Today Offers Prime Opportunity to Boost Greensmen's Status

By ARTHUR LANGTON

JUST AS great crises in history have tended to develop a spirit of nationalism and independence in countries which for centuries have submitted meekly to political domination, so the current economic crisis may lead to the elevation of the greenkeeper's status—if he can make good. Historians are almost as one in saying that the birth of American independence came when, owing to difficulties with other countries, England was forced to allow her colonies to look after themselves. Continuing the parallel, golf course superintendents in many sections of the country are being given a free hand in regard to upkeep activities as long as they continue to produce satisfactory results under present conditions.

No longer are players apt to criticize the way in which a course is run as long as they have a satisfactory place upon which to play. A spirit of passive cooperation borne of the realization that perhaps, after all, the greenkeeper knows his business, has arisen among club members. A contributing factor in this change of attitude has been the growing conviction that no man's judgment is infallible. There was a time back in the gilded days of 1928 when business men, having made a little money through the grace of Providence, felt they were justified in sitting in judgment upon the running of everything with which they came in contact. But since those extravagant days many of these self-appointed critics have fallen by the financial wayside and the others feel that their footing is none too secure, with the result that their confidence in their own omnipotence has been sadly shaken.

Opportunity Beckons Greensmen

In addition to the crisis, the greenkeeper now finds himself confronted with the chance of a lifetime. His plight may be desperate, with the very existence of his club in jeopardy, and no chance of obtaining further employment if he is discharged. But, if he can be instrumental in piloting his employers through the storm, his future high status will be assured, and with this in mind it behooves every greenkeeper to take advantage of the opportunity to save his course from waste and ultimate destruction. This he is able to do better than any other course employee.

The writer is no authority on economics, having barely scraped through the only course he ever took in the subject, but it has been his observation that true economy on the golf course is not a passive thing nor a policy of negation. It means aggressiveness, much more so than in prosperous times when such a practice is easy. It is unsafe to believe that economy consists of not doing as much of this, that, and the other thing as formerly. When a boat is in danger of being engulfed the crew does not sit down on the job for fear that further activity will increase the danger. Economy, then, can mean increased efficiency.

The implication that greenkeepers have not reached the peak of efficiency in golf course maintenance will be met with cries of rage vented by greensmen from Alaska to Agua Caliente. Psychologists are fond of carrying on tests with skilled performers in every line of activity, performers so skillful that it is difficult for them or anyone else to conceive how their activity could be made more efficient. Yet under favorable stimulation the efficiency curve of these performers takes not merely a perceptible rise, but a positive flight, usually to the surprise of the subjects. The point is obvious, and its application to course maintenance is particularly forceful because of the varied opportunities for improvement.

Improve Efficiency, Not Speed

Since few workmen operate anywhere near their maximum of efficiency, common sense would indicate that the course personnel represents an excellent place for the practice of economy by the improvement of performance; which decidedly
This terrifying shot, the 18th at Pasatiempo, shows some of Dr. A. Mackenzie's architecture at its most picturesque. Mackenzie's idea is that a course should look tough and play pleasant, for golf after all is fun. Due to cleverly located stairs the walk to the green is not the mountain climb it seems although Mackenzie and other good architects try to avoid a steep finishing hole.

does not mean making the individuals work harder. The individuality of each task makes efficiency-expert, chain-gang methods of labor promotion worthless on a golf course.

Morale is everything, and to develop it in his crew the greenkeeper needs only to instil a sense of responsibility in his men. One of the most successful superintendents in California keeps his men enthusiastic about their work in spite of wage cuts by appearing before them in the role of director instead of dictator. To use his own words, "if I tell a man he has to do a certain task in a certain way because I want it done that way, he will do it, all right, but not a darned bit more. And when he is finished he stands around waiting for me to tell him what to do next. But if I tell a man that I want him to do a certain job in a certain way, but suggest that he improve on it as I am sure he can, that man is put on his own responsibility and it is a matter of pride that he gets that job done as well as he knows how."

**Gives Crew the Low-Down**

Another Pacific Coast greenkeeper in charge of a long and hilly course is doing wonders with a tiny crew by taking the men into his confidence and impressing them with the fact that their efforts will determine whether or not the course will survive and they with it. Further than this he does little overseeing because he has neither the time nor the inclination. He states that intelligent men do not need it and he will not keep the other kind.

