

Letters to the Editor

Gobbledygook

Passaic, New Jersey
December 30, 1957

Editor, *Educational Leadership*

Dear Sir:

It's been a long time since I've laughed so heartily as I did over an article in a professional magazine. I'm referring of course to Newton Hodgson's contribution to "The Importance of People" for November. Though we've had many warnings that the Professional's gobbledygook confuses the public (and ourselves), it is only rarely that someone hits the target as well as your Sunday-off, burned-up correspondent. Long may he blaze!

The remedy for authors and speakers who indulge in a confusing and self-enlarging species of double-talk might be a sentence to six months solitary confinement with copies of Fowler's *Modern English Usage* and Sir Ernest Gower's *Plain Words*. Or perhaps a sabbatical tour of duty as a copy boy for *Readers Digest* (elementary), *Time* (secondary), and the *New Yorker* (education beyond

the high school). Preferably running for James Thurber or E. B. White.

With educational problems tumbling out everywhere (report cards, increasing enrolments, salaries, buildings, curricula, and frantic scientific speed-ups) —O how badly do all of us need to say what we mean, and in the fewest possible words. Not because of our auditor's stupidity, but because the simple word, the direct word, the avoidance of euphemisms and clichés will get our meaning from one mind into the other in the shortest possible time and with the most understanding. This will serve the cause that is our life's work and at the same time be a kind of self-improvement. Which is good.

I'm sure that "The Importance of People" is affording to many others as well as myself, many moments of pleasure (and some of that indirect learning we're always talking about).

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