

The builder came down from the roof. 'I can describe the damage in a way you will get the repairs on your insurance,' he said. 'We wouldn't like that,' said the housewife, 'we try to be absolutely honest.'

The builder was horrified. 'I've never met anyone who's said that,' he said. 'I don't know what to do.'

Have inflation and high taxes priced honesty out of the reach of ordinary people? Why does it matter anyway?

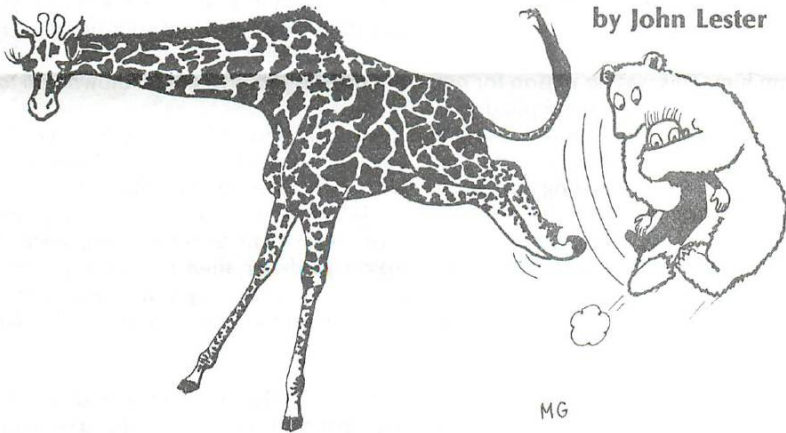
One thing is certain: if you want to make ends meet without taking short cuts, you don't just need a radical approach to honesty. You need a radical approach to money. In this issue we look at both.

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HONESTY... THE ORDINARY MAN'S WATERGATE

by John Lester



MG

A MAN WALKED into the hospital where I was working. His severe stomach ache was the result of a hug from a bear. A scar on his stomach was caused by a kick from a giraffe. His story was so outrageous that everyone believed him. We shouldn't have: he was a pathidine addict and he was lying.

Lying, of course, is as old as man. What is new is that dishonesty is fast becoming endemic in society at large.

A few days ago I was in the home of a senior shop steward. He claimed that dishonesty was rife in his factory. 'There is one man,' he said, 'who is paid for a 40-hour week, but I have never seen him work. He is usually absent for 20 hours and plays cards for the other 20.'

'Then there are those,' he continued, 'who have lost pride in their work and have allowed standards to slip or the pace of work to fall. There are those who go home early. There are shop stewards who allow union work that could be done in a few hours to fill all 40. Others take components out of the factory—often costing over £100 each—and sell them.'

Pilfering, according to John Dale in the *Observer* last year, probably added up to £2,500 million in 1978. Some of it takes place with the employers' consent. And this sum leaves out the fringe benefits, perks and fiddles of white collar workers and executives. A foreman told me of the fiddling that managers indulge in in his firm—cars brought in for new parts and body work, even houses painted at the company's expense.

Then there are tax and social security

fiddles. The same article in the *Observer* suggests that the country loses over £2,000 million a year in tax evasion by small businessmen and moonlighters who do not declare their full earnings. Most of us know people who earn more out of hours, without paying tax, than in their regular job. And every doctor knows the patient who seeks a panel note for some condition which is impossible to assess. Some are genuine—and some are not.

A director I spoke to was well aware of all these forms of dishonesty, although he stressed that the majority are honest.

As lies spread—by imitation, or in retaliation, or to forestall suspected deception—trust is damaged. Yet trust is a social good to be protected just as much as the air we breathe or the water we drink. When it is damaged, the community as a whole suffers; and when it is destroyed, societies falter and collapse.

Sissela Bok, 'Lying'

But fiddling is only possible because the honest condone it. A shop steward who is trying to change some of these practices told me, 'We have all been afraid to tackle dishonesty. I am afraid of what friends and colleagues will think and do to me. Supervisors are afraid. So are the management

who have allowed discipline to slip.'

Money matters are the ordinary man's Watergate—the area in which dishonesty surfaces. The same temptations lie deep in the struggle for power and control, and not only in America. Catholic and Protestant in Ireland, Arab and Jew in the Middle East all have reason to mourn Britain's readiness to promise one thing to one group of people and quite another to others.

