

Settling Grievances

The general topic in this section of *How to Win Friends* deals with how to win people to your way of thinking. Yesterday we learned that if we're wrong we need to admit it quickly and emphatically. In this chapter, Dale talks about a gentle word and a gracious demeanor that keep a spark of animosity from turning into a flaming inferno of rage.

The example he starts out with is Rockefeller dealing with strikers. It is particularly effective if you know the history behind it. This might be called, *the rrest of the story...*

You only hear in the book about the union's destruction of property and their desire to lynch Rockefeller. These people were living in substandard conditions. Women and children were dying from exposure. Workers were diseased. They were woefully underpaid - essentially slaves to the corporations owned by Rockefeller. The mine owners and steel mills had hired Pinkerton agents here in Colorado to deal with the unionists. They were supposed to be a private security company, like Wells Fargo. In fact they were nothing more than paid thugs and henchmen.

They ambushed the strikers one cold winter night shooting directly into the tents of the union families. Hundreds of women and children were killed and injured. It shocked even the industry magnates in New York. Rockefeller either had to go down there personally to settle things down, or lose control of his corporations in the courts. He was trying to live up to his father's reputation while building his own. He walked into a really dangerous situation. Every one of the union men wanted to kill him for what had happened. They held him responsible for the deaths. It took a lot of courage to go there. Just showing up impressed the strikers. Here is the inheritor of the largest fortune ever amassed, a man of power, influence, and prestige, going to meet a group of grubby, blood-thirsty miners who worked for him. Superior to inferior. Do you know how he behaved?

He met them hat in hand, sat down to dinner with them and ate their food. He listened to what they had to say. He met them face to face, not as boss to employee. He had no idea just how bad the living conditions were until he talked with them and saw the effects of the managerial tactics used by CF&I in Pueblo. The first thing he did was fire the manager. He told the workers he would change things, and he did. He became a hero to them. Now let's ask Dale's question again. "How did he turn them around to his way of thinking?" The answer is that he didn't. He allowed himself to be turned around to *their way of thinking*. There's a lesson to be learned in that.

The issue is really how he gained their respect and got them to go back to work. He began with a gentle voice and tender words. He began by listening to what they had to say. He didn't go in all high and mighty demanding and threatening. Enough people had died at the hands of his managers to risk further bloodshed. But he had to get them to listen - not to reason and certainly not to his way of thinking - but to his apology and his commitment to their future well-being. He won them over with honey, not vinegar. That's the point.

When someone is angry with you, you cannot win them over with logic and reason. *People don't want to change their minds*. They cannot be forced or threatened into agreeing with you. But they can be led to set aside their anger if we are ever so gentle, and ever so friendly. Then dialogue can take place, and understanding may follow. Take that to heart in your marriage, in dealing with your children, in dealing with your co-workers and even your enemies.

"Blessed be the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." (Mt. 5:9)