

EVERYBODY'S DOING IT

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"Everybody does it." That's what the little boy said when his teacher caught him cheating on a test.

"But Mom, everybody does it," wailed the girl, whose parents had just lectured her for staying out until three.

"Aw, everybody does it," explained the policeman whose habit of winking at minor traffic violations for a small fee had been discovered.

"Everybody does it," said the youth when questioned about drinking at a local tavern with his friends.

Who is this "Everybody?" Should we really go through life with the philosophy that almost anything is alright ... as long as an undefined "Everybody" is doing it?

An alert citizen would certainly have to agree that it would seem so. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, crime increased 27% in this country while the population increased only seven percent ... embezzlement has doubled since 1956 ... and crimes by citizens under 18 years of age increased by 12% in 1963 alone. Orlando W. Wilson, Superintendent of the Chicago Police Force, told a committee of the Bar Association that "crime is overwhemning our society."

However, evidence of the decline in morality is not to be found in crime statistics alone. Let's just take a look around. The Daily Telegraph, one of London's leading newspapers, said in an editorial on "The New Morality": "This new, subjective morality has come perilously near to the doctrine that 'What is, is right'."

Since when have individuals determined their standards by that legion of sinners known as "Everybody?" Since when does practice make perfect? Of course, I can cite no definite point in our history at which mob rule became the guide for personal standards. Generation after generation tried to rear children to be moral citizens with high standards. Time after time the parents repeated, "It's not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game."

But, human nature being what it is, youth looks to adults for examples to follow. They now see that the mark of a successful man is not how he has played, but what he has won or lost. This concept has led to several important developments

in our national standards ... our way of life.

For instance, divorce -- which used to be disgraceful -- is now so commonplace that it is only unusual if one has been divorced three or four times.

The American public actually spends more money annually for liquor and cosmetics than for education. Illegitimacy has grown. It has been estimated that one out of every six brides is pregnant at the time of her wedding.

More and more citizens are being caught lying just a little on their income tax forms. If a man doesn't try to cheat the government, he's not considered honest, but stupid!

This then, is how the game is played. Youth discovers that, in practice, winning or losing is important -- the way you play the game does not really matter. It is little wonder, today, that the college student takes the bribe that the adult "fixer" gives him for doing a little favor like not scoring points for his team. Not surprising either is the decline of the honor system in American schools, as indicated by recent events at the Air Force Academy.

The problem is that the majority of the people do not take an active stand against these evils in our society. Our values seem to have changed. These new values come about through significant changes in our way of life. For example, leisure time, of which we have more than any other society, has proved to be the germ that has provided a fast spreading cancer: the decline of individual productivity.

Once a man worked until he had accomplished something. There was a pride in workmanship that carried over from his job into his spare time, in which he actively pursued a productive hobby. An outstanding example of this was Thomas Edison. And the Wright brothers put in a full day at the bicycle shop before tinkering with any flying machine!

But modern man seems unable to fill his time with worthwhile activity. He sits behind a desk or at a machine for the required number of hours, thinking continually of ways to get a shorter work week -- and a pay raise ... and generally he gets them.

What does he do with his newly acquired time? After "work", golf and other fashionable sports consume some of it. And the "vast wasteland", that is television programming accounts for much of the rest.

Turning now to the executive, let's see how some of our more affluent citizens are spending their time. First, a client comes into town and is installed in the best lodgings the company can afford. Before dinner he is perhaps treated to a Turkish bath. An attractive girl comes into his room. The client is taken out to dinner, which is served with cocktails, wine, and plenty of atmosphere. Later, the client may get drunk as he wishes on the company time and money.

Yes, this is a description of business practices in modern America... but it could be that of Rome, about 500 A.D., just before the once great democracy fell to the barbarians. There is a striking similarity between the histories of ancient Rome and modern America: they both began as democracies with high individual standards and a nation-wide desire to improve. Not long ago the United States became the most advanced nation in today's world in scientific achievement, military might, excellence in the arts, and standard of living. Rome achieved this status too.

What will happen to us now? If history continues to repeat itself, we may guess that it is time for our society to decay and wither, along with each citizen's decadence. After all, no democracy has ever lasted over 200 years... do we only have 11 years left?

We know that Rome's citizens partied too much and became morally as well as physically soft. And we know that the barbarians came and took what the Romans apparently no longer cared for -- Roman property, way of life ... life itself.

A modern parallel to the barbarians is the greatest of our Communist foes, China, which today echoes in deadly overtones the statement of former Russian leader Nikita Khrushchev: "We will bury you!" Will they have to? Or are we busy doing the job for them right now? Are we ready to surrender our lives, our way of life, to the enemy, because they no longer seem worth fighting for? When will we realize that this new morality (if mob rule can be called morality) threatens us with the loss of everything we ought to care about? A mathematical axiom says that the whole is equal to the sum of the parts. This concept applies to our society: it is no better and no worse than you, and you, and you, and me, and everyone else in the country.

Which brings us back to the original question. Does everybody do it? That depends on you!