The one remaining family director of a well known British car firm gave me an example of this in the industrial field. The board has discovered that by mistake they were underpaying the men. He advised them to set this right immediately. Instead they decided to say nothing and to yield the money under pressure at the next round of pay negotiations. My friend died of a heart attack a few months later, while the company went on to great difficulties from which it has yet to emerge. For where honesty is absent, so is trust.

When trust breaks down Government is tempted to fall back on a firmer interpretation of the law, *greater police protection* and charismatic leadership. State control replaces self-control.

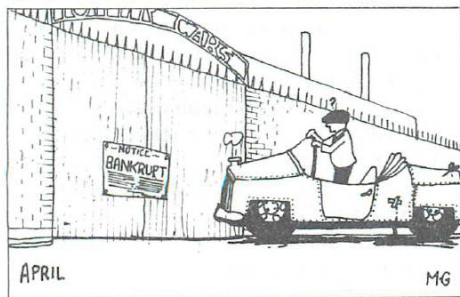
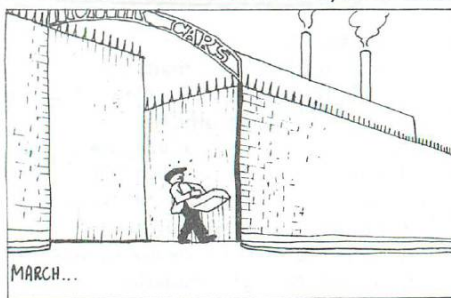
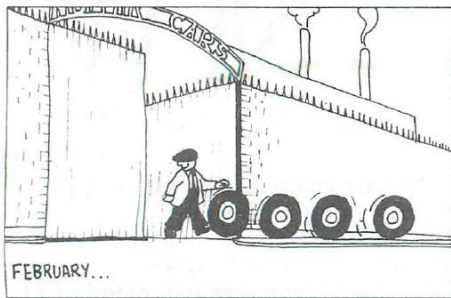
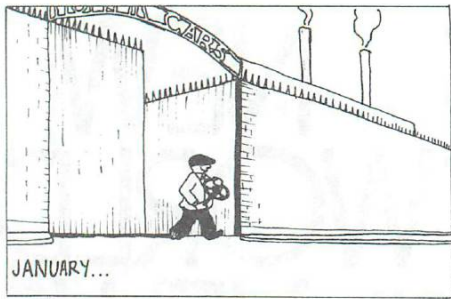
Politics have never worked unless they have served a value which is non-political—an ethic which is greater than the political ethic. Man's only weapon ultimately is one of truth. If he uses that he is stronger than the man who uses something else. If our society were rededicated to truth in its totality and to the increase of human dignity and meaning then I believe we could find a way forward.

Laurens van der Post
speaking in London

But honesty is more than an absence of dishonesty. It is a refreshing virtue. A few incidents have illuminated for me what it means.

When I was eight years old a joiner was making shelving for my parents' garage. 'Why do you take so much care over something that no one will ever know about?' I asked innocently. 'Young man,' he replied,

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HONESTY... Down to earth

ERNST GROSSMANN trains fitter-electricians in Switzerland. He worked as one of a national committee to draft new regulations for apprenticeship schemes. Before the first meeting he wrote down what he thought on the subject: 'It is not adequate simply to state that the employer must educate the apprentice. We must also lay down for him what he should aim to teach: punctuality, high standards of workmanship, a sense of responsibility, independence of thought and action, team spirit, honesty.'

His points were included in the draft regulations which were then examined by colleges, industrialists, trade unions and educational and vocational authorities in all cantons. At each stage the word 'honesty' was deleted and Mr Grossmann struggled to have it put back.

After four years of discussion, the final meeting was due to take place in Bern. Mr Grossmann asked for an interview with the Chairman and explained why he felt honesty was so important. This is the story he told:

On leaving school, our eldest son decided to become a horticulturalist. I asked a nurseryman who had been specially recommended to me if he would take on an apprentice. He refused saying that he had just sacked an apprentice who had lied and stolen from him. This was no reason for not taking on another apprentice, I replied, and eventually he agreed to take my son. But first he wanted to know whether he lied or stole.

This put me in an embarrassing position. I thought, 'If I tell him the truth, he certainly won't take my son. I'm justified in telling a lie for his sake.' So I answered the nurseryman with great conviction, 'My son is neither a liar nor a thief.' The nurseryman took him.

A short time afterwards my son wrote to me: 'Dad, please take me home again. I don't like the job and would rather be an unskilled worker in your firm.' I answered, 'It's always difficult in any job to begin with; just stick it out.'

