

News

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Restrictive admissions criticized by NCCJ

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With memories of the Griffin Bell confirmation hearings still ringing in the ears of many in the club industry, especially in view of Bell's subsequent resignation from three clubs that barred Jews and blacks from membership, there was little surprise when the president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews recently criticized private country clubs with such restrictive admissions policies.

Dr. David Hyatt, president of the 50-year-old human relations organization, called on clubs with such discriminatory practices to eliminate them. In a statement from his New York City office, Hyatt admitted guaranteeing open membership in country clubs was low on the priority scale for the NCCJ, compared to the needs of minorities for equality in jobs, housing and education.

"It is nevertheless a shameful practice on which the spotlight of

public opinion must be focused until it is finally eliminated," he said. "Such elitist, discriminatory practices have no place in our American way of life."

Although the following is taken out of context, it sums up the feelings of Hyatt toward private country clubs with restrictive admissions policies: "The very fact such clubs still practice discrimination to such a widespread degree throughout our country in this 20th century remains an ugly blot on our democratic record."

Hyatt further stated such social discrimination remains one of the toughest and most poisonous forms of prejudice within the nation. "The NCCJ will press our already vigorous efforts to eliminate such practices in the months and years ahead through our nationwide educational programs for better human relations."

There was response to Hyatt's charges from National Club Association president M.E. "Bob" Meyer. The right of freedom of association, Meyer rebutted, was something also guaranteed by the Constitution. The vice president for public relations of the NCCJ, Harry A. Robinson, told GOLF BUSINESS, "Meyer has a good argument, but we are talking about the morality of restrictive admissions policies."

Meyer noted the fight for individual rights is beginning to bring other "rights" onto a collision course. Using the example of the American Civil Liberties Union, Meyer pointed out that this organization, which has been a foe of NCA in the past, had some contradictions pulling within its own organizational fabric.

"Before getting to any others of the various 'liberties,' the ACLU first enumerates its belief in 'freedom of association. Isn't that what private clubs are all about?," Meyer insisted. "Why aren't clubs within the Constitution and the Bill of Rights when they practice selectivity?"

Commenting on the Hyatt remarks, NCA Executive Director Jerry Hurley told GOLF BUSINESS the NCCJ criticism was another in a long line of attacks on the private club sector this year.



Dr. David Hyatt, president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, has called on clubs to drop membership restrictions against Jews, blacks, and other minorities.