

March 28, 1965

### WHY PEOPLE BECOME CORRUPT

First of all, you have to figure out what you are working for. It's not enough to know what you're against--like I'm fighting segregation, or the system, or the power structure. In order to get the kind of world you want--a world without segregation and violence and misery--you have to know what you are for. What I think we are all working toward is people having enough to eat and wear, and enough room to live in comfortably, and being able to do the things that they enjoy and not being afraid of getting punished for expressing themselves. I think that's what the Movement is all about when you come down to it. Things like seeing that people have money or jobs or economic or political power are not basically what we're working for. If it were possible for people to get enough to eat and wear and for them to do what they enjoyed, without their getting money or economic or political power, that would be fine. Because money and economic and political power are only one means to an end, and the end is what really counts.

It seems to most people who are trying to bring about change (like civil rights workers) that the only way you can get a better life for people is by getting them more jobs and more money. And the only way to obtain money and jobs is by getting political power. Since the power in this country is held by a power structure consisting of President Johnson and the Democratic Party, and behind them the big corporations, it seems like the only way to get what people need is to get control of the power structure, so as to put some of the control over economic and political matters into your own hands.

So some people who are trying to change things end up working very hard at doing what will make them accepted by the power structure. They talk about dressing respectably and worry about Red-baiting; they try to get into the Democratic Party; they decide on courses of action, like demonstrating (or not demonstrating) on the basis of whether that action is "politically necessary"; and they urge compromise with the power structure, like accepting the two seats at Atlantic City. Of course, such a person has become corrupted. In trying to become part of the power structure, he is forced to lose his militancy; he forgets the people he should be fighting for. He has been taken over by the system.

Other people who are trying to bring about change talk as though they are completely opposed to the system. They prove to you how corrupt and brutal it really is ("Life with Lyndon" is a great example of this); they say that since the power structure is so immoral, what we should do to get power is to be sneaky and underhanded ourselves; they say that since the power structure works like an inefficient and ruthless machine, we must be efficient and disciplined and ruthless ourselves in order to get power; they, too, base their actions on what is "politically necessary."

This second person probably sounds quite different from the first, because the first seeks to gain power by being accepted into the power structure, the other by fighting the power structure and taking its power away. However, both have a number of very important things in common. They both want to take over the power structure. This means that they are both forced to base their actions, not on what the people they represent want, but on the nature of the power structure itself. And they both end up becoming like the system they oppose, although in different ways.

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It is easy to see that the first person is wrong. It is harder to understand how the second person is wrong, but I will try to explain why I think he has fallen into the same trap the first has.

Back at the beginning, I asked what we were working for, and I suggested that economic and political power were only means to an end. They are not necessarily the only way you can bring about a world in which people are free to enjoy themselves. In fact, the present system is based on money and power, and we know all about the misery and cruelty which is a result of that system. But the fact is, the second person is trying to take over a system he knows is bad, using the very means which make it so awful.

Where he has gone wrong is that in his own thinking and acting he has not gone beyond the way things are now. The system says that money and power are important and that you have to be ruthless and efficient to get them; so he is ruthless and efficient to get hold of money and power. Just like the compromiser, he has forgotten the people he is working for, and their basic desires. Instead, he lets the values and structure of the system determine what he does. He cannot bring about any changes in the way things are, because instead of working to build something new, he is all caught up in reacting to the system. He, too, has been taken over by the system.

I am going to write another paper later, explaining what I think we should be doing--how we have to act in terms of what we want, which is free people building their own lives, instead of being forced to react to the system we are stuck with now.

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