

W. Gale Cutler's Commentary on "Using Company Resources"

Commentary On
Using Company Resources

In the publication "Common Sense and Everyday Ethics" (American Viewpoint, Inc., 1980) there is an interesting quote:

There is no such animal as an absolutely honest human being, and there is no perfect society. For whatever reasons, however, it does seem that it is the compelling destiny of man to seek survival. In the process of trying to survive under increasingly complicated demands and responsibilities, both individual man and society as a whole must strive toward perfection or slide toward destruction.

In this case Al cheats his company by ordering tools for his own use, Michael fears Al's management power over him and takes a devious route to disclose Al's dishonesty rather than confronting Al directly, and then he lies about having disclosed Al's dishonesty.

Lying (a lie is a false statement or action made with the intent to deceive) is an omnipresent social disease that may be endured in mild forms, but at advanced and epidemic stages can erupt to destroy the foundations of a free society. Today many people do not consider lying dishonest!! To them the threshold of dishonesty begins with stealing. A significant number do not even consider stealing very dishonest, may not at all when one steals from big businesses (a large manufacturing plant, a major insurance company, a utility, etc.). Some people feel so impersonally toward big businesses that they do not think of a big corporation as having any particular ownership.

The government doesn't fare any better. The honor system of paying one's proper taxes is now eroding. Unreported earnings from cash income taken in by various industries, services and individuals have been estimated at several hundred billion dollars annually. This type of lying isn't just a harmless social habit that can be

tolerated ethically and morally- it's a decline in society's honesty.

People will claim that they lie because they do not wish to hurt someone by telling the truth. The inescapable conclusion of this type of thinking is that it is all right to lie anytime it will benefit oneself or one's friend. What if everyone used this standard? Sooner or later you wouldn't be able to trust anyone.

Doubtless there may be times when it might seem preferable to lie rather than not lie, but if an individual must lie to save his job, then he is working for the wrong person in the wrong place. In this case, Al is clearly committing a wrong act in ordering tools for his own use and, when found out, should be severely reprimanded or discharged. Michael should either confront Al directly or when accused by Al of "ratting" say clearly that he did "rat." If Michael has to live a lie to preserve his job, he is working for the wrong person and the wrong company. Even if Michael lies to Al, it is probably inevitable that Al will find out who told on him. Rather than live in dread of this, Michael should face up to Al when asked if he "ratted" and hope that management will back him in disclosing Al's wrongdoing. If management doesn't, Michael will simply have learned that he is working for the wrong person and the wrong company.