

From the Twilight Zone:

Are we strengthened by unity... or conquered by division?

I've just returned from Tampa and the annual FTGA Conference and Show, and still can't announce a turf coordinator for the University of Florida. The optimism that I expressed in this column in the last *Florida Green*, that this issue

would be settled by now, was obviously premature. As disappointing as this situation is, those of us working so hard on the matter are continuing our efforts to resolve it, and actually see positives about the protracted process.

I am typically one who disdains the minutiae and mitigating circumstances of an issue, having to distill things to their simplest formulations. However, peeling back the layers of the University's bureaucratic onion is quite interesting.

Frustrating is another word that comes to mind, but my exposure to this Twilight Zone is short and sweet compared to those living there. We will be meeting again within days to determine our next step.

On a brighter note, one of the most gratifying projects I've ever been involved with has yielded spectacular results! Rick Tatum and I volunteered to contact our various equipment distributors to try to secure equipment desperately needed at the various locations where turfgrass research is conducted, and have been overwhelmed at the response.

Hats off to Nick Crane and Kent Busser from Nucrane Machinery, Tim Kilpatrick and John Swaner at Kilpatrick Turf, James Branstrom and Bryan Riddle of Pifer, Inc., Jeff Hayden and Jim Sartain of Golf Ventures, and Joe Limberg from Hector Turf for donating or lending over \$100,000 worth of turf maintenance equipment to Gainesville, Fort Lauderdale, and Belle Glade.

Others have orally committed to this project and will be recognized in future columns. Thank you, gentlemen! You've always been there for us

and deserve recognition for all your contributions to the turf industry.

I try to avoid climbing on the soapbox very often, but while on the subject, I think it necessary to admonish those superintendents with attitudes of arrogance and disdain for the commercial members of our various golf and turf organizations.

I've heard it and witnessed it for years, and still fail to understand it. Almost every golf outing or industry function is totally or heavily financed by our vendors or other commercial enterprises, but some superintendents still voice their preference for "superintendent only" events, or otherwise show their contempt for our comrades on the commercial side.

I just don't get it!

I do understand the desirability of meetings strictly with your peers for relevance, practicality, confidentiality, and efficiency, but these kinds of meetings can be scheduled as often as needed without offending those who usually foot the bill for most of our activities.

Being a history buff, expressions like "Divide and conquer," and "In unity there is strength," are particularly meaningful to me. We need the support of everyone who has an interest in the golf and turf industry - not the alienation or indifference of a large and important segment.

Though golf is played by 25 million Americans, it is a hobby for them and it is a career for us, and we will have to fight the environmental and regulatory battles.

I don't think it too simplistic to say that most of the negative financial, regulatory, and environmental impacts to our industry are a result of our weakness and fragmentation (divided and conquered), while most of our victories (in unity there has been strength) were achieved by working together.

As persuasive and effective as Tom Benefield has been with the water issues, and as much as he deserves the lion's share of the credit for his successes, I doubt he would have been given the time of day if he were representing his own selfish interests instead of the FGCSA and FTGA. Think about it!

Mark My Words



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