My son then wrote to our parson asking him to persuade me to take him home. The parson's efforts were in vain, as were those of a trade unionist whom he also approached. When this failed, he wrote, 'If you don't take me home at once, I'll kill myself.'

Early one morning I had the clear thought, 'This apprenticeship started with you telling a lie; you must put that right.' With a heavy heart I went that day to the nurseryman, admitted that I had not told him the truth and apologised. He replied, 'Your son is cut out for this job. I've never known him to lie or steal.'

My son knew nothing of this—I didn't tell him till later—but shortly afterwards he wrote, 'Dad, I have suddenly started to enjoy the job and I want to aim at a first class in my final exam.' He achieved this, became a master-gardener, then a horticultural adviser and a short time ago was appointed an instructor at the Swiss Horticultural College.

When the final draft appeared the Chairman met Mr Grossmann and said with a grin, 'Honesty is in!' He went on to explain, 'Bank scandals and espionage by a senior officer in recent years have shown me the damage dishonesty does to the nation's reputation.' On the Chairman's recommendation the committee agreed to the latest draft, and the Senator concerned put his signature to the clause requiring training in honesty for Swiss apprentices.

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'the Rolls-Royce motto is good enough for me—"Whatever is well done, however humble, is noble".'

The second incident took place when I was twelve. It concerned a friend. The phone rang in his office. He answered it. It was for his boss, who said, 'Tell him I'm out.' 'Tell him yourself, Sir,' my friend replied. He lost his job, but he kept his self-respect.

When I was 16 my maths master said, 'I will get you through this exam, but you should not go on with mathematics at university. You are not good enough.' It hurt—a reason many give for not being honest—but it helped.

As a young house surgeon, some years later, I gave a vague answer to my chief. He saw through me and said sharply, 'Always say you don't know when you don't. Never hide your ignorance. No patient has ever come to harm at the hands of a doctor who admitted he did not know.'

But perhaps the most important incident

took place later still. I was walking down a street in Bombay with an older friend. We had just been to see a distinguished Indian who had asked our help over a difficult decision he had to make. 'I did not help much,' my friend said. 'I am afraid I was trying to impress him.'

I saw that being honest in the generally accepted sense was one thing. But honesty about one's motives, feelings and intentions was a further dimension. It had brought an inner freedom to my friend because where there is no longer anything to hide there is nothing to fear. So although I felt uncomfortable—for I, too, had been seeking to make a good impression on our host—I began to want that quality enough to alter the way I was living.

Such absolute honesty is a quality of great worth. For the future hangs not so much on great men as on the quality of the values by which we live. Oil and other material resources will run out. But the moral capital of a nation is replenishable by the choice of its citizens.

Many of those who have worked for God through the ages have lived on the principle of 'faith and prayer'. Receiving no salary, they have relied on the inspired—and unpredictable—giving of others.

JACQUELINE PIGUET, who with her husband gives all her time to work on this basis with MRA, examined this phenomenon in a recent issue of the French magazine 'Changer'. We reprint extracts:

IN WESTERN SOCIETY voluntary work is seen as an occupation for spare time or retirement, or for a woman with no financial problem. But when someone says he has given up working for a salary—so as to be free for the work of MRA, for example—he meets with amazement, often mixed with scepticism.

Cash or cheque?

I ASKED A MAN who does decorating work in his spare time if he would paint and repaper our dining room. He quoted a price and then asked to be paid in cash. I knew this meant that he would not pay the money into his bank account and that it would not appear in his income tax return. I told him I would like to think it over.

When I took time to consider what God might want me to do, a thought came to me: 'Tell him you would not like to be the cause of him taking any wrong step and that you realise what a big slice the high tax rate takes out of his earnings. Then say you will either pay him the figure in notes or as an alternative you will give him a cheque for the price quoted plus the sum he would have to pay.'

The decorator was silent for a few minutes and then said he would take the cheque. It cost £30 more than we had budgeted for. This was not an easy sum for us to find from our pensions, but it was worth it.

Leslie Fox

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue;
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.

William Shakespeare
from Sonnet 138

Home from sea

'THEY SAY MARRIAGES are made in Heaven, and ours was like nothing on earth.' Kamal and Mita Parekh might have come from different planets. Kamal has his own business in Bombay. He loves life, people and parties and any situation provides an opportunity for a joke. Mita, on the other hand, is an artist. Sensitive and aesthetic, she feels life is a serious business. The first 20 years of their marriage was a trip across a stormy sea and time and again the waves of conflict tossed the family onto the rocks. Their three daughters, Radhi, Millie and Gopi, grew up never knowing what tomorrow would bring. At the age of 13 Radhi had already decided that marriage was a dead loss, to be avoided at all costs.

