

Prov. 21:23 "He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity."

Stuart Chase describes a Quaker meeting in which the principle of "cooling" was used very effectively. The situation was that the burial ground of a Quaker meeting house had been filled to capacity. The business meeting was called to decide where future burials would be located. Enlargement of the filled burial ground would take away from the area set aside for their school's playground. There were deep feelings aroused regardless of the plan that was considered by the leaders. Chase describes what happened:

As emotions flared in the first meeting, the clerk called for silence, and then, when he found the atmosphere still electric held the matter over for a month--put it, as it were, into the refrigerator to cool. The second meeting showed little sign of cooling, however, and back to the icebox the subject went. It took six months for the temperature to get suitably low, but agreement when it came was unanimous, with no resentful minority or jubilant majority. . . The issue was not compromised but moved up to another level where a new plan was evolved--a plan in nobody's mind at the beginning of the discussion.<sup>4</sup>

Chase points out that this Quaker principle of calling for silence to cool emotions is used rather widely in political and labor relations. There are some disadvantages to such a device.

1. It may be used manipulatively to control the course of a meeting or discussion within a meeting. A leader who did not like the way things were developing could call for silence. It is not altogether uncommon for manipulative leaders to use a "season of prayer" as a device to turn back legitimate criticism and in some cases make people ashamed that they brought the matter up.

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<sup>4</sup>Stuart Chase, Roads to Agreement, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1951), p. 49.