

What to Buy; How to Buy It; Stirs Expert Opinion

NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW just what effect codes will have on group buying. The group buying idea has been repeatedly tried out in the golf club field and in no outstanding instance has its success in net savings and satisfaction been such as to identify the practice as being at its theoretical best any boon to clubs.

However, the failure of the experiments has not been accompanied by any warning obituary statements for two reasons: (1) the fellows who thought well of it in theory finish their terms as officials and have no further direct interest in the affair, and; (2) who wants to talk about a flop?

So much of the operating costs of country clubs are labor expenses that equipment and supplies purchases, with the exception of restaurant foods, are matters of sharply limited possibilities of saving. Machinery and supplies for the course, for instance, seldom run 20 per cent of the annual budget, and even if a 10 per cent saving could be chiseled out on these items it would amount to 2 per cent gross, which leaves the operation actually in the red if all costs and rights to sales service are figured up.

Manager's Analysis

The Chicago District Club Managers' Assn., in a calm and experienced study of group buying, had the following report to make:

"The chief reason for the failure of club group buying is that the various clubs are not branch houses, whose officers, directors and employees are subject to orders from the office of any association.

"With no one in authority to push the newly established bureau of standards, purchasing or whatever it is, it can only be a failure unless some real services can be rendered. What are these? Suppose we took a look around the clubhouse first. Say it is—

Towels: Whether to buy Cannon, Martex, Fields, Carsons or whose. Read the endorsement ads in any hotel paper. If 5,000 hotels with a million times the re-

quirements of our Chicago country clubs cannot decide on one, how can we?

Loins: Full loins, short loins, strip loins, boneless strips. Try and get a standard here. First, what grade, choice steer, No. 1 or cow? What menu price, what size portions, can you use all your tenders, use few, or buy more than you can strip out?

Asparagus: Run of field, choice or jumbo?

Food stuffs: The Association might attempt a weekly market list; some commission houses publish them. However, sudden heat or cold, or rain during the week causes such quick price changes that many houses have discontinued quotation sheets for vegetables, fruit, etc.

Furnishings: Chairs, carpets, towels, dishes, silver, all different patterns and manufacturers. Often purchased through members at prices from cost to handsome profits.

Course Supplies: 10-8-6 or 6-8-10, sulphate and lime, sulphate, phosphate, potash and mix 'em yourself. What is past fertilization history? Present condition? Would seem difficult to select a standard.

Seeds: Some want the best, some want price. How many send samples to seed testing laboratories to see what proportion of chaff, weeds and seeds and what is germination? The same for hose, sand, mowers, sprinklers, etc., each for a different purpose, purse and club. Occasional market price lists on course supplies that have little or no day to day fluctuations would be of value.

"Running through the whole theme are the questions of buying through connections, financial conditions, payment of invoices. 'Discrepancies in prices paid,'—with so many conditions, should think there would be.

"Personally, looks like a tough, thankless job.

"I am ready to present a concrete problem for the bureau. During a year we use from 8 to 10 barrels of general cleaning and dishwashing powders. Prices for this material vary from 6c to 12c a pound. There certainly is a 'discrepancy in price' here. Have tried Wyandotte, Oakite, Soil-ex, Proctor and Gamble's, Picks Pittsburg and have even made soft soap for this purpose.

● SPREADERS

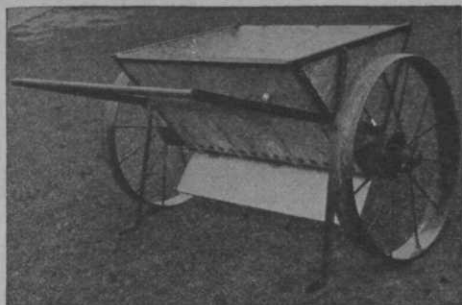
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"Among the lot there is one I prefer. Now what are the ingredients of each? Judging from the price of