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ACCENT ON  
MANAGEMENT

## SHORTAGES WILL AFFECT CLUBS

The news from Washington these days is concerned mostly with shortages, present and future. With speed limits being reduced on highways, Federal and state governments converting to smaller cars for transporting staff members and store owners being asked to eliminate excessive or unnecessary electric signs, clubs, too, are beginning to give some thought to whether or not the new state-of-the-nation will affect them.

If you haven't thought about the question yet, the answer is "yes."

Many club managers, particularly those in the North, are re-evaluating their supplies of heating and fuel oil. The majority of these clubs use natural gas as a fuel. They are also on what is termed "interruptable service," which means that during periods of protracted excessive cold they will be asked to convert to oil to conserve natural gas for vital community facilities. Many clubs count on being able to refill their oil tanks during these times of conversion; they depend on 1,500 or 2,000 gallon storage tanks to provide them with a 10-day to two-week supply of fuel.

Now it is clear that refilling these tanks will be neither as simple nor as sure as it has in the past. Accordingly, these clubs already are beginning a careful evaluation of their facilities and heating practices to conserve what little they have. (It should be noted that "Weather Trends" predicts a long-range forecast of "colder in the Northeast and from the Carolinas to the Great Lakes and Minnesota-Dakotas.")

Even clubs in the more temperate zones of the country should take an equally hard look at their energy use with an eye to conservation and efficiency. When no actual shortage exists

for a particular club, it still must consider its image in the eyes of the community. It is not likely that a town that has been asked to conserve electrical energy will approve of a lavish electrical Christmas display on the clubhouse grounds or will watch electric golf car use on the club's course without critical comment.

Many other shortages now are becoming evident. These also will have an impact on clubs. Some of them will not be immediately evident, but consider the following list of crucial shortages: propane and butane gas; anti-freeze solutions; fertilizers; plastics of most kinds; glass products; paper, cardboard and shipping containers; leather goods and, of course, gasoline.

Gasoline, alone, is going to create some unexpected problems for clubs. Many clubs in the northern areas make a practice of plowing out club members' driveways after heavy snows. This practice probably will have to be discontinued.

It takes about 1,500 gallons of gas to run the equipment necessary to keep the greens and fairways cut. Even last year many clubs found that their suppliers were allocating less than this amount to them. This condition, if continued, will require hard decisions by the golf course superintendent.

The image problem also raises its head in this regard. Consider the recent request to Minnesota's Governor Anderson asking him to ban the use of snowmobiles, notorious gas guzzlers, for the duration of the shortage. The governor replied that he recognized the need to conserve gas, but did not feel that any one sport should suffer at the expense of others and that he would consider snowmobiles in the same category as night baseball, football games, basketball and hockey. Can golf cars be far behind?

To those who have felt all along that a golf course was meant to be walked, not driven, the elimination of golf cars, at least the gas operated ones, will be welcome news. Other shortages, however, will create more difficult problems.

Our children have grown up in an economy in which, given the money, they could buy almost anything. We now face a period when, money or not, what we want won't be available. The test will come when we decide whether to become frightened by it or challenged.

The situation is somewhat analogous to that faced by clubs two decades ago. At a time when the income from slot machines in the club's grill and bar seemed to be the difference between profit and loss, many clubs were positive they could not survive their removal. The well-managed club, however, met the challenge and came through with flying colors. Hopefully, today's clubs will face this new challenge with the same amount of determination to solve the problem. Undoubtedly, it will mean considerable belt-tightening, but it can be done.

A less obvious problem, but one that is there nonetheless, is that of the possibility of a depressed economy. Should the country face a real economic crunch, clubs may find that members, already hard-pressed to meet increased dues, may begin to drop some of their club affiliations. Should such a turn of events actually occur, the club industry may once again have to look at such measures as mergers or other cooperative operations to continue to provide facilities to their memberships.

This column only begins to touch on the problems and possible solutions. We will have more on shortages and how clubs are meeting them in subsequent issues.