Are we suffering from too much education? The array of conferences now all competing for the same audience has led to a situation where choices have to be made about what to attend and what not to attend. There are conferences or similar educational events by the IOG, STRI, TAE, EGU, BIGGA, GCSCA, FEGGA and more besides.

There are architects' and constructors' conferences, irrigation conferences, turf suppliers' conferences and one day greenkeeping conferences run by the trade. This year we have ended up the losers but it will be someone else's turn next and this does none of us any good.

Maybe it is time that we got together to use our combined resources to produce an international sports turf industry conference at a major venue. As a combined conference we could run our own programmes but with the ability to sit in on other related areas as suited to each individual. It could reduce the participating Associations' costs, stop the competition for each others time and bring together the lead players from all sectors of our industry so that we might be able to understand each other better and help move each other forward. Course Managers could relax after a full day conference with secretaries, trade members, groundsmen, agronomists, architects, Home Union officials and perhaps even the odd golf professional, discussing how we can all work together to take the industry forward.

With today's cost travel we could maybe even hold such an event during the winter in Southern Europe at little or no extra cost. What a mouth watering prospect that would be! The fact that British greenkeepers were willing to sign up to Orlando before Staverton Park makes you wonder. This might all sound pie in the sky but I believe we need to take up the training and development we offer. They are the ones who currently need us most and maybe they are where our resources should be targeted. How do we do that is not for me to say. I do not have all the answers, ask my staff.

Maybe a round of golf and a talk on irrigation is not what they are looking for. Maybe they are not allowed to go for a round of golf and a talk on irrigation. Maybe we should get together with the Golf Unions, thank them for the seriously good work they are doing with the GTC, and ask them if they can help to the mutual benefit of us all.

.Maybe the annual Section or Region seminar, aimed in the main at Course Managers, is no longer the priority. Maybe we should target small groups of focal clubs who are not engaged and persuade them that having young, active members of BIGGA as staff on their golf courses is going to be of great benefit to them by improvements in the quality of their course.

As I said earlier, I do not have all the answers but I do know that there are greenkeepers out there who could not care less about the conference at Staverton Park because they do not have the opportunity to attend. It is they who deserve our most serious attention.

I am well known for quoting the lines of my favourite Bob Dylan songs and have often used one of his most famous "The times they are a' changin". Mr Dylan has a new song out, it is called 'Things Have Changed' - they have - we need to recognise that we have members in difficult situations with little encouraging from their employers to take up the training and development we offer. They are the ones who currently need us most and maybe they are where our resources should be targeted. How do we do that is not for me to say. I do not have all the answers, ask my staff.

Chairman's Column

Kerran Daly MG, Chairman