

Lower Dues for More Members Works O. K. in Early Tests

By TERRY GREENFIELD

JOHN FULTON, club membership expert, registers the opinion that there's not a thing in the world for the private clubs to worry about this year, except—
The high cost of golf.

Fulton has been the consultant on the membership problems of about 50 clubs in the central states since the first of the year, and maintains that the social membership which will split the cost of the club operation among more people is the outstanding answer to the club's income problems for this year. Swimming pools, tennis courts, etc., for attracting all members of the families and golf playing privileges on a fee basis except Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, are working out nicely in building up the gross income and reducing the per capita cost of operation.

There's another part of the answer that a few clubs already are trying with decided success: reduction of dues. Initiation fees in the greater number of cases have been reduced because the law of supply and demand is working rather than the bookkeeping system's valuation of membership on a plant value basis. This sturdy old law of supply and demand is at work just as strongly on the dues situation, although there has not been a hasty or keen realization of the fact.

Golf clubs that carried resigned members on the books during a fair part of last season were compelled to wash out a considerable percentage of the delinquent members before this year dawned. Inability to dispose of the resignees' memberships to others who will assume dues based on bull market conditions will mess up a number of budgets this year unless the club directors make an early and vigorous stab at solicitation of new members on a reduced dues platform, according to Fulton's forecast.

Cites Examples

Already some foresighted clubs have acted on the realization that it's not only the first cost but the upkeep of club memberships that is slowing up membership

campaigns. For instance, take Inverness at Toledo, one of the country's famous clubs. Last year the dues at Inverness were \$200 plus the tax. Banks folded in Toledo right after the National Open and caught a number of the Inverness members. The club itself was hit for around \$6,000, but fortunately had used some of its balance prior to the bank dive in retiring bonds prior to the due date. There were plenty of rumors that Inverness had taken the count as a private club right after the bank failures, but the financial statement of the club for 1931 show the club in good financial shape. Incidentally, the audit by Ernst and Ernst shows how club books ought to be kept.

The general financial situation in Toledo brought about a wave of resignations that threatened to seriously affect Inverness' future. Instead of waiting until the situation developed to the fatal degree, the club reduced the dues to \$150 including tax. Since that time many of the resignations have been recalled, and only a couple of new resignations have been recorded. Interest of prospective new members took on new heat.

Westward Ho (Chicago district) reduced the dues from \$180 plus tax to \$125 including tax. Quickly after the reduction was announced 24 new memberships were secured and 7 resignations recalled. Rolling Green, also in the Chicago district, had \$180 plus tax as its dues last year. This year the dues are \$150, including tax when the member pays his account by the 15th of the month. Again, new life in the membership situation!

Why Wait?

One of the officials of a club that successfully reduced its dues says the situation has a parallel in the case of a landlord who keeps the rents up until the tenants move out on him and then has to put a sharp cut into effect to attract some new lessors. This official figures that the time to arrange for a cut is before a club

is face to face with an extremely serious membership solicitation problem.

The dues reduction matter is something that is bound to come up as a problem for many club boards during the next couple of months. It will simmer down to an estimate of how much the traffic at the club can be increased at a lower cost of golf per individual and a higher collective income. In some territories this will be about the first thing private clubs have done to compete with the constantly growing charm of fee course golf played at establishments that frequently offer attractions not remotely comparable with those of private clubs.

GOLFDOM at present is at work on a market study of golf that already is revealing some interesting facts and not the least interesting is the discovery that approximately 1½% of the white population between 20 and 64 are members of private golf clubs. This would indicate that the market for private club membership is a long way from the saturation point.

Actually it seems as though the golf clubs had a job of selling to do instead of depending mainly on the rapid spontaneous growth of the game which featured the years previous when golf's advance was on the "craze" basis. Where selling starts is by making the price right. In making the readjustments of prices there may be some painful necessities of writing off white elephants and ample agony in figuring out the carrying charges on big plants put in during the circus days of several years ago. It's no easy job and it involves weighty responsibility in estimating how strong the effect of lowered dues will be on the membership situation, but according to the experience of those clubs that have reduced the dues, lower dues and more people paying them will be the successful principle in club readjustment to the 1932 conditions.

PGA AT PEORIA

Annual Business Meeting

November 7-9

SIXTEENTH annual meeting of the Professional Golfers assn. will be held at Hotel Pere Marquette, Peoria, Ill., November 7 to 9 inclusive. This is the first time the meeting has been held away from met-

ropolitan centers and probably is in line with the policy of the PGA to pay special attention to the growth of golf in the smaller cities. Elmer Biggs, pro and supt. at the Peoria C. C., leading club of the convention city, is prominent in PGA executive circles as a member of the ways and means committee.

Plans for inviting leading makers of golf goods to display their 1933 lines to the PGA delegates are being considered.

Some newspapers announced in error that the PGA annual championship was to be played at Peoria Nov. 7-9. Award of the PGA championship has been made to Keller course, St. Paul.

NAGA Plans Greens Show in Chicago in 1933

CONFERENCE of officials of the National Association of Greenkeepers, held recently at Chicago, set Jan. 31 to Feb. 3 inclusive as date of the 1933 annual meeting and equipment show of the organization. Headquarters will be at Hotel Sherman. The event is the first of the many business association sessions definitely scheduled for World's Fair year at Chicago.

Fred Burkhardt, sec. of the NAGA and chairman of its show committee, will have floor plans of the exhibit space available at an early date. Details of the conference program will be completed at the meeting of the association's executive board to be held in Cleveland in November. At this time the reports on the 1932 season's experiences will be used in determining subjects of greatest practical and timely interest.

The Chicago planning session was attended by Pres. John Morley, Vice-pres. John MacGregor, Sec. Fred Burkhardt, Edward B. Dearie, jr., and Alex Binnie.

Minnesota Short Course Has 56 in Attendance

SHORT COURSE in greenkeeping conducted by University of Minnesota in association with Minnesota Greenkeepers' assn. attracted 56 men to sessions that coped with the "dirt" and technical problems of course maintenance. Five men attended from North Dakota, 6 from Wisconsin and the rest were natives.