

Golf Goods Price Mess Needs Ironing Out

OUT of the clamor of conversation on pro merchandising there comes some clean-cut advice from a manufacturer who suggests centering thought for a while on the price structure of golf goods.

This manufacturer, A. L. Mercer, president of the Vulcan Corp., writes to GOLFDOM commenting on an article in a sporting goods dealer publication relative to marking up the retail prices of sporting goods. Col. Mercer comments: "It seems to me that manufacturers, distributors and retailers are trying to figure out how high they can mark their goods to allow all kinds of discounts. Wouldn't it be infinitely better if the sporting goods industry were on the same basis as the grocer, baker, druggist, etc., where prices are fair in the first place, and discounts are normal? The public is not asking for a differential."

Pros Maintain Fair Prices

This brings out one phase of the pros' merchandising that is safe and sound and which deserves the utmost encouragement from the golf goods manufacturer. The pro maintains the standard price and sells quality merchandise so each item shows a legitimate profit instead of being handled at a cut price to lure the sucker in for a killing on some high-priced low value item that the stores push to more than make up for the loss entailed in handling known quality merchandise at a "bargain" price. When Mercer mentions the druggist as a fair price establishment, we consider that he slipped a cog for plenty of druggists have been getting golf balls by hook or crook or through loopholes in the manufacturers' price structure at prices that enable them to cut the life out of ball price stability. Grocers and bakers aren't selling golf goods yet, thank heaven.

The sad part of this price mess is that the pros aren't the only ones being burnt. The manufacturers are being snared or forced into the jungle. Profits of the golf goods manufacturers are a long way from what they should be in a business of

golf's magnitude and growth. When you get down to the reason for the short showing, you'll find a price list that's running wild. Legalities prevent any price fixing but so far as we have been informed, they do not prevent a clear defining of interests entitled to certain discounts.

The "Buy It Wholesale" Bunk

This American craze for getting the discount is playing hell with more business than golf. The customer gets it in the end—and we don't mean the discount. Recently there was brought to GOLFDOM'S attention the golf goods catalog of an establishment featuring this "buy at wholesale" bait. The list price for a certain well-known ball was \$18.00 a dozen. Can you tie it? With the alluring discounts of the catalog the retail price was only a few cents less than that of a pro shop, and postage more than accounted for the difference.

Buying at a "discount" usually proves that Barnum was right but it is taking a long time for the evidence to get across to the public. For that reason we suggest that Col. Mercer's comment should be revised to read, "the *intelligent* public is not asking for a differential."

Purchasing agents in various cities have been working this discount business for their company employees until it is not only a serious menace to the pro volume and good-will, but to the business the manufacturers of golf goods are getting from other established retail outlets. Some of the larger oil companies, we happen to know, are busy offenders in this respect. But try and buy oil and gasoline at a discount from these companies. Brother, don't waste your effort, it is "un-American and denies the business man his legitimate profit" when you are working it on the other fellow.

Inside Job of Petty Larceny

Just how far this discount mania is reaching in golf comes to light in a case from New York state. A member of one of the clubs last year sold, at cut prices,

more than 200 dozen golf balls to other members. The balls were not those of any manufacturer doing any appreciable amount of business with golf pros. This sterling amateur sportsman managed to chisel in at a dealer's price and pick himself a few nickels at the expense of a good pro who is doing his desperate and faithful best to serve the club. The case has been called to the attention of the U. S. G. A. by the P. G. A. officials, with a request to define the amateur status of this specimen Mr. "Hello World" Henderson might describe as a pusillanimous practitioner of petty larceny. To GOLFDOM'S way of thinking this is a case where the manufacturer of the balls would appreciate getting data so a positive stop could be put to the operation. But the poor damned pro is over the barrel. If he squawks, bang goes his job, for the chances are 9 times out of 10 he won't be given a chance to explain that his precarious profit comes from a full development of his opportunities to supply the playing equipment needs of his members.

There is one of the S. O. S. situations that call for the early attention of the P. G. A. business boss, Gates. It is a job that can and should be handled with dispatch and firmness, for the lack of a proper, well maintained price structure is a constant threat to the manufacturers' profits as well as rank unfairness to the pro who is trying to do a specialty business on a gross profit of about 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ % and still maintain the same sort of an honest price and satisfactory thorough service that the club official considers should prevail in his own business establishment.

Philly Course Superintendents Re-elect Evans President

LOUIS M. EVANS of Cedarbrook was re-elected president of the Philadelphia Association of Golf Course Superintendents at the organization's annual meeting. Eugene MacFarland of Marble Hall was returned to the vice-presidency, and R. C. Lane of Bala again made treasurer of the P. A. G. C. S. M. E. Farnham of the Philadelphia C. C. was elected secretary. E. T. Young had served the organization in that capacity for three years and asked for relief.

Meetings during the winter are held monthly in Philadelphia. The 1930 outdoor schedule opened April 7 at Marble Hall. Despite the cold and rain there was

a good turn-out. Philadelphia seldom has less than an 80 per cent attendance at its meetings. Members of other associations who happen to be in the Philadelphia district at the time of any of the association's meetings are cordially invited to attend. Upon request, Secretary Farnham (club mail at West Conshohocken, Pa.) will be glad to mail notices of the Philadelphia meetings to those interested.

Eighteen of the members of the association attended the Penn State short course but only a third of that number were able to get away for the National Greenkeepers' convention at Louisville. The Philadelphia association is hoping to develop among club officials a realization of the value the conventions have for each club represented and in this manner get authorization of each greenkeeper's convention expenses at a profitable part of the annual maintenance budget.

Making All Year House Operation Pay

DURING last winter, the Greencastle (Ind.) C. C. had its first opportunity to see what could be done by all year operation of a competently managed, well-appointed country club outside of the metropolitan district. The winter season has been a financial and social success at Greencastle, according to President J. F. Cannon.

In giving the reasons for the happy outcome of the venture Mr. Cannon sets forth the following:

"The dining room is under the most capable management since the founding of the club. The cuisine is excellent, and of course patronage is natural.

"This year the Greencastle Rotary Club is having its weekly dinners at the Country Club.

"Bridge luncheons and dinner parties are scheduled daily because of the club's splendid cuisine and spacious rooms, and because of the location, just a mile from town.

"Civic organizations are invited to take advantage of the club facilities for their banquets.

"Dances are held every two weeks with special programs on Halloce'en, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, George Washington's Birthday, and Easter.

"The dining room on Sundays has so far been practically as well filled as during the golf season."