

Unions for the Golf Course

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Most of us are aware that labor pains are sometimes the result of a failure to take certain precautions! This may also be true of the labor pains that can be created when we who are responsible for maintaining a golf course are faced with the prospect of having a union attempt to organize the facility.

A union has been described as "an association of workers that has as its major objective the improvement of conditions relating to employment." While we are all aware of the strength of unions in industries, the present trend is for unions to organize such professions as teachers, police, firemen, and other technical and professional people.

Steven J. Cabot stated, "Employees don't vote for a union, they vote against management." There is little doubt that the primary reason most unions have gained their present dominance is because of the lack of concern for employees by supervisors in earlier times. Other reasons include to strengthen bargaining power and improve working and economic conditions.

Before a union can become a reality there is a definite procedure that is prescribed by the National Labor Relations Board. The first step is to obtain an authorization card from thirty percent of the work force of an organization. This is a request to have an election to decide if the employees wish to be represented by a union.

The union can then petition the N.L.R.B. for the right to hold such an election. If fifty percent of those voting in the election decide for a union, the union is then certified as the official

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bargaining agent for that group, and to negotiate a contract with the representatives of management.

Provisions that the management and the union bargaining team discuss include: Union recognition, management rights, grievance procedures, disciplinary procedures, wages, benefits, safety, employees' rights, and duration of the contract.

There are a number of things that supervisors may not do, under a threat of punishment by the N.L.R.B., while the organization is taking place. Among them are: 1) the supervisors may not threaten any employee with loss of his job because of union activities, 2) you may not interfere with attempts to sign up other employees, 3) you cannot spy on those conducting union business, 4) you cannot ask an employee how he is planning to vote.

In all likelihood, if a union is to gain entrance into the golf courses of the Chicago area, I believe it will be through either a Park District or City Golf Course. This is in spite of the fact that most such courses offer many benefits that are not available to all full time employees in the private sector.

In the Wheaton Park District, the benefits are typical of most area park and municipal courses. A full time employee receives the following benefits: Time and a half after 40 hours. There are 11 paid holidays per year; if an employee is required to work on a holiday, the rate of pay is two and a half times his regular hourly rate. After one year a full time employee is eligible for 12 days of vacation with an additional day per year added until 25 days, or five week vacation; two personal days per year; one sick day per month until a total of 30 days or 6 weeks have been accumulated. After that the District will buy back half of

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all sick days beyond the 30. All full time employees are covered by an insurance policy that will pay the beneficiary two years wage in case of death of an employee. Hospitalization, including dental care, that covers 80 percent of all dental work is also part of the package. There is also mandatory participation in the Illinois Municipal Retirement Act which does require a contribution by the employee but provides a pension that along with Social Security is just about equal to full salary after 20 years. A minimum of eight years is required to be vested in this plan.

The union that is most active in the area of government is the Association of Federal, State, Municipal, and County Employees, AFSME, and it's presently engaged in attempting to organize several employee groups in the Chicago suburban area and will no doubt be successful in their efforts to organize some municipal employees and then spread to the park districts in that city.

Whether you are against or for unions is for each individual to decide, but I am sure that the time is not too far away when there will be some golf courses in the public sector that have been organized. It may or may not spread to courses in the private sector, but it's time to give some thought to the changes it will not doubt bring.

The source of most of this information is the textbook, "Supervision," by Stan Kossan, and published by Harper & Row.

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