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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The Era of Conferences:

During one of the very early post-war years following World War II, I was privileged to be interviewed by a country club in a large metropolitan community for the position of golf course superintendent. This occasion was recalled to me recently quite vividly during a conversation concerning correspondence between a club official and his superintendent.

Post war development of new products had come in rapid fire order, the turf field being no exception. As materials became available, clubs began to renovate their grounds—to once again restore them to their former beauty and to bring back the excellent playing conditions for their members, as they once knew them before the long struggle overseas began.

By this time every company who was offering commodities for public consumption had representatives on the road, not to sell so much but just to write orders for future delivery, sometimes as much as six months to a year away. This was the day of the "Seller's Market". Conferences and equipment shows, representing every conceivable product were being held to introduce new lines, along with the old tried and true ones. Our economy was gaining momentum. The word was "go" in every sense of the word.

Ideas for the development of the turf grass field were being revised upward. Golf was on the way back, having received world wide publicity, after playing an important role in the rehabilitation of thousands of service men. Dr. Fanny Fern Davis of the Green Section had recently told us of the miracle of a new product with a long name, but shortened to become known simply as 2-4,D, as our own GCSA Turf Conference in Cleveland. Local turf organizations were being re-organized and holding monthly meetings again. These were exciting times. We were seeing the world lay aside some of the hatreds and come alive once more to take on new interests and the game of golf was very definitely in the running.

My interviewer, the greens chairman of this club, was a very intent individual and probably a real getter. He had very definite ideas on what he was looking for. His questions were very sharp and pin pointed to get the answers for which he was looking.

When finally his line of probing and questioning began to subside and I could get in a word or two, I had to know the answer to one specific question. "Has your superintendent secured another position locally or is he retiring?", I asked. "Very simple" he replied, "he is being asked to leave because he has apparently lost interest in keeping up to date. You know, he very seldom attends the local greenkeepers meetings and never attends the big conference like the one you fellows just had in Cleveland. We would gladly send him and pick up the tab. We want a man that will attend these functions and bring back the latest findings, put them to work for our club, if they apply to our problems and make our place one of the finest clubs in the area." Well, there it was. A real blueprint, so loud and clear that the exact words are still ringing in my ears today.

A lot of water has gone under the bridge of life since that day. 2-4,D was a boon for all turf establishments. Chlorodane soon followed and took care of the ant and tropical earthworm problems, etc. Fairway spraying for disease control has become standard practice and with the same control, plus short cutting, tees look as well groomed as did the greens a few years back.

How were all of these important developments, practical knowhow and basic research of turf problems put into the hands of people like ourselves and eventually put to work on thousands of courses throughout the golfing world? I think it is safe to say that a major portion of this information was distributed through the medium of local meetings, trial plot field days and turf conferences on either the local, state or national level. Conscientious turf men have attended, came home with new ideas, new formulas and cost figures and applied these findings to their own problems. For whose benefit? For our golf club, park district or other turf establishment, naturally.

Although developments in the turf field have turned in a somewhat different direction, research and 'idea hunting' are still in progress and very important. The nutrition of turf grasses, selectivity of chemicals and automation of irrigation are just a few. The Era of Conferences is still going strong, a good indication of our faith in the Free Enterprise System and, in our own golfing world, a sound indication of our satisfaction with the Conference as a medium of education for our turf managers.

It is a little difficult to reconcile these established facts with the recent attitude, as expressed by the club official, when he made it known to his superintendent that there was very little chance that he would be sent to the next turf conference because the board was frowning on "all un-necessary expenses" at this time. A Turf Conference an un-necessary expense?

Now it would appear to me from this point of view that, perhaps, we have failed to inform our club officials of the practical nature of our various turf meetings; that the fringe benefits derived from such meetings are the property of the club, not the superintendent. Then, of course, we could examine this line of thinking a bit closer to see if we have failed to carry out our mandate from the respective clubs to give Full Attention to the business at hand while attending Turf Conferences.

Confucius would probably say "Food For Thought, Well Masticated, Will Save Many Headaches."

Warren Bidwell, President