The Parekhs had visited the MRA centre in Panchgani several times. 'I was well aware of the changes I needed to make in my way of life, but my prayer was, "God give me purity, but not yet,"' says Kamal. 'At the same time I wanted my daughters to take an interest in MRA because I thought that would help the atmosphere at home.'

The family's problems came to a head when Kamal left home, swearing never to return. 'I spent two grim days in a hotel, whiling away the time with drink,' he says. 'Then in desperation I decided to go to Panchgani again.' Not knowing what else to do, a few days later the family followed him.

At Panchgani the family sat down together to thrash out their arguments honestly. 'It took two solid days,' says Kamal. 'I decided to lead a simple, straight life, seeking God's guidance. As soon as I gave myself to God everything around me changed—the trees, sky and flowers all seemed different and cheerful. I felt life was worth the effort. Suddenly I had extra energy and I felt like flying.'

The next day Kamal and Mita found Millie

sitting writing in a notebook. She is the musician of the family, calm and serene on the surface, but dare to lift the lid and the steam shoots out. She had been examining her life in the light of absolute standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love. She told her parents what she had written and all her fears about the future. 'I began to feel I had a responsibility for our family instead of just thinking it was my parents' problem,' she says.

When she returned to Bombay, Millie visited her school principal and apologised to her for cheating in a test. To her surprise the interview finished with the two of them praying together for the school.

Saree material

Meanwhile Kamal too had made a somewhat eccentric move. His decision to live a simple life meant he stopped smoking and drinking. This was a struggle. 'With no drinks being served,' he says, 'a few friends stopped coming to my house and this upset me. But I found out who my real friends were.'

After some weeks Mita suddenly realised that she had given up her daily habit of visiting her husband's office to check up on what he was doing. 'As I began to thank God for the things I did have instead of blaming Him for the things I didn't, my life changed. The energy which had formerly gone into criticism began to be channelled creatively.' She has started a small hand block-printing unit for the sarees and dress materials she designs.

'Our family has not become faultless, but our marriage has been saved and we are happy,' concludes Kamal. 'There seemed to be nothing but despair and emptiness ahead,' says Radhi. 'But God used that time of crisis to give us a new direction.' Jackie Firth

MONEY...

THE LIFE OF THE CATHEDRAL BUILDERS

Everyone in an urban society depends on money which passes from one person to another. Those who unreservedly put themselves into the service of Providence have their 'wages' passed on to them through others' wallets and bank accounts. To some this is a shock. 'If I gave you money, that would embarrass you,' they say.

This does not mean dependence on others' good will. It is not a question of good will at all, but of each person's obedience to the inner voice within him in a task which all take on together. Those who give and those who receive are building the same cathedral. Their jobs may be different, but their aim is the same. The obedience and sacrifice of those who give is matched by the obedience and sacrifice of those who receive. But both have to make the same choice: is my life to be shaped by the bank account or by the inner command?

There is a growing revolt today against the power of money as the overriding factor in all decisions from a family's life-style to international relations. Some react against this by renouncing wealth and raising goats in a tumble-down farm. But more is needed to shift the dead weight of materialism. There needs to be an army of people who dare to shock by going against the current and leading the way for everyone.

No law can ever make people live so unselfishly that there is enough for the needs of everyone everywhere. For a society so conscious of rights, making sacrifices is madness. Sacrifices can only be asked—and obtained—by a command that comes from deep inside each person. Thus 'living by faith' can no longer be something exceptional, the preserve of those who work without salary. It is an attitude of obedience and compassion, to be shared by all who

want to make a breakthrough to a new society.

We have become so used to speaking ill of the second half of our twentieth century that we fail to see the signs of this breakthrough already happening. Never, even at the greatest moments of our history, has there been such widespread concern for the suffering and hunger of others. Such concern as there was used to be the preserve of individuals and religious groups. One cannot imagine governments, fifty years ago, automatically allocating a proportion of their budget—however small—to overseas aid.

We learnt at school of the renaissance, and the age of discoveries. It is conceivable that historians will see our age, too, as a turning point when we made a choice in our economic life, brought unselfishness and sharing into our calculations and created a real community of North and South.

MONEY...

