

Today Offers Prime Opportunity to Boost Greensmen's Status

By ARTHUR LANGTON

JUST AS great crises in history have tended to develop a spirit of nationalism and independence in countries which for centuries have submitted meekly to political domination, so the current economic crisis may lead to the elevation of the greenkeeper's status—if he can make good. Historians are almost as one in saying that the birth of American independence came when, owing to difficulties with other countries, England was forced to allow her colonies to look after themselves. Continuing the parallel, golf course superintendents in many sections of the country are being given a free hand in regard to upkeep activities as long as they continue to produce satisfactory results under present conditions.

No longer are players apt to criticize the way in which a course is run as long as they have a satisfactory place upon which to play. A spirit of passive cooperation borne of the realization that perhaps, after all, the greenkeeper knows his business, has arisen among club members. A contributing factor in this change of attitude has been the growing conviction that no man's judgment is infallible. There was a time back in the gilded days of 1928 when business men, having made a little money through the grace of Providence, felt they were justified in sitting in judgment upon the running of everything with which they came in contact. But since those extravagant days many of these self-appointed critics have fallen by the financial wayside and the others feel that their footing is none too secure, with the result that their confidence in their own omnipotence has been sadly shaken.

Opportunity Beckons Greensmen

In addition to the crisis, the greenkeeper now finds himself confronted with the chance of a lifetime. His plight may be desperate, with the very existence of his club in jeopardy, and no chance of obtaining further employment if he is discharged. But, if he can be instrumental in piloting

his employers through the storm, his future high status will be assured, and with this in mind it behooves every greenkeeper to take advantage of the opportunity to save his course from waste and ultimate destruction. This he is able to do better than any other course employee.

The writer is no authority on economics, having barely scraped through the only course he ever took in the subject, but it has been his observation that true economy on the golf course is not a passive thing nor a policy of negation. It means aggressiveness, much more so than in prosperous times when such a practice is easy. It is unsafe to believe that economy consists of not doing as much of this, that, and the other thing as formerly. When a boat is in danger of being engulfed the crew does not sit down on the job for fear that further activity will increase the danger. Economy, then, can mean increased efficiency.

The implication that greenkeepers have not reached the peak of efficiency in golf course maintenance will be met with cries of rage vented by greensmen from Alaska to Agua Caliente. Psychologists are fond of carrying on tests with skilled performers in every line of activity, performers so skillful that it is difficult for them or anyone else to conceive how their activity could be made more efficient. Yet under favorable stimulation the efficiency curve of these performers takes not merely a perceptible rise, but a positive flight, usually to the surprise of the subjects. The point is obvious, and its application to course maintenance is particularly forceful because of the varied opportunities for improvement.

Improve Efficiency, Not Speed

Since few workmen operate anywhere near their maximum of efficiency, common sense would indicate that the course personnel represents an excellent place for the practice of economy by the improvement of performance; which decidedly



This terrifying shot, the 18th at Pasatiempo, shows some of Dr. A. Mackenzie's architecture at its most picturesque. Mackenzie's idea is that a course should look tough and play pleasant, for golf after all is fun. Due to cleverly located stairs the walk to the green is not the mountain climb it seems although Mackenzie and other good architects try to avoid a steep finishing hole.

does not mean making the individuals work harder. The individuality of each task makes efficiency-expert, chain-gang methods of labor promotion worthless on a golf course.

Morale is everything, and to develop it in his crew the greenkeeper needs only to instill a sense of responsibility in his men. One of the most successful superintendents in California keeps his men enthusiastic about their work in spite of wage cuts by appearing before them in the role of director instead of dictator. To use his own words, "If I tell a man he has to do a certain task in a certain way because I want it done that way, he will do it, all right, but not a darned bit more. And when he is finished he stands around waiting for me to tell him what to do next. But if I tell a man that I want him to do a certain job in a certain way, but suggest that he improve on it as I am sure he can, that man is put on his own responsibility and it is a matter of pride that he gets that job done as well as he knows how."

Gives Crew the Low-Down

Another Pacific Coast greenkeeper in charge of a long and hilly course is doing wonders with a tiny crew by taking the

men into his confidence and impressing them with the fact that their efforts will determine whether or not the course will survive and they with it. Further than this he does little overseeing because he has neither the time nor the inclination. He states that intelligent men do not need it and he will not keep the other kind.

But even the best men will grow slack at times, particularly in regard to breakage and loss of equipment, items which cut a large figure in the budget of every course. This can be brought down to a minimum by posting all the workmen's names and listing after each the tools that that individual has damaged or lost. No rewards or fines need be made in regard to the best or the worst records, the stigma of posted losses usually being sufficient to bring about a reformation in even the most calloused cases.

Periodic Check-Up Advised

It is difficult to outline a universal set of rules whereby golf courses may save money satisfactorily; each course has its own problems and consequently must look to itself for its own solutions. For this reason a careful analytical survey of maintenance conditions, including every possi-

ble contributing factor must be taken from time to time, preferably once a month. It is wisest to consider not alone how certain expenses may be curtailed before the next check-up, but also how the same expenditure will produce better golf. The most successful greenkeepers are not necessarily those who spend the least money, but those whose courses attract the most players.

In one of these check-ups a certain greenkeeper found that every few days one of his men had to be sacrificed to the cause of rodent control, there being an ever-recurring plague of gophers and moles in the vicinity. He found, by making each greensman responsible for the eradication of the pests within certain vital areas of the course that control could be maintained without loss of efficiency in other departments. Incidentally, in the palmy days of a few years ago, another superintendent found that the best and cheapest way to eradicate moles on his course was to put a bounty of 50 cents a head on the rodents. Today, half that amount is effective.

One man decided that the cost of poling greens was too much and could be reduced. He went to a nearby firm and had it make him a special broom, a monster of its kind with a nine-foot brush. It cost less than \$5.00, outlasted innumerable canes, and did a better job in a shorter time.

Greensmen Inventive Lot

Perhaps the best indication that at least California greenkeepers are taking their economies seriously is the fact that those once so popular monuments to waste, the junk piles, practically have disappeared from the land of sunshine and receivers. Instead, nearly every bit of scrap metal is hoarded as much fine gold, for some day it may be used in the manufacture of some money-saving device. Practically every greenkeeper in the state has a pet scheme or device that he is working on, and some have scores of them to their credit. The strange part about most of these brain children or brain storms is that many of them work. Scarcely is there a superintendent but has operating on his course sprinklers that will never recognize a father, weird contraptions with arms, cogs, wheels, vibrators, and baffle plates. But it is interesting to note that sprinkler manufacturers pay these creations the compliment of very close attention for many of them have incorporated principles that

later have been seized upon and patented. Another favorite subject for experiment and modification is the topdressing machine. It would seem from casual observation that no company has yet produced one of these machines that greenkeepers have not tried to improve upon. The writer has seen these machines taken to pieces by ambitious greenkeepers and rebuilt along absolutely different lines in the attempt to obtain a more even distribution.

In the southern part of the same state most club officials are not aware of the fact that there is a tremendous amount of borrowing and lending of tools and equipment between the various courses. The members of one club do not realize that the very excellent spiker it purchased a few years ago has helped to improve the turf on at least four courses in the district. Nor do these members know that tools from practically every other club in the vicinity have contributed to the excellence of its own greens. But such is the case and such will continue to be the case while the present very commendable spirit of co-operation prevails. It is this spirit of co-operation which is holding down the cost of upkeep and maintaining splendid turf in Southern California. Which makes it possible for greenkeeping to be robbed of many of its terrors in this district, because one's colleagues on neighboring courses are willing and eager to lend their opinion, equipment, and goodwill. In this manner the status of greenkeepers is being raised throughout the whole district.

Poa Annua Fight Begun

MAY INSPECTION of many mid-western courses shows much *poa annua* on greens. Mindful of what happened last year when this grass went out during the hot weather, some of the veteran greenkeepers are advocating longer cutting and less water on greens in the hope they'll be able to avoid last summer's big bare spots on their greens.

OAK RIDGE C. C. (Tuckahoe, N. Y.) has solved the trap foot-print problem by driving a 2 in. dia. galvanized iron pipe about 4 ft. long into the ground at the end of each trap, out of playing range. In these pipes are trap rakes. Players must not leave vicinity of traps until caddies have raked and replaced rakes. "Plan works great," says Isaac Simons, Oak Ridge pres.