

Suggests Unemployed Be Used Building Muni Courses

By Fillmore Harty

COMBINING the words "golf" and "unemployment" may seem strange and yet with the proper study of both it will be found that the two can work hand in hand in a most homogeneous fashion.

This article is not written with the thought of the large city but more with the thought of the small community with a population of not more than 25,000. It is true that unemployment in the small city is not as acute, in most instances, in proportion as that of the large metropolis, but political executives will verify the statement that while the situation is not as large it is just as annoying and distasteful. Taxpayers of the community, with incomes cannot afford increased taxes, doles or donations to relieve the situation because of reduced incomes forced on them.

How then can this situation be relieved? Would it not be better to create work which in time every community will need? Would it not be better to construct these needed improvements now while labor and material costs are low?

In the majority of small communities, municipally owned and operated golf courses are not numerous. Many have courses but as a general rule they are flat, uninteresting and monotonous. With the increased interest in playing golf there should be far better courses. Why is it not a timely suggestion for these smaller cities to remodel and rebuild these poor courses? Why is it not a timely suggestion to build new courses on available land?

Perhaps if the executive heads of the cities were to understand more clearly the financial return of properly conducted golf courses, they would connect the building of them more closely with their unemployment problem.

The writer has made considerable study of public and private courses both in times of prosperity and depression. With the depression came the loss of many private club members because of financial difficulties, but the play on public courses increased. As an example, a large public course in the Detroit district decided to reduce the daily fee from \$1.50 to \$1.00, which, they thought, was a ratio of reduction in accordance with depressional



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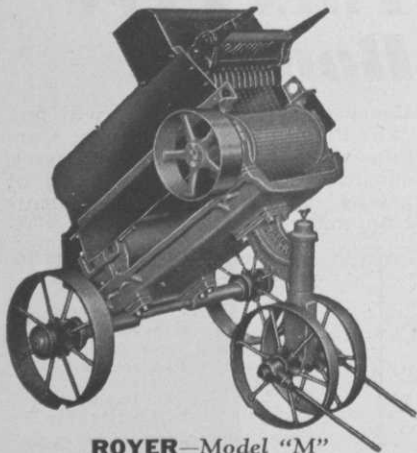
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standards. As a result, the business has so increased that it has been necessary to increase the size of clubhouse accommodations and increase the number of persons employed. The amount of fees now collected and the amount of money now spent by players for food and golf supplies is by a large percentage greater than during the so-called times of prosperity.

This condition is to be found in the majority of instances. Of course, there are some courses that have not had a good financial return, but this is almost invariably due to poor management, refusal to meet present day spending demands, and most important, poor and unkept courses. Also the clubhouse must be sufficient to take care of the golfers' needs.

To attract the patronage of the public golfer it has been found absolutely necessary to have adequate and pleasant clubhouse facilities, a well designed and well maintained course and courteous service. When a golf project has these three requisites then it will prosper. A properly conducted course will net a return of from 5 per cent to 20 per cent.

The greatest amount of unemployment is to be found among the unskilled labor class. It is from this class of labor that course construction draws. Wages of these men have decreased materially and because of their eagerness to obtain employment more work will be accomplished. The only skilled men required are the architects and construction foremen. Tractors, power shovels, discs, etc., are the only equipment needed, all of which are a part of every city's equipment. Materials such as fertilizers, shrubs, grass, seeds, etc., have decreased in cost. With the decrease in cost of labor and materials it is now possible to construct a course of championship caliber for about the same cost formerly expended for an inferior one during the times of prosperity. Clubhouse construction costs are also lower, usually about 20 per cent.

Golf will always be a game for the masses. Attendance records show the number of players are increasing yearly.

Cities should have as a matter of pride of ownership at least one course of championship caliber. They should have a clubhouse that is well planned and attractive. It should have spacious lounges, large locker rooms and well serviced restaurants. And wherever a layout is in accord with the above requirements it is prospering.