

Letters

Send your letters to the editor, *Greenkeeper International*, 13 Firle Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL

Problems of us and them

May I offer my sincere congratulations on the timely editorial highlighting the situation 'greenkeeper replaced by milkman from committee.' Granted, this was seen as a 'mere trickle that could become a flood', but there are, believe me, many similar cases that do not necessarily come to the attention of the Association.

I too suffered a similar fate – at the whim of a committee member who I apparently upset over a matter of 'policy'. I had been head greenkeeper and, latterly, course manager for 26 years. I left of my own accord and compensation was paid to me following my taking legal action.

I am of the opinion that this whole 'fire at whim' situation needs careful consideration by our Association, if only to provide help and guidance for future victims. Clubs always will face problems when short-term committee members make long-term decisions – which may be altered or scrapped at a later date. The only man to see through such course-related policies is the head greenkeeper – after all, he above all has a vested interest and he usually survives longer than any committee. Please understand, I have no wish to devalue the duties of elected committees, but in so many instances a better and closer working relationship would remove problem situations. Certainly, when we arrive at the 'milkman' situation, we are on the start of a very slippery slope indeed.

My congratulations also for a superb magazine month upon month. The content and format are excellent and the editorial style especially is of the highest calibre – our gain is Fleet Street's loss. As a long established member of the greenkeeping profession, I am as proud now of my membership in BIGGA as I have ever been. Any greenkeeper who is not a member doesn't know what he's missing – though it can be likened to doing the job with only one arm!

JOHN D LOWERY
Timperley, Cheshire

Control at a distance

The editorial comment (April '93) regarding advisors setting themselves up as surrogate greenkeepers prompts me to reply.

I see my role as one of aiding the golf course developer, the golf club and the head greenkeeper. Many head men are relatively young and have good educational qualifications, but they are often lacking experience in the field.

When I was in the 'operational front-line' I always welcomed advice on any particular problem I might have. Though I didn't always heed the advice, I found it beneficial to learn of the options available. Judging by some of

the new courses I have seen in recent weeks, there are some chronic errors still being perpetrated, this at a time when we should be able to get it right the first time around.

Well paid and experienced course managers/head greenkeepers need have nothing to fear from consultants as long as the consultant is experienced in the areas for which he is being consulted – a second opinion is always worth while, especially if it saves a limb!

DAVID JONES

International Golf Course Consultant, David Jones & Associates, Chepstow, South Wales
• *The point made in the leader – growing concern that some consultants are reportedly attempting to usurp the head greenkeeper and run a golf course by 'remote control' – remains real reason for disquiet. If my comments result in just one green committee re-thinking a suspect decision, a valuable purpose will have been served.* – Editor.

Fescue's future assured

Regarding 'Future of the Fescue' (May '93 issue), may I offer the following observations? I firmly believe that the greenkeeper should be as conscientious regarding selection of grass seed varieties and mixtures as the farmer is when selecting semen from the right breed of bull to inseminate the cow.

Yes, there is a future for the fescue, but before explaining the breakthrough in the breeding of fescue I must debate the contentious comment in the first paragraph of Tony Howarth's article – "Seldom is a top quality seed mix offered without it". I question this, being of the opinion that only seldom does a seed mix contain top quality varieties. More importantly, I ask – when have top quality varieties been used? In my experience, varieties and mixtures have all too often been selected on price alone.

Howarth asks: Is the greenkeeper able to achieve a fescue/bent green? The answer is yes, right now (and certainly in the future), with the breakthrough of Barcrown slender creeping red fescue, Baruba/Bargreen chewing fescue and with good management, the greenkeeper is able to achieve a fescue/bent green and he can also control *Poa annua*.

What do I mean by 'the breakthrough in the breeding of fescue'? Ongoing discussions with greenkeepers, architects, agronomists and our breeders has enabled them (the breeders) to collect and breed varieties which are tailor-made for golf course requirements. Nowadays, greenkeepers are confronted with more complicated influences: heavily polluted soils, low maintenance requirements, environmental laws, saline conditions and extreme wear conditions for greens and tees. All of these criteria highlight the need for accurate information, in order to match specification to demand.

In the past, many failures occurred because of poorly selected species, varieties or mixtures, (often selected merely on price), and we know for certain that even forage grasses have been used for amenity purposes. In the sixties Barenbrug started to change its breeding goals, beginning with the desire to breed new varieties which would withstand the stresses and extreme conditions required for golf. Simultaneously, our breeders became convinced that grasses bred under poorer environmental conditions, eg. on soil with low fertility levels and given less water and/or nutrition, would give a better indication of quality.

It then became clear to us that varieties bred in poor conditions performed as well as other varieties which demanded higher maintenance levels. The concept of testing new varieties under stress conditions such as drought, low fertility soil, minimal fertiliser application and pressure from diseases etc., proved successful. The first results came in the late seventies, and in the eighties a real breakthrough was achieved.

All this may clearly be seen, reflected in official independent trials conducted by institutes such as the CPRO in Holland, the INRA in France and the Sports Turf Research Institute in Britain. BIGGA members would find it worthwhile to inspect the findings contained within the booklet 'STRI Turfgrass Seed 1993', and we at Barenbrug would be happy to supply copies free of charge.

Above all, let it be stressed that with good management and the careful selection of cultivars and mixtures, rather than with the hit or miss 'bag of seed for the green' approach, healthier greens with more fescue can be assured.

MICHEL MULDER

Marketing Director, Barenbrug UK Ltd,
PO Box 2, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP30 9NW

Please give me a chance

I have been a member of BIGGA for over five years but due to unemployment and limited finances I have been unable to renew my subscription for 1993. This has meant that I have been unable to see your excellent recruitment pages and thus my chances of finding further employment in greenkeeping are restricted. So, if any employer reading my letter would care to give a chance to a 22 year old greenkeeper with five years experience, together with Phases I and II in Greenkeeping, I would welcome their contacting me.

In the meantime, I thank BIGGA and Greenkeeper International for all they have done for the profession and look forward to the day when I can return to the fold of such a forward and excellent Association.

ROB PARKES

177 Coast Road, Rhyl, Clwyd, LL18 3US
GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL July 1993 13