

# Harvesting Fruits of New Morality

**I**F YOU HAVE been a victim of theft or robbery, or have been cheated in a business deal, you may have been harvesting fruits of the "new morality." That is the trend toward permissiveness and the philosophy that each individual ought to decide for himself what is right or proper in any given circumstance.

Circumstances today apply tremendous pressures to individuals to lie, cheat or steal in an effort to get even or stay even with the world in which they live. They frequently cause moral people to lose their sense of right and wrong.

A notable example was conviction of 230 or more Oklahoma county commissioners who had been elected to positions of trust by voters who thought they could be depended upon to do what was right. Most of these convicted admitted they had not done so.

Corruption may begin at home just as well as at the county courthouse, city hall, state capital or in Washington.

A great many people feel that they are underpaid and overtaxed,

so one of the nation's great games is to outwit tax collectors. It is the taxpayers' right to claim all legal deductions and "loopholes" but records show many go beyond that line.

Employees sometimes try to rationalize their embezzlement of cash or theft of tools from employers on grounds they are not being paid what they are worth. Such activities are no more right than the robber with a gun, a shoplifter with a "booster bag," or a crook making purchases by using other people's credit cards.

It appears that much of the increase in bankruptcies may be due to people trying to escape debts they ought to pay. Millions of dollars in student loans go unpaid because borrower's education did not include indoctrination regarding honesty and responsibility.

College students using computers to break into private records may be only a sample of what could be happening in professional circles. One big bank was taken for \$21 million but who knows how many unde-

tected crimes are being pulled off?

Sociologists trying to analyze the urge to cheat sometimes overlook basic laws of civilization that demand honesty and fairness in dealings among people. One said: "Rather than having classes to raise people's morals, we should decide clearly what kind of behavior is acceptable. If we want people to be honest, we have to reward them when they are and punish them when they're not."

Reformers argue that it is impossible to regulate morals by legislation, but from earliest times there have been laws of God, laws of man, laws of nations, laws of states, and laws of cities.

Laws cannot stop unethical, dishonest or immoral behavior unless they are enforced. They will not be enforced unless people want a decent, safe society enough to demand it.

As the urge to cheat spreads, our civilization is bound to degenerate into nothing more than a "dog eat dog" society.