Chairman’s message

As my year of EIGGA chairmanship draws to a close, I would like to make some observations about our industry in general and EIGGA in particular.

First, I should like to say what an honour it has been for me to have served as chairman since my election at Cambridge. I have greatly enjoyed meeting people from this and other countries who share the same interests and ideals.

EIGGA has, in its first two years, come a long way—perhaps not as far as some would have liked, but things take time.

Looking at education, EIGGA is now represented on the GTC (Greenkeeper Training Committee) along with SIGGA, the BGGA, the secretaries’ association, national golf unions, Bingley and Jim Arthur. The aims of the GTC are to check on the content of courses on offer, discussing with the tutors what greenkeepers feel is right or wrong and to ensure that they are run on the right lines.

The involvement of the golf unions is extremely important, as it has become obvious that, in many cases, golf clubs do not wish to educate their staff. The reasons behind this attitude are many but, with the support of the golf unions, we will have a stronger voice. After all, better education will have many benefits, most obviously the improved condition of the courses.

This brings me to the standing of greenkeepers in golf. EIGGA was formed to present a much more professional image, both in education and appearance. The latter has, undoubtedly, been achieved. The new blazers and ties mark our members as the smartest in the country and this has brought favourable comment from many quarters.

Education, as I have said, is moving along the lines we wish to see, coupled with the various diplomas offered by EIGGA. It should be noted that some colleges are offering a phase three City and Guilds course in management, covering all aspects of golf course management. However, I feel it must be said that greenkeepers can be, and frequently are, their own worst enemies. Many seeking more rewards from their chosen career are not prepared to help themselves.

How can we expect others to take us seriously when we do not take ourselves as such? There are several thousand greenkeepers in this country today—how many belong to an association? Far and away the minority.

Apathy is our worst enemy. I’m not quite sure how we deal with this, but deal with it we must to achieve our goals. Ask yourself: “What do I want from greenkeeping?” If you consider it a 40 hours a week job—and many do—and when you have finished work, you no longer want to think about golf courses, then changes in
status and salaries are a long way off.

Greenkeeping is a profession, make no mistake about it—a career that is with you 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It is not that many years ago that professional golfers were looked down upon and it is only since the formation of the PGA that progress and status have zoomed. Strength is what we need. Every greenkeeper in this country should join EIGGA now. We already have more greenkeeper members than any other association in Britain, but we need more. If every head greenkeeper joined, we would have 2,000 members!

Progress must be maintained. Our most important aim is to employ a full-time administrator to visit clubs and check on such things as conditions of employment. This can only be achieved with money. All over the country there is a small hard core of dedicated people working to benefit your future. Give them the backing they deserve. Support your branch and if you don't have one, form one today!

I was interested to read a recent article questioning the role of agronomists in British greenkeeping. The author said they threatened the jobs of many greenkeepers and that if greenkeepers were more articulate, agronomists would be out of a job.

I do not agree with this view. On a well-run course, the course manager and the agronomist can work in harmony. It is extremely helpful to have a second opinion from a trained eye. As for being more articulate, we're back to education again, aren't we?

In a recent copy of the USGA Green Section Record, there was a letter from a top superintendent thanking agronomists for their contribution to raising the status of superintendents in America. The secretary, course manager and agronomist are all part of a team—they are not in competition.

I trust that as many members as possible will attend EIGGA's annual conference at Warwick University on March 22, 23 and 24. A full programme is planned by greenkeepers for greenkeepers.

I look forward to seeing EIGGA move ahead in 1985. Remember, your future is in your hands. Join now!

Peter Wisbey.