

The Ultimate Weapon

Thomas Jefferson, Karl Marx, Abraham Lincoln, Adolph Hitler, and John F. Kennedy played significant roles in shaping the world in which we live. Each of these men had the ultimate weapon—the power of the tongue and the pen. The power of highly developed communicative skills is the power to lead—and to persuade men to follow.

Since World War II, world leaders have given considerable thought to the development of the “ultimate weapon.” Perhaps world leaders are looking in the wrong direction for this “ultimate weapon.” Maybe, it has always been with us in the form of the tongue and the pen.

Extension agents, like many college professors, spend so much time accumulating knowledge that they often overlook the important half of the teaching profession—presenting their “words of wisdom” in a manner that cooperators can understand.

This accumulation of knowledge can become the stumbling block for the Extension agent. Many agents feel that all the cooperator has to do is to listen to what he is told and read the leaflets he is provided—the consequence should be successful understanding. This attitude is a fatal mistake. Extension agents assume that cooperators are going to perform well in two of the most untapped skills in the communications field—listening and reading.

Ralph C. Nichols, co-author of the book *Listening and Speaking*, has done extensive research in this field. He finds that the normal listener understands only 25 per cent of what he hears in a meeting. Likewise, in his book *Why Johnny Can't Read*, Rudolph Flesch describes the horrible condition of the average American's reading ability. This inability to read is echoed and documented by many other reading-research authorities.

These studies explode the myth that cooperators understand the thoughts and feelings of the Extension agent simply because the agent knows what he's talking about. As someone has said, “Men who can command words to serve their thoughts and feelings are well on their way to commanding men to serve their purpose.”

The power of the pen and the tongue is the most powerful weapon we possess; it is the ultimate weapon. Why can't we develop and use this power for the benefit of mankind?

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