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I almost got hung up over the car thing like everyone else. I'm kind of amazed both about how I almost got caught in it without knowing it, and how I ever got out of it really. The car thing is pretty simple. Cars have become a real status thing in the movement. The cars are part of the sncc fleet, so they don't really belong to anyone in particular, but they are assigned to projects, and really in most cases to the project director. Then they are seen as the personal property of the person, who looks at the car as his own, and becomes jealous of it use. The things that he used to do without a car he can no longer do, and other people around him begin to want the same privileges, and are immobilized by the absence of the car. The fact of the car belonging to the fleet works to increase the status value, because while certain individuals' use of the car is unchallenged, and people will only ask for the use of the car otherwise sitting in front of the house for only the most important of duties, others who are less acknowledged will find that while in charge of a car for a particular duty they will have someone come up and ask for the car. They will be told that the car belongs to sncc and not to them, the underlying logic being that they are in a better position to judge sncc's needs, which is true except that they aren't always doing this.

There's the feeling that seniority and experience (consisting very largely of very real and unduplicatable suffering and danger) have given one the right to demand certain privileges. It will never be articulated this way, but functions this way. It is one of the ways in which the old staff differentiates itself. Unfortunately the old staff is not a singular entity that can make this whole thing work smoothly. There are different stages, a funny hierarchy, which means that nearly always the one in charge of a car can be challenged for its use by another. This brings out a lot of bitterness and resentment of people pulling rank, always unspoken.

Then there's the conviction everyone begins to have that they can't get along without a car, which is what was happening to me. I had decided that there was nothing I could do except go to the projects, and that I needed a car to do this. As a matter of fact I really believed that I couldn't do anything without a car. So I arranged to use Morty's car while he was in New York. Then Courtland asked Morty for the car for the weekend to use for FDP, and Morty bowed to seniority. Because I knew Courtland would not feel responsible to me to get the car back on time, and I felt my project was important, I had Morty tell Courtland the car had to be back in order for me to drive to meet Morty in Memphis.

Elaine DeLott

making them aware of the issues involved in their staying, or the decision should be made to get them out. Since this decision is really alien to the way things are done in the movement, although this might be an example of the paralysis of movement thinking in the way of handling a problem, it must be faced as a test of this way of dealing with things. Certainly this problem must be faced before another summer project is undertaken, unless, of course, the old staff is ready to be perpetually split. Tentative solutions are - perhaps requiring a year commitment from people, sending those (people) around out into the field, really out in the field. This would handle a lot of the people that don't really know why they're here, but have been allowed to hang on.

There is something else to consider. It is the education that Mississippi has given to northern kids coming back from Mississippi on the course of a country. It is important both in terms of 800 kids in the mainstream of a culture, and 800 individuals who have begun to learn new things. In any event, I think it is up to the movement to decide whether it feels capable in terms of the work it wants to do in the south, of taking on the education of American youth in general. I don't think it is a simple decision, but one that must be faced.

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