The curate's nest egg

HUGH CHANNER is training as a curate in his first parish, which is in Yorkshire:

IN OUR MARRIAGE SERVICE five years ago I promised Theresa, 'All that I have I share with you.' In fact I hardly owned anything. One friend gave us a dining-room table and chairs which her parents wanted to give to someone in need. Beds and major kitchen items were bought second-hand from other friends who happened to be moving into a smaller house.

Then we needed to change our ailing car, as I had a 20-mile journey to work every day. Granny's estate just happened to be wound up finally at the same time as, almost as a joke, we had arranged a test drive in a new car.

'I get a tremendous kick out of making something out of nothing,' says Theresa, 'whether it's a new recipe from cheap cuts of meat, beans or lentils, or making clothes for the children out of something old.' She is collecting jumble to raise money for the local Life group. Some of the items will be absorbed into our wardrobes. In fact Alice



and Helen, aged three and 18 months, are almost entirely clothed with gifts or permanent loans.

We have started thinking about the children's future. Should we start saving for it now? Should we take out life insurance? To what extent can we—or should we—protect our children from the harsh realities of the world?

We've only just started asking such questions but it seems that our own attitude towards possessions and financial security is the real answer. Children are great copiers. If we are never satisfied with what we've got, how will they learn to be? If we put our relative needs before the absolute needs of people of other countries they will copy us.

We have started to ration the children to two 'sweetie days' a week. This means that Alice often needs to know what day it is at a very early hour, but we know that it is helping her to discipline her wants.

Resources are dwindling and consumption is increasing. The survival of many people in the poor part of the world depends on our rich countries controlling our demand for a larger slice of the cake. 'Surely,' says Theresa, 'we must learn to make the best out of what we have.'

On the comet's tail

ONE DAY as I cycled along our busy High Street, edging between the tramlines, I had an unpleasant thought. I had just acquired £1000, and as the income from it had strings attached, I had decided to leave it in a will to the Oxford Group (later MRA). 'What,' I thought, 'if God thinks He can do more with my money than with me and so whisks me off from this earthly scene?'

That experience, many years ago, started me off on a life-long exploration of how to steward God's resources. Until then I had always thought of money as a means of getting things—the frills of life as well as the basic securities. To see money as a means

of getting things done was a new idea to me.

Behind different enterprises—such as a campaign with an MRA play—lies a comet's tail of giving on the part of a host of ordinary people. They range from the man who sacrifices his savings to travel to a distant country with such a drama group, to the elderly lady whose cheque comes from the home-made marmalade she has sold.

One may get an idea that turns into a money-spinner—to give an original fundraising party, arrange a film show, sell a piece of jewelry, find a rewarding use of a skill. Over the years I have found it is important not to delay or dither. These ideas may come from God—and you have to act in accordance with His timing.

One of the biggest bogey myths in our

country today is the assumption that to accept a slightly lower standard of living is an unthinkable disaster. I write as one of the thousands of retired people with small incomes who live in bungalows, guest houses, flatlets, or bedsitters. Our standard of living has come down with a bump since the days before the war when many of us lived in modest affluence. But we still have food and warmth and a roof over our heads.

I have not found that life has become cramped as material and physical assets decreased. My own spiritual journey goes on and so does my exploration of God's resources. The bogey has walked into my life and turned out to be a shadowy little scarecrow.

Mamie Fancourt

For the record

I WANTED to have a record player and there was a sale in a nearby shop. I studied the prices and found I could afford one. But it wasn't as simple as that. I had been trying to work out the right use of money—what to spend and what to give away. I feel we must look at our 'needs' in the light of the poverty in many countries; can people in the Western world find something more satisfying than possessions? These are questions which need answers.

In the end I decided against buying the record player. Later that day I met a new neighbour. 'Come and have a cup of tea,' I said on impulse. As we talked she told me how worried she was about her teenage son. I could only speak of my own faith in God's love for each of us even though sometimes the picture looks black. As my neighbour got up to go she suddenly said, 'Would you like a record player? I have one I want to give away.'

Soon after she told me that when she got home that day she prayed asking God to lift the burden of her worry. And peace flooded in.

Vera Frampton

**People bank with interest
and play the stock exchange:
if you have money to invest
it is easy to arrange.**

**And money brings you dividends,
(though taxes seem to take a lot)
you make it work for useful ends,
you multiply what you have got.**

**But we, we bank on what
we haven't got
and that's a lot!**

**We reap unending dividends
regardless of the market trends.**

Signalund Strong