

Permanent Committees Best?

THE hope of introducing business methods into club management for the efficient operation of a club has led a number of close students to seriously question the advisability of annual elections and committee appointments.

Picture in your mind, if you will, say these observers, business houses with which you are acquainted whose capital investment amounts to \$300,000.00 or more. Let us say this business house has three hundred or three hundred fifty or four hundred stockholders, all of whom are customers at that business house. Each customer requires service, demands service and receives service; each customer agrees to pay \$125.00 to \$175.00 or more for six or seven months' service offered by that company. This company serves meals and the customer pays extra for those meals. This company rents lockers and offers service in the locker-room for which the customer pays an extra sum. Not one of the customers expects financial profit from the operations of the company but they do expect service and an opportunity to enjoy the health-giving facilities offered by that company.

Now if you know of any \$300,000.00 corporation which insists on changing presidents, office managers, factory managers or business managers on the first of January of each year, would you consider buying stock in such a company?

If you had a company or a property worth \$300,000.00 or more, they ask, would you appoint presidents, secretaries, greens chairmen and house chairmen who knew nothing whatever, or practically nothing, about the work they were supposed to manage, and, if after you had appointed men who knew nothing or practically nothing about their particular work in this company, would you replace them at the end of one year with other men who knew less and cared less about the operation of those particular departments?

These critics of the orthodox method continue by stating that when a golf club is first started, it is fathered by six, eight, ten or a dozen men and in that group we find one or more who are so financially situated that they are able to guarantee the consummation of their endeavors. A plot of ground is purchased by this small group and the same group proceed to construct a golf course and after that the club

house. They assume the financial responsibilities and the business worries of building and completing an institution wherein the capital outlay in a metropolitan district begins at approximately \$300,000.00 and may run up into \$700,000.00 depending upon the value of the land, type of golf course and size and character of the buildings.

Rating the President

For one, two or three years, these business men devote their business ability to the creation of a business house for the pleasure of others and after this business house has been placed on a firm foundation, we find three hundred sixty stockholding customers proceeding to replace these founders of the institution with men who have come into the institution for the purpose of enjoying themselves. The most popular man is elected president. He may be interested in the financial welfare of the club and he may not. He may be interested only in the social welfare of the club. He may be interested in the economical management of the club or he may be interested in the office tenure. He may or may not have ability to manage a \$300,000.00 institution and he may or may not have the time or inclination to give more than one hour a week for the next six months to that office.

Greens chairmen, house chairmen and the chairmen of other committees seem to be selected often not on account of their knowledge or ability or willingness to work but on account of their popularity or their consent to accepting the office to which they are elected or appointed and then they are elected for one term which usually means a six months' season after which they are removed and men who often know considerably less about the work than they do are placed in those offices to manage this \$300,000.00 company.

Is it logical, is it reasonable, is it right and is it fair to the stockholders, question these reasoning doubters, that Bill Jones, who knows nothing about the cost of food or the operation of the kitchen or the management of the dining room or the value of a rug, should manage a house and hotel wherein more than \$50,000.00 worth of food will be served during the six months of his incumbency? If in the six months he learns something about his

club-house or has the inclination to learn, is it right that he be taken out of office and another man as green or greener than Bill Jones was last year be given the office to manage the club house for the next year? True it is that each golf club has its paid employe for manager but the president of any \$300,000.00 company has a paid employe to look after the details of his office and yet he would not countenance the changing of office managers any more than you would countenance the changing of presidents every year in business.

On this side of the case let us quote a golf club official who is noted for his knowledge of the practical side of green-keeping work:

"In talking with a nationally-known greenkeeper the other day, the writer inquired about the greens chairmen and their value to a golf club asking for the opinion of this man who has followed the profession of greenkeeping for more than twenty years. He said his estimate of the number of greens chairmen who know their business is about one in five hundred. It was his contention that greens chairmen generally take this office because it is forced on them and that only a very, very few give any time or study to turf or turf life depending usually upon an underpaid greenkeeper to give them the information they require at meetings. In other cases, men wanted the office of greens chairman in order to have the authority to alter the layout of the course or alter the greens to suit their particular fancy because they played the course in figures ranging somewhere between 75 and 90 and thought they knew all about a golf course. From him I learned that it was customary for golf clubs to spend from \$5,000.00 to \$15,000.00 each and every year to change the golf course to meet the requirements of each new incoming, six-month incumbent in that office and in very few cases did the alterations remain permanent more than two years after the change had been made. In many, many cases those alterations made the course poorer rather than improved it, but it had to be done.

"The sum and substance of the writer's opinion now is that all clubs in general would be much more efficient, more economical, more satisfactory to all concerned if the by-laws were so altered as to permit of the electing or selecting from the Board of Directors of a permanent house chair-

man, permanent greens chairman, permanent secretary and a permanent treasurer. Social committees both inside and outside may be changed as often as desired but where the financial and operating offices of a club are concerned, the officers should be permanent and men holding those offices should give time and study to the efficient management of the club.

"Greens chairmen should know more about turf life and golf course management than does the greenkeeper. The chairmen of the house committee should know as much or more about house management than the paid manager of the club while the secretary and treasurer should know more about finances, banking and law than you could expect from the salaried employe of the club who performs the duties of these offices. It is the writer's contention that there would be less assessments, better food, less losses, better locker-room service, less repairs, cleaner courses, more efficient machinery, less labor on the course and fewer complaints from the members if this system were possible and put into operation."

"Directors That Direct"

These radical statements provoke thought. Many may consider that the day of the permanent chairmen will come only with the millennium. The reward of the permanent chairmen is lots of work and a little honor. Under those circumstances there will be no horde of applicants for the positions. But there are plenty of club officials thinking of the possibilities in this direction. There already has been some cautious action taken after due deliberation. One of the Canadian clubs has effected a compromise between the present method of conducting club affairs and that proposed by the advocates of permanent committees. This club has established its management in the hands of "directors who direct." Before the club was organized one of its prime movers canvassed the situation pretty thoroughly and made the recommendation of directing directors which was acted upon. In telling of this case, the club executive advocates limiting the power of directors to the hiring and discharging of the manager. He says:

"Unlike a business corporation, where the same directors are usually re-elected year after year, and the business is run by the general manager, golf club directors change frequently. There is no par-

ticular joy in the job and a club member who criticises the running of the club in a reasonable manner is very liable to find himself elected a director. Each new man feels that he must make some alteration to warrant his election and the consequent period of change and experimentation which each new board goes through is expensive and unsettling.

"The 'greens committee' is usually productive of its share of trouble. Good workmen are hard to get and the 'bossing' by well meaning but inexperienced directors leads to friction with the help who retaliate by doing less than a day's work and demanding more than a day's pay.

"By the appointment of a manager who has complete control of the organization, including discharging help, purchasing supplies, etc., and holding this manager directly responsible for the proper running of the club there is a continuity of operation which is lacking in most golf clubs. The manufacturers might not sell as many or such a variety of sprinkler systems, rollers, grass cutters, etc., etc., but they would benefit in the long run from more intelligent purchasing.

"In our case we estimate we have saved at least a third of the cost of construction and maintenance by this method, and have eliminated one of the most frequent causes of friction between club members."

"Over-Bossing" Is Peril

By CHARLES B. MILLS

THE small club too often has a surplus of managers. The greenkeeper scarcely knows to whom he should turn for advice and counsel. Worst of all he is without a definite authority for his final decision. Around many nine hole courses especially, there is an atmosphere of inefficiency and sometimes of friction. One member of the green committee thinks number nine needs sanding and another "opines" that such a process would ruin it. The greenkeeper doesn't know which one to offend so he does nothing or uses his own judgment and disgusts both.

The writer is a member of a small club that maintains a short nine-hole course and which boasts of an ex-blacksmith greenkeeper. He does practically all the work himself; repairs the mowers, changes the cups, cleans out the rough and fills the tee boxes. That fellow has become a regular handy man about the course. His transformation from a smithy to a greenkeeper has been complete. He talks of number seven and good approaches and replacing divots just like a life-long golfer with Scotch ancestry. Yet that man can hardly turn around without being given some conflicting instructions. Someone tells him to mow the fairways and another advises him to lay off and get on the greens. Still another tells him about some rich dirt down in the creek bed that ought to be worked into the greens at once even before they're mowed.

Yet this club is no more composed of

a bunch of dumb bells than any other. Scores of courses are being handled in the same manner, even those that boast of more adequate equipment and larger maintenance forces than ours.

What is the solution? I believe it is simply this—have fewer and smaller committees. Appoint greens chairmen especially who know something of grass growing and love it. A good greens chairman is just about the most valuable asset a golf club can have. Personally I believe the right man needs no committee. He can counsel with the president and directors about expenditures and other matters on which momentous decisions are required. But whether serving alone or as head of a committee he should be spokesman at the course. The greenkeeper should be expected to take orders from him and none other. He should do the buying for course maintenance or at least approve it.

It goes without saying that every club hasn't an indefinite number of members qualified to serve as greens chairmen. But in every club there is one (sometimes more) "turf nut," a man who gets more real enjoyment out of killing earth worms than from learning how to follow through. That's the man to snag onto. Make him greens chairman. Keep him greens chairman, and give him 100 per cent co-operation. Your club will be better off financially and every other way by the pursuit of such a policy.