But even the best men will grow slack at times, particularly in regard to breakage and loss of equipment, items which cut a large figure in the budget of every course. This can be brought down to a minimum by posting all the workmen's names and listing after each the tools that that individual has damaged or lost. No rewards or fines need be made in regard to the best or the worst records, the stigma of posted losses usually being sufficient to bring about a reformation in even the most calloused cases.

**Periodic Check-Up Advised**

It is difficult to outline a universal set of rules whereby golf courses may save money satisfactorily; each course has its own problems and consequently must look to itself for its own solutions. For this reason a careful analytical survey of maintenance conditions, including every possi-
ble contributing factor must be taken from
time to time, preferably once a month. It
is wisest to consider not alone how cer-
tain expenses may be curtailed before the
next check-up, but also how the same ex-
penditure will produce better golf. The
most successful greenkeepers are not
necessarily those who spend the least
money, but those whose courses attract
the most players.

In one of these check-ups a certain green-
keeper found that every few days one of
his men had to be sacrificed to the cause
of rodent control, there being an ever-re-
curring plague of gophers and moles in the
vicinity. He found, by making each greens-
man responsible for the eradication of the
pests within certain vital areas of the
course that control could be maintained
without loss of efficiency in other depart-
ments. Incidentally, in the palmy days of
a few years ago, another superintendent
found that the best and cheapest way to
eradicate moles on his course was to put
a bounty of 50 cents a head on the rodents.

One man decided that the cost of poling
greens was too much and could be re-
duced. He went to a nearby firm and had
it make him a special broom, a monster of
its kind with a nine-foot brush. It cost
less than $5.00, outlasted innumerable
canes, and did a better job in a shorter
time.

Greensmen Inventive Lot

Perhaps the best indication that at least
California greenkeepers are taking their
economies seriously is the fact that those
once so popular monuments to waste, the
junk piles, practically have disappeared
from the land of sunshine and receivers.
Instead, nearly every bit of scrap metal is
hoarded as much fine gold, for some day
it may be used in the manufacture of some
money-saving device. Practically every
greenkeeper in the state has a pet scheme
or device that he is working on, and some
have scores of them to their credit. The
strange part about most of these brain
children or brain storms is that many of
them work. Scarcely is there a superin-
tendent but has operating on his course
sprinklers that will never recognize a
father, weird contraptions with arms, cogs,
wheels, vibrators, and baffle plates. But it
is interesting to note that sprinkler manu-
facturers pay these creations the compli-
ment of very close attention for many of
them have incorporated principles that,
later have been seized upon and patented.

Another favorite subject for experiment
and modification is the topdressing ma-
chine. It would seem from casual observa-
tion that no company has yet produced one
of these machines that greenkeepers have
not tried to improve upon. The writer has
seen these machines taken to pieces by
ambitious greenkeepers and rebuilt along
absolutely different lines in the attempt to
obtain a more even distribution.

In the southern part of the same state
most club officials are not aware of the
fact that there is a tremendous amount of
borrowing and lending of tools and equip-
ment between the various courses. The
members of one club do not realize that
the very excellent spiker it purchased a
few years ago has helped to improve the
turf on at least four courses in the dis-
trict. Nor do these members know that
tools from practically every other club in
the vicinity have contributed to the excel-
lence of its own greens. But such is the
case and such will continue to be the case
while the present very commendable spirit
of co-operation prevails. It is this spirit
of co-operation which is holding down the
cost of upkeep and maintaining splen
did turf in Southern California. Which makes
it possible for greenkeeping to be robbed
of many of its terrors in this district, be-
cause one's colleagues on neighboring
courses are willing and eager to lend their
opinion, equipment, and goodwill. In this
manner the status of greenkeepers is be-
ing raised throughout the whole district.

Poa Annua Fight Begun

MAY INSPECTION of many mid-western
courses shows much poa annua on
greens. Mindful of what happened last
year when this grass went out during the
hot weather, some of the veteran green-
keepers are advocating longer cutting and
less water on greens in the hope they'll be
able to avoid last summer's big bare spots
on their greens.

OAK RIDGE C. C. (Tuckahoe, N. Y.)
has solved the trap foot-print problem
by driving a 2 in. dia. galvanized iron pipe
about 4 ft. long into the ground at the end
of each trap, out of playing range. In
these pipes are trap rakes. Players must
not leave vicinity of traps until caddies
have raked and replaced rakes. "Plan
works great," says Isaac Simons, Oak
Ridge pres.