

In·My·Opinion

Malcolm Pettit

Malcolm Pettit is the marketing manager of Alginure Products. He is pictured in a less familiar role—as reader and assistant minister of All Saints, Clifton, Beds.

CLEARLY, the responsibility of communicating an idea or opinion to such a motley assortment of the human race as the the readers of this illustrious journal is not one to be taken lightly and it was with a blend of fear, excitement and vigour that I took up the pen in pursuit of the task.

Unhappily, that blend lacked the one essential ingredient—a topic of sufficient interest to titivate the imagination, stimulate controversy, inspire enthusiasm and generally achieve recognition for the writer as the new prophet for which the sports turf industry has waited so long.

In these circumstances, there was only one thing to be done. A course of action taken at times of crises throughout history by great men and women (lest I be accused of chauvinism by feminists) recommended itself to me. I responded promptly, poured out a generous noggin and went and sat in my easy chair to mull over the current problems that confront us and was soon deep in thought.

I suppose it was inevitable that I should close my eyes as an aid to concentration and if that state modulated into a fitful sleep, who should wonder? The pressure of the aggressive life lived by the paladins of industry is no light thing and surely it was the Bard himself who recommended “sleep that knits up the unravelled skeins of care”.

It was in that state, if you are still with me (and I can understand and forgive if you have turned the page), that I found myself in a state of trance wherein I perceived strange characters and voices vying for attention.

It seemed that I was in some vast amphitheatre with a stage surrounded by fiery beacons whose flames were of several bright shades of red, yellow and blue merging, flickering and dancing. I saw a crowd of folk kneeling and standing around the front of the stage. They seemed to be



crying out a mixture of chants and pleas: “Show us the way.” “What is the truth?” “Help us.”

Suddenly, a hush descended as piercing spotlights picked out figures on the stage. At first, they were vague and ephemeral, but gradually they took more definite form and I became aware that one of them was a man of chunky build. His grizzled but kindly face was topped by greying hair that flapped across his brow and he was dressed in a garment like a Roman toga with, on his head, a coronet of laurel leaves.

He threw up his arm and began to speak with the stentorian tones and authority of the orators of old. “Death to meadow grass!” he proclaimed. “Save yourselves from this wicked generation of sellers of pop-up irrigation and makers of fertiliser. Return to the ways of your forefathers

and follow the way of starvation and striving. I, Arturus Jamesis Maximus, have declared it.”

Just as suddenly as it had come, so his shape dissolved and disappeared and there arose a murmuring from a part of the crowd. “It is true, O Arturus. We have seen it with our own eyes and have followed your words. There is only one way.”

A shrill, piercing blast as from a silver trumpet rent the air and all was silence as there emerged a second figure on the stage. A tall, bespectacled man of grave mien, yet with a twinkling eye and dressed in academic robes and mortar-board.

As he spoke in calm and measured tones I detected a warm Celtic burr in his voice. “Turn to science for your salvation,” he declared. “Don’t be led astray by peddlers of untried solutions to your problems. Test their ideas, their systems, their products, their machines in the light of the truth of Bingley.”

Having said which he, too, receded from view and I was aware that another body of the crowd, who seemed to carry with them various pieces of testing equipment, were nodding in agreement.

There was a low rumbling, as of distant thunder, and two more figures appeared—one from the North West, the other from the East, each driving a machine. One pulled a vast mechanical contrivance, which seemed to cut through the grass and/or bore holes into it, while the second spread sand in its wake.

Each was an honest artisan type, of open countenance and yet with an alert air of learning about them. “We have brought our treasures from afar,” they cried. “Sand from Essex. Blades and spikes from Lancashire. Return to sand and aeration and all will be well with the land that your masters have left in your charge.” Then they, too, vanished and many of the watching crowd took up the

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chants: "Spike and sand. Slit and sand."

In turn, their cries were drowned by the appearance of a vast procession lead by the throbbing beat of a brass band, American style. The tumbling clowns with painted, smiling faces slapped the onlookers on the shoulder and pressed upon them glossy brochures illustrated prolifically with pictures of vast, expensive machines. Dancing girls, scantily clad, bewitched the watching crowd and offered sample packets, brightly coloured, of seeds and fertilisers, while jugglers and acrobats cavorted in front of displays of chemicals.

As quickly as it had appeared, it passed on leaving the ranks of onlookers silent, bewildered and puzzled until from among them a hesitant figure came forward and stood at the front of the stage. He paused, mopped his brow, and stammered inarticulately. "My friends," he croaked, "we all seek the answer. We all want simplicity. We all search for the better way. Yet we remain confused by the voices that call us to follow each and every wave of doctrine.

No magic cure

"Perhaps today we have learned that there is no single way, no magic cure. We must each seek the blend of wisdom, experience, knowledge and materials that have been shown to us in the light of our own particular problems. They are there for us to use. Let us not be afraid to enquire, examine and test them all and then we shall find our way ahead."

I listened. Surely the voice was familiar? I looked. The person was strangely like the face I saw in the

mirror each morning. I woke, brow bathed in perspiration, hands twitching with excitement, aware of someone shaking my shoulder gently.

"Do you want another drink, dear? Lunch will be in ten minutes," my wife said.

Now, about this article! Where was I?

(Author's note: Any similarity between the characters depicted and persons recognising themselves is wholly deliberate and not to be taken lightly!)

EIGGA News & Views—Continued...

London

The branch's first evening match of the season was held courtesy of Northwood GC. As expected, Michael and his staff had the course in exceptional condition. Many thanks go to Parkers for continued support. The winners were: 1st—C.Slater, 2nd—T.Low and 3rd—D.Stenton.

A one-day seminar will be held at Moor Park GC on Wednesday, November 28. Letters will be sent to all head greenkeepers and greens chairmen. Please ensure that all forms are returned as soon as possible.

The cost for the day will be about £8, which will include morning coffee, buffet lunch and afternoon tea.

If this seminar is a success, as expected, a further one-day event will be held in February.

Tickets for the annual dinner-dance at the Post House Hotel, Heathrow will also be available shortly. Contact Tom McDonald on 01-950 7469 for tickets.

The autumn meeting has been arranged at Porters Park GC on Monday, September 24.

David MacIndoe.

EIGGA Increases

New prices for association clothing are: ties—£3.75 (from £3.50), pullovers—£15 (from £14) and blazers—£43.50 (from £40).

East Anglia

There was a nice, quiet gathering at Bishop's Stortford recently. My apprentice informs me that all was well on the course. My assistant agreed—having received the booby prize, I guess he saw most of the course! Twenty-six attended and four indicated a desire to play, but did not arrive. We may have to ask for money with entry forms if it happens too often.

Prizes went to: 1st—Steve Thresher with 38 points on the Home Course. Steve won the new Kings Shield and a replica donated by Kings of Coggeshall; 2nd—Larry Coytie (on countback), 38 pts and 3rd—Steve Noye, 37 pts.

Graham Brighton won a 1/4lb tea with the suggestion that he should stick to that sort of tea! Our thanks to Bishop's Stortford for a super day. I'm only sorry I wasn't there.

Future dates include Bury St Edmunds on September 6 and the greenkeepers versus the captains match at Frinton on October 23.

Mick Lathrope.

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