

## The Truth About Lying

L YING is never expedient. This is not a moralistic observation; it is a deduction from objective experience.

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Modern propaganda is expedient lying developed to the status of a fine art. It starts with a basic principle: that the liar-in-chief must prepare "his people" psychologically for the plan of living which in his omniscience he has ordained for their own good. His Munchausenisms have a purpose, a mission. Since the Plan is good, whatever expedites the Plan must be good. Thus the deliberate lie—which in private life would make him a social outcast—makes a patriot of the Planner.

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This use of the expedient lie is not confined to the avowedly totalitarian governments. Whenever the State, even under the democratic form, assumes to function for the "good of the people," the tendency to mould public opinion to the acceptance of the "good" grows apace. This tendency is not limited to the outright lie. The distortion of facts, the use of the half-truth, the over-emphasis of unimportant details, the drawing of favorable conclusions from basically erroneous but imposing statistics, these are some of the methods to which even we in democratic America have become somewhat inured. Pressure groups justify their use of this method on the ground of expediency; and the State is the apotheosis of pressure group polity.

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The recrudescence of Stateism in modern times has been attended, naturally, with an ap-

palling amount of propaganda. But, because lies seem to carry with them their own detectors, the residuum of all this lying is extreme skepticism. So much so that even an obvious truth is scanned doubtfully, and never accepted without reservation.

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Only a nit-wit believes the dispatches from the war zones; and many of us have got into the habit of looking for the lie in every statement from every capital, including Washington. Which is good; for the surreptitious attempts to inveigle us into this imperialistic war will continue until they are successful or the war collapses.

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But, the point is that all this lying has been quite inexpedient. In all neutral nations it has failed and we have no doubt that even in the warring nations there is a modicum of sanity that cannot be blotted out by lies.

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Perhaps, after all, then, honesty is the best policy—the truth is most expedient. All the truth. If that is so, and experience most decidedly demonstrates that it is, the half-truth method of advancing any philosophy—and particularly the philosophy of Henry George—is worthless. Cunning deception seems always to be detected, and the deceiver branded as a liar. It thus becomes inexpedient. If one goes down to defeat flying the banner of Truth, one at least gains the respect of one's enemies; and that is expedient for the next battle.