Charges Cities Unfair As Fee Golf Competitors

IS PATERNALISM in government going too far when the municipalities engage in competition with owners of fee courses and take an "edge" by subsidies out of taxes paid in part by the fee course owner to his municipal competitor?

The question is brought up by Max Ludwig, Pennsylvania fee course owner, who charges that waste of public funds is covered by bookkeeping sleight of hand and that heavy play is attracted by unwarranted reductions in rates made at the expense of the fee course business conducted as a tax-paying private enterprise.

Ludwig's challenge for a show-down undoubtedly will bring out some lively debate, since the golf course as a municipal recreation feature is firmly established.

According to GOLFDOM's investigation, the majority of municipal golf courses are operated on a basis that shows a profit due to heavy play and a rather general divorce from the chiseling management frequently connected with any phase of politics.

The golfer, being an exacting creature, usually exercises enough supervision and complaint to keep public course operation free from the nefarious activities customarily discovered in anything where politics dips in a hand, but whether or not the player will judge the public course guilty of unfair competition we leave up to you.

Mr. Ludwig's statement follows:

"Waste in government today is discussed on every street corner, where it seems almost anyone has time for the discussion of almost anything. The seriousness of excessive spending and often waste of public funds, and its attendant reaction upon the people in these troubled times is attested by the efforts of our leading economists and well organized public groups to forestall any further waste of tax money. The press, always quick to sense the feeling on current subjects, has "spotted" all such news, and Page One is hardly complete these days unless the public is appropriately horrified with some new exposé of higher assessments, increased millage, operating inefficiency, and some times even waste and graft of the taxpayers' hard earned cash.

Government and Golf

"Government, necessarily static and bound with countless miles of red tape, is always the last to economize and retrench in a period of depression and consequently in such unpleasant periods as the present we are interested to know where all this money goes. Tax authorities amaze us with the facts. Especially do they amaze us when they show the trend of government to engage and indulge in what hertofore has been the sole realm of private business enterprise. This trend is of par-
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GOLFDOM

particular importance to the golf industry,
and something, heretofore a far cry to the
greenkeeper suddenly hits home. For the
golf industry discover local governments
constructing golf courses, maintaining
them at a loss, and nonchalantly extract-
ing the difference out of the hides of the
genial but long suffering taxpayer. Part-
icularly has this problem confronted
the owner or manager of “fee courses” in
the “provinces” away from the thickly pop-
ulated metropolitan areas. With the ris-
ing popularity of golf several years ago
many such cities built and now maintain
fine courses for their people. In a great
many cases these courses were built at
the organized insistence of golfers who
had not the facilities to enjoy fully this
newly found sport at prices they could af-
ford to pay. Needless to say, all this sup-
port has had an important influence on
golf, generally speaking, and more specif-
ically in the health building and recrea-
tional advantages it provided for thou-
sands of people who a few years ago,
thought a driver was the boss, and a
mashie had something to do with potatoes.
“This entrance of government into golf
was a fine thing for the golfer, especially
if he wasn’t a taxpayer of consequence,
but it was a bitter pill for the public goir
course owner. How does he fit into thn>
picture? And particularly, how does he
fit into the picture, if the city-owned
course operates at a deficit and he then
contributes a share of his tax money to
foster golf at less than cost and at the
expense of his own business? Unfor-
tunately for him, lower prices means more
votes to his competitor, and he is inter-
ested in profits, not votes.

“Competing against this obstacle means
nothing but red ink and probably insol-
vency. And to further aggravate the sit-
uation, he doesn’t even get credit for his
passive and genial resignation to the wolf
at his own door.”

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