



A Thought on Presidents' Day 2019

by

Barry Austin Goodfield, PhD

I have something in common with former President Dwight D. Eisenhower we both like Eric Hoffer (July 25, 1898 – May 21, 1983) very much. In fact, Eric was made even more famous when President Eisenhower recommended his book the *True Believer* in an article written to a veteran and published in the New York Times.

In this letter, Eisenhower explained to the veteran that Hoffer, “Points out that dictatorial systems make one contribution to their people which leads them to tend to support such systems — freedom from the necessity of informing themselves and making up their own minds concerning these tremendous complex and difficult questions.” Eisenhower suggested that the authoritarian follower desired nothing more than insulation from the pressures of a free society.

From my mentor S. I. Hayakawa later United States Senator from California was so gracious to introduce me to Eric Hoffer. Eric co-lead with Hayakawa a graduate seminar at San Francisco State in the late 1960s. As Hayakawa’s assistant I had the pleasure and responsibility of getting Eric back-and-forth to his home on Clay Street in San Francisco. During that time our friendship developed. I would periodically visit Eric at his apartment for a cup of coffee made in a cup filled with

Maxwell House instant coffee and hot water boiled on the kitchen stove.

The insulation Eisenhower referenced seems to be a continuing systemic issue in our society today. It's not just a dictator providing viewpoints that become a short circuit too critical thinking, there are the other dictators who 24x7 influence us with their philosophy. You can call it CNN, FOX News or social media there's no shortage of opinions and advice.

Polarized positions on critical subjects are as available as soft drinks on the shelf in the supermarket. And like soft drinks people become mildly and some not so mildly addicted to the flavor and taste of the content.

I have friends of mine who proudly proclaim that the only way they get their news is from one of these two stations for some watered-down version presenting the same biased thought process.

One can only wonder what our presidents would say to the way some of us are spoon fed and others are force-fed the "reality" polished and packaged by professionals.

For full disclosure I must admit that on occasion I have been one of those "credentialed experts" poignantly predicting the implications and consequences of Summit conferences held by President Trump.

I must also say as someone schools in General Semantics and Communication Theory I advocate independent thinker over "Group think" so freely dispensed. Talking heads aren't always filled with wisdom. Their thought per word ratio although presented with passion may sorely lacked content. As an avid news watcher I must confess my primary source of information comes at 5:30 in the morning from the BBC. It's not the accent that attracts me it's the objectivity. Perhaps that's what we need to celebrate when we think about our great country and Presidents' Day.

Ref.: [Eric Hoffer](#)

Picture David Dee Delgado

[President Dwight D. Eisenhower](#)

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