

# U.S. Law Should Require Criminals Repay Losses Suffered by Victims

**T**HE United States government acted properly in retrieving the merchant ship taken over by Asian Communists.

Now, let's turn our attention to the protection of lives and property here at home. American criminals have no more right to appropriate things of value by theft, fraud or force from other Americans than nations have to steal our ships.

Yet, this is happening every day.

Freedom by the American definition includes the right to own property. When the government cannot or will not protect our property, this part of our freedom is lost. Our government is not in charge of the situation. Outlaws are in control, because it is they who can decide which people may live, who may walk the streets unmolested, whose homes are safe, and who may retain their property and their money.

Outlaws sometimes are better protected than their victims. A newspaper story a few days ago told about a man who had some rare guns stolen. By skillful detective work, he located the thief, managed to enter his home legally to identify the guns, ~~and didn't have to work, while his~~ legal search to recover his property, along with that stolen from others.

The thief had entered the man's home illegally, but the constitution prevented police from entering his home to search for stolen property until they had evidence and a search warrant.

Another item described a woman who was beaten by a husky youth who stole her money. He was provided with a place to stay, food to eat and didn't have to work, while his victim was unable to work and was without funds for food.

The criminal was under no compulsion to restore the woman's losses. Even if he was imprisoned, the victim suffered more than the outlaw did. This is commonly the case.

Many welfare and Social Security checks are stolen, depriving elderly or needy people of money for food and shelter. Even if the thieves are known, they often go free and victims go hungry.

It has been suggested that public funds ought to be provided to reimburse victims of crimes, but that is

not the best answer. A better way would be to capture the criminals and, as a part of their punishment, require them to work and repay their victims insofar as possible. There is no way to recompense fully for beatings, stabbings, gunshot wounds or death.

Nevada has a shoplifters' law that requires parents to pay all legal fees, fines and retribution costs to merchants if their minor children are caught stealing. This is a good step, but why not require adults to make restitution, also?

With all of the self-righteous concern that is expressed for the welfare of lawbreakers by courts, Congress, legislators, lawyers and civil rights groups, it is time that crime victims be given consideration, also.

Records show that criminals frequently commit illegal acts because they are unwilling to work. If they had to pay back what they stole, plus a penalty, many of them might find it is easier to work and earn the money they want in the first place.

325 S. 2nd. Street  
Purcell, Okla. 73080  
May 20, 1975

Mr. Ferdie J. Deering  
THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN  
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Dear Mr. Deering:

This is commend you for your editorial in THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN Tuesday, May 20. The editorial, "U.S. Law Should Require Criminals Repay Losses Suffered by Victims," exactly expresses my own ideas on the subject. To me it is an intelligent way to handle criminals and would be a more effective deterrent than a fine and a period in jail. The victim deserves some help, also. Such treatment could help both the criminal and the victim.

Sincerely,

*Alma Lee Marti*

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