

# When You're Figuring 1931 Greens' Budget Look Far Ahead

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**D**URING the next few months the 1931 budget of nearly every golf course in the country will be prepared. Probably many golf clubs and 90 per cent of the greenkeepers are considering the budget right now.

Green-committees always are anxious to cut expenditures "next year." "We've got to! Times are hard and members are complaining of the costs." The house-committee and other committees, each plan on reducing their budgets also. The combined proposed savings will be several thousands dollars. Each committee will fulfill its pledge for economy, "because of hard times," and all the other stock arguments for such economy.

The executive board will listen with approval to the reports of the various committees, and announce a budget that will be several thousands of dollars less than last year. Sh! did any one mention lowering the dues? Are not lowered dues commensurate with decreased budgets because of "hard times"? And perhaps resignations will be less, thereby preserving a congenial membership.

The green-committee after due consideration decide that it can reduce its budget in several ways. 1. Use less labor; 2. Use less fertilizer; 3. Buy no equipment; 4. Buy no grass seed; 5. Grant no wage or salary increases; 6. Make no improvements.

Considering the items separately the green-committee feels that "it should, to be decent" grant a small salary increase to the greenkeeper and a wage increase to two faithful laborers. Several improvements have been *promised* by the committee members earlier in the year. These promises must be kept. As a comparatively small amount is spent for seed, this item is ignored. All agree that the club is already spending less than "other clubs" for fertilizer and that item just can't be reduced. Thus labor and equipment are the items left to be reduced. Probably these items are as easily reduced as any

for "we can get along with fewer men and the old equipment." The greenkeeper should be questioned and his reaction carefully considered.

## What New Equipment Needs

New equipment to a greenkeeper means either work better done and with less annoyance, or a reduction in labor hours of the time required for any routine job. Either interpretation is very important to the greenkeeper and they appear to be especially important this fall as they will have a large influence on the 1931 budget.

Equipment has reached a stage where it has a great influence over golf course maintenance. It has become so great a factor that at the present time in some instances, it is out of control; in others, the greenkeeper is bewildered or afraid. Such a state of turmoil is unfortunate and should be calmed by a careful study of each situation.

Let us consider replacement equipment first. The actual effect the purchase of any such equipment will have upon the budget for 1931 is the cost less any turn in value of that which has been worn out, plus an increased insurance premium. The budget thinks no further than 1931, neither does it care. The item is too large for the 1931 committee and is dropped and passed on to next year's committee; possibly with full knowledge that the item will be larger because of the lowered turn-in value, and that the 1931 repairs will be out of proportion to the use and value of the machine. A reasonable amount budgeted annually and to be cumulative if unused would be economical and tend to stabilize the club's finances.

The greenkeeper wants worn-out equipment replaced before the turn-in value is too low. He sees in new equipment a saving in repair bills and some labor. However, if the replacing equipment is the same or similar type as that replaced the actual operating labor hours will not be many less than with the old machine. This is a point frequently overlooked. The

greenkeeper is rightfully worried over replacements of equipment if his budget has to be drawn on for the full amount of a set of cutting units, for example, every three years without any provision being made for an increase in budget or the right to carry over the previous year's savings.

Without special provision a set of cutting units every three years means just one thing and that is that every third year there is approximately \$250 less spent for maintenance. Couple that with additional traps, fertilized fairways and other desirable items that increase maintenance cost and if the greenkeeper maintains his standard for that year he is a master greenkeeper who has had some good breaks with the weather.

### Consider Labor-Saving

Labor-saving equipment deserves more than careful consideration by the green committee. It demands intelligent and unselfish thinking. Of the greenkeeper, it demands a revision of his own efforts.

Consider the far-reaching effect the purchasing of one equipment has if it can reduce the working force on a golf course from 14 men to 10, or from 12 men to 8. A payroll reduction of approximately \$2,600, or a little over 17% if four men are kept throughout the year and the greenkeeper's salary is included. The budget makers see an immediate reduction of \$2,600 less cash cost of the labor-saving device. Fine! Bring on some more labor-saving devices.

Some narrow-minded individual with much "economy" and little practical experience says, "We've cut our budget from \$20,000 to \$18,000. John Greenkeeper won't have so much responsibility, let's cut him 10% in salary."

Such an absurd idea should be ruled out at once, squelched, and the perpetrator sentenced to ten years shoveling compost. The physical plant over which the greenkeeper is superintendent is no less valuable because of the payroll decrease, therefore there is no lessening of responsibility. The payroll may be decreased but the results demanded are not less. Therefore, the need for ability is no less.

### Directing Greenkeeper's Efforts

Labor-saving equipment should affect the disposition of the greenkeeper's efforts. If there are fewer men to be bossed, there will be less demands upon his time as a foreman. What then should he do with

the time? The greenkeeper is the one who can best decide. That part of his salary that formerly went to bossing the four men discharged because of the purchase of labor-saving equipment must be paid for either by skilled labor, supervision, or expert knowledge.

As a boss over his men the greenkeeper assumes the role of foreman. As a director of operations he is the superintendent and his ability to correctly order the operations determines his grade as an expert.

As an expert the greenkeeper is a profitable investment. As a superintendent he pays fair dividends. As a foreman or skilled laborer he may be neither profitable or costly, but as a laborer he is very costly. A few minutes' thought should convince anyone that as labor-saving devices increase, the greenkeeper must earn a greater amount of his salary as an expert. However, the demand for a foreman does not decrease in direct proportion with the payroll decrease.

On a 9-hole course where the laborers are cut from 7 men to 3 or from 5 to 2, it appears at first glance that the greenkeeper is left high and dry with no one to boss. So he is—but he is no less valuable than he was before the advent of machinery, if he maintains his present maintenance standard.

### 9-Hole Man's Job

The writer has heard a number of snap-judgment men sneer at a greenkeeper of a 9-hole course. Even gone as far as to say that the greenkeeper on an 18-hole course was worth three times one on a 9-hole course. Any such idea is erroneous. Here are only two of a number of arguments. The standard of maintenance of playing surfaces on the average 9-hole course is equal to that of the average 18-hole course. Fifty rounds of 18 holes on an 18-hole course is equal to 100 rounds on a 9-hole course. Think it over.

With the reduction of laborers there is a definite increase in the magnitude of an error. Every greenkeeper realizes that fact either as stated, or with a different understanding. This labor-saving equipment is placing a greater premium on the greenkeeper's abilities and not returning him to the ranks of laborer.

To return to the budget and the green committee, let us assume they realize all the above conditions, and are set on reducing the budget by purchasing labor-

saving equipment. Here is a warning. All labor-saving devices to date have to do with routine work, work that must be done periodically, daily or otherwise. The budget demands that the labor force be reduced to "moving the machines" and a spare. Don't yield to the demand for if you do it will in due time be costly to your club.

The green-committee and greenkeeper are working with things that are animate. Turf is sensitive, is hurt by harsh treatment, and responds to nursing. Wounds cannot be entirely healed by machinery, neither does machinery pay particular attention to the pimples on the face of "number nine" green, or nurse a sick green. The danger for the budget makers is that in their enthusiasm they are liable to reduce their labor budget so much that there will be no personal care, nursing, or attention to ailing areas of turf.

Labor-saving machinery is *desirable* for routine work on golf courses for it releases men from grooming the course and encouraging the grass, particularly sickly grass. If experiences teach that a machine can save four men's time, buy it, but cut only two men from the payroll instead of four. Even then there will be a reduction in the budget. Place more value on the released men than on the payroll saving by discharging men.

### Advancing the Greenkeeper

Some one slips an item in the budget proposals for, say \$250, to be used for professional improvement of the greenkeeper. Should such an appropriation be in lieu of a salary increase? How should the greenkeeper use it? What becomes of added obligations if the greenkeeper accepts the offer? What will he get out of it? Will it be worth it? These are pertinent questions to be answered frankly.

Salary increases are for added responsibilities or rewards of merit. Professional improvement is keeping abreast the times and increasing one's knowledge. One can hardly be substituted for the other.

A greenkeeper can use an appropriation for professional improvement in a number of ways. There are meetings and conventions that he should attend. There are always special projects being undertaken within reasonable travel distance, or the winter schools for greenkeepers are worth attending.

The greenkeeper accepting professional improvement opportunities from a club is

obligated to put forth his best efforts that he may acquire as much knowledge as possible. He is also morally obligated to remain with the club long enough for the club to profit by their generosity.

The greenkeeper will get as much out of professional improvement as a member of any profession does. The amount will be in direct proportion to his efforts, willingness to learn, and ability to absorb what he sees and hears.

If professional improvement is unprofitable, why are doctors, lawyers, bankers, and merchants seeking and demanding such improvement?

The 1931 budgets of golf clubs are to have a very far-reaching result upon the individual club and upon golf courses in general. They must not be selfish and short sighted but must be economically sound.

## Greenkeepers Show Space in Lively Demand

Cleveland, O.—Fred Burkhardt, chairman of the show committee of the National Association of Greenkeepers, forecasts a complete sell-out of exhibition space at the fifth annual exposition which will be held at the Columbus (O.) Auditorium during the first week in February, 1931.

Burkhardt reports that more than three-quarters of the space already has been reserved. Indications for attendance at the annual convention which will be held in conjunction with the exhibit point to a record figure as a number of additional clubs have ruled to make their greenkeepers' convention expense a logical detail of the maintenance budget.

Golf, the game that grew without newspaper publicity, now is getting attention from the press. At Merion 75 golf writers filed 2,225,000 words with the 32 telegraphers in the press quarters. Thousands of words additional were filed at the Philadelphia telegraph offices. When Jones made his debut at Merion in 1916, 300,000 words on the tournament were filed by 29 writers to six telegraphers.

The writers praised the Merion press arrangements made by R. L. Barrows; chairman of the club's press committee, as the best of any national golf event.

Gate receipts at Merion totaled \$55,670, the highest amount of any national championship gate. There were 3,091 six-day tickets and 16,362 daily tickets sold.