

Education has become an issue in the presidential campaign. The concern of voters represents traditions of the maturing of children and the attainment of knowledge, but also some contemporary needs like valuing teachers with commensurate salaries, size of classrooms, and safety from gunplay and other forms of violence at schools.

However, Americans don't like too much education. Many corporations benefit when the public is a little stupid.

At a deli recently I ordered a draft beer with my sandwich. The waitress asked, "Would you like a large drink? It's a better value," she explained. She didn't explain other things, like the large drink might give short-term impairment of my judgment and I shouldn't drive after dinner if I ordered one. She didn't explain the starch content of beer and how that might affect the nutritional balance of the food I had ordered. She didn't observe that alcohol is addictive and if I ordered one large beer I might actually thirst for more, or decide to order more food to make up for the quantity of liquid that I'd now be drinking. She didn't even try to argue that I'd loosen up a little more under the influence of the drug. Nor did she caution that the net result is I'd be spending more money, and if saving is what I had in mind I should just order a tall, cool refreshing yard of tap water. No, she pitched it the way her superiors I'm sure had instructed her, "Tell the customer it's a better value."

It's a small incident, but it shows that in marketplace America, better education loses out. If we educate people too much, it will hurt the economy. So some products are labeled "fat-free", even though their sugar content is high, or "sugar-free", even though the cholesterol is high. The makers of chocolate candy, tobacco products, and snack foods sell their merchandise based on enjoyment, not on good health. I don't know the ratio between being smart and buying smart, but many food and drug products are packaged in hopes that people won't know too much about them and will buy them seemingly for their own benefit, but more to benefit the company that produces them.

The Letter to the Ephesians says, "Watch carefully how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of God."

It's no secret that you can succeed in this country without a good education. You can hold high political office without the skills to speak a grammatically correct sentence. You can make more money on an illicit drug deal than as a sacker in a grocery store or as a teacher. You can earn more in professional sports than you can completing a college education. But money isn't everything. Education does not always bring more money -- but it will bring more personal satisfaction, more peace, more love, more charity, more insight, more benefit to the community, less crime, less selfishness. It will also help us understand the will of God.