never before experienced.

Perhaps this might be an oversimplification, but the following example will give you some idea of what I am getting at. It doesn't matter how many times you have gotten up in the morning, walked over to the toaster and put in the bread for your morning nourishment. This morning when you walked over to the toaster was the only time in your life you will ever experience going through that action, on this particular day, at that particular time, during the entire period of your life here on earth. Tomorrow will be different, precisely because it will be a different day. And even if you do everything exactly the same as you have done every day in the past, when you do it tomorrow, you will be learning something new because you will be experiencing that "moment of your life" for the very first time. You may not think you are learning much in the greater scheme of things, but as you are going through the process of preparing the toast, you will be reinforcing some skills that form the total essence of your being. You may simply be learning just how important it is to take the butter out of the freezer the night before so it is soft in the morning. You may have learned that before, but this time you are learning once again how important it is to have soft butter to spread on your toast, so what you

learned previously will be reinforced once again.

If we examine how this principle applies to the world in general, it becomes much clearer. Take a look around you. The world is definitely changing and it will never, ever be the same again. Admittedly the world has gone through changes at other times in its history, but the enormity of what is happening today is without precedent.

Unfortunately there are many people who still insist on continuing to do what they have always done, and who want to live by the old rules. These people are experiencing frustration and failure around almost every corner. They are the ones who think they can rely upon the knowledge they have accumulated in the past to deal with the world we are living in today. They are, as Eric Hoffer says, “Beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists”.

In fact, in times of change such as what we are currently experiencing, the only ones who are going to be able to cope are those among us who are continually striving to learn how to adapt to change and who are willing to prepare themselves for the future. They are the ones who are willing to do new things and have a thirst for expanding their knowledge of the world around them. They are “life-long learners” who wake up each day with renewed excitement about the prospects for the future and respond to the ever-changing world in an appropriate manner instead of constantly trying to fight change and make the new world adapt to them.

And so be it. We are all students of the world. We are all, no matter what our age may be, going through “transition periods” in our own evolution. Each stage of life is preparing us for the next and each stage can be more wonderful than the one before, if only we accept the principle that life itself is one huge school system in which we will never be able to say we have completed our “education”. There is no such thing as an “educated” person. There are only those who embrace learning and those who don’t. As long as we are of this world, if we want to get the most from our experiences, we must embrace our role as learners, equipping ourselves for the world we are living in today and preparing for the world that will be tomorrow,