

# A Little Advice and Some Optimism

By GUY C. WEST

**N**OT LONG ago I read of a supply company which wrote a very touching note containing an appeal for you know what to a certain country club. By return mail came the following:

*"Gentleman: This club has divided its bills into three classes: first, those which it is absolutely necessary that we pay; second, those which we will try to pay sometime; third, those which we will pay when prosperity has returned. As a result of your recent note we have decided to transfer the small matter of your bill from the third class into the second."*

There are many clubs whose attitude seems to be along these lines. Many are forced toward this viewpoint because their members have not paid their dues, or have dropped their membership entirely. Hence, these clubs possibly are not to be condemned too harshly, if they are honestly doing their best to pay their bills as dues are collected from their members.

This matter of collecting dues is a tough proposition for many clubs at present, especially the smaller ones. I recently heard of a club which has billed its members on February 20th, and again each month for five months, a fifth of the dues each bill. Other clubs are working along this same line. Possibly this method would be better if the ruling was made that no member would be allowed to play golf if more than a month in arrears. Whatever method is used, there seems to be room here for some real constructive thinking.

## Buy from Loyal Dealers

I believe that those clubs which still owe dealers money for past purchases should place their business for 1933 as near 100 per cent as possible with those dealers to whom they are indebted, thus helping those dealers who have been their friends. All spare cash which these clubs can dig up should be given the dealers owed to bring down the old bills. One or two creditors may carry on and help a club through a bad period, but many creditors might bring about a financial collapse of the club.

In this connection, new incoming officials should be enlightened by outgoing officials

of those dealers who have befriended the club in the past, and recommended that the club business be given where prices are consistent to the old friends.

During 1932 all clubs were forced to curtail their expenditures to live within their incomes. This tendency will also be marked this year. It is absolutely essential that each club do its utmost to keep its credit sound.

I am reminded of the club which wrote to a seed house, ordering a hundred pounds of bent seed, saying—"if the seed proves O. K., we'll send check." And the dealer wrote back, "Please send check, if O. K. we'll send seed." Ofttimes a little more care in keeping within the income, of paying bills more promptly, and such replies will not be necessary.

In justice to those clubs whose credit is sound, it might be well for some agency to establish the *credit rating* of every club in the United States. If such a rating was established, any dealer would know in a glance how much credit he could extend. Clubs could be helped, and the cost of selling reduced.

## The Optimistic Side

Most of us are quite apt by this time in cursing the depression, and probably most of us have plenty of reason to curse! However, there seem to be a few gleams of optimism which are resulting to some extent at least from this depression. Should we call this period a normal one, in which we are getting ourselves readjusted from a very abnormal one? Possibly. Can we expect the extravagance and high wages and salaries of 1929 again? Probably not for many years at least.

It seems optimistic that the clubs are placing more and more dependence upon their greenkeepers. Many have been appointed general managers and superintendents. A prominent official recently said that in his opinion the greenkeeper was the logical man to step up, as no one else could make a dollar go so far, or do so much at such little expense. At many clubs the greenkeeper is given a budget, and is told to go ahead and show results—given

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entire responsibility to handle all labor and buy all supplies without interference.

Secondly, we can thank this depression for keeping away those high pressure salesmen who were so common a few years ago, who tried by every means to stuff their products down our throats, who passed as "turf experts," and didn't think it was possible for us to "get by" without their products. Clubs cannot afford to buy for an experiment now; they must buy proven goods. It seems significant that wild-cat goods were most often sold by high-pressure salesmen, and we see few of them now.

The third feeling of optimism comes from the fact that never before has there been such a fine feeling of fellowship and cooperation between green-chairmen and greenkeepers as there is at present. We see evidences of this on all sides. In New England probably the best example at present is the Green Section committee of the Massachusetts Golf association, comprised of three members of M. G. A., and three members of the Greenkeepers' Club

of New England. This committee is now sponsoring a joint meeting of the two bodies, at which meeting the officials of the clubs and the greenkeepers discuss their mutual problems, including maintenance under lowered income. Surely much good will come from such a meeting.

There are various other factors which are of an optimistic trend. Greenkeepers have been brought out into the light more of late, and rightly so; as a class they are too often found in the background. The old established clubs, soundly financed and managed, have kept their credit sound for the most part, while many of the clubs which were entirely "boom" built are now closed. Business of the clubs as well as all other business should emerge from this period of readjustment on a sound basis.

Probably when we get through this year we will note other optimistic factors which are not so evident at present. For the present I urge all clubs to keep their credit sound if in any way possible. I also suggest constructive optimism.


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