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Truth Needs All the Help It Can Get

HONEST people are not extinct but if you read much about what the human race is doing you could get the idea that they are an endangered species.

Recent news items said businesses suffered employee thefts amounting to \$20 billion last year. Among measures being taken to offset these losses, businesses increasingly are subjecting employees to polygraph examinations.

Electronic lie detectors aren't the first devices capable of determining truth or falsehood. Parents and wives have had a reputation in this field for a long time. Reliability of polygraphs and human lie detectors still are being challenged.

A magazine cartoon showed a group of slot machines. A sign on one asked "What's Your Heart Rate?" Another urged "Check Your Blood Pressure." The sign on a polygraph advised "Detect Your Own Lies."

A famous confidence man declared "You can't cheat an honest man," meaning others have enough greed to overcome their honesty. If

true, it points up the rarity of honest individuals, because a lot of people are taken for suckers every day.

Besides the old "pigeon drop" and other schemes that are pulled off with astonishing frequency, people fall for fake merchandise, bogus art, loan swindles, and political promises.

Lying is international. This month a West German news magazine, Der Spiegel, bought page ads in the United States to announce it had withdrawn a libel suit filed against a British publication which allegedly had implied it was controlled by Russia's KGB.

The suit was settled in the House of Commons when the parties agreed that Soviet Intelligence Agencies seek to manipulate Free World Media with forgeries and deliberate falsehoods.

What would happen if everybody told nothing but the truth for a day? It probably wouldn't make us speechless but it could cut a lot of conversations short.

Some people lie to get a job, to get ahead, to make money, or to im-

press others. There are some who seem to lie just because they are listening to their own tall tales.

When I was a boy I enjoyed listening to an old cowboy who worked for my father. With a straight face, except for a cheekful of chewing tobacco, he told outlandish yarns. He was the hero of most of them and may have believed them himself, if others didn't.

In order to be truthful, an individual either must know the truth or be honest enough to admit it. "Stonewalling," meaning saying nothing at all, is a current Washington buzz word for dodging the issues.

In his famous "Essay on Man," written in 1734, Alexander Pope wrote "An honest man is the noblest work of God." But in these days when people have fantastic ways of stretching the truth to cover almost any situation a Chinese proverb also may be worth considering. It said, "Lock your door and make a neighbor honest." Truth needs all the help it can get.