

GROWTH AND HONESTY

The other day I met a highly experienced leader in community training who informed me about the problems he finds in his work with Filipinos both young and old. As a man who loves his people and is determined to succeed in the important assignment entrusted to him, he has taken up his work with a serious purpose and a will to overcome the varied obstacles on the way. With his usual way of analyzing the problems which he expects to meet, he confided to me that what makes the solution of most of them very difficult is the low regard which our people have for honesty in most of their work and in their social relationship. All of them speak highly of honesty. But in their personal dealings with others, they do not act honestly. In fact, they do not feel that dishonesty is inherently wrong. To them cheating is not always abhorrent. One who acquires a fortune through dishonest means is as respected in our society as a person who observes the moral rules as faithfully as he can. There is no social stigma a dishonest person receives from dishonesty that closes the door of so-called respectable clubs and the friendship of decent families to him.

But a community, a town, or a barrio that is addicted to dishonesty in its general behavior, this gentleman observes, acquires not only a bad moral reputation but also a distinct economic disadvantage. Its material growth gets stunted. People outside tend to avoid doing business within it. Its land values do not improve. It experiences a general social anemia, and finds itself shunned by people who are interested in a decent, clean, and safe environment. — V.G.S.