

FROM: Richard Mullins, 4th year graduate student, Dept. of Psychology  
RE: The Influence of Good Grooming on Power Structures

The article appearing in this mailing entitled "The Care and Feeding of Power Structures" (so that they can be manipulated for the particular purposes of the civil rights movement) is unique and valuable because it gives a specific, detailed plan of action to achieve definite ends. This type of proposal is rare in liberal movements. Also, many of the premises put forth are true; a great number of business and civic leaders do determine their best interest on a dollars and cents basis and the most effective way of reaching them is through a threat to their pocketbooks.

However, in a movement such as this which is dedicated to human worth and democratic ideals, there are other alternatives which should at least be tried before we assume that all people in the power structure are acting in bad faith and have only their personal gain in mind. These alternatives are not realistic if all human activity is motivated by the desire for personal monetary profit, as Mr. Minnis implies in some of his statements. Examples such as William Plymat of the World Peace Broadcasting Foundation in Des Moines and industrialist Cyrus Eaton illustrate that men of wealth and position will take stands and engage in activities which are not popular with many people and diminish rather than enhance their monetary status. Thus, instead of blanket statements about the corporate elite, each man should at least be judged individually, regardless of the views of his predecessors, to see if he can be reached by moral, humanitarian, or legal arguments before economic pressures (or economic blackmail, as hinted by Mr. Minnis) are applied. It has been shown by psychologists that changes in behavior brought about by threats of punishment are not as permanent or far reaching as those accomplished by more positive means.

It can not be too strongly emphasized that the nature of the institutions which are to be changed must be understood before any action is undertaken. However, a realistic understanding of the ponderous organization of the Chase Manhattan Bank should have indicated that they would have needed more than 24 hours (which was probably used as a token because the young man did not admit the possibility that they might actually do something) to formulate a major policy statement. Because leaders and institutions have not made changes in the past does not mean that they do not think about and are not concerned with the injustices of segregation. Public opinion should be sounded and organized, and the power structure should be made unmistakably aware of it. If the leaders are presumed innocent and given a fair chance to change and still do not, then economic pressure should be brought to bear. In many cases in the South, such as the Montgomery bus boycott, this is a very realistic and proper tool. However, civil rights workers do not have a monopoly on altruistic motivation, and the live alternatives to economic threats should be recognized and tried when caring for and feeding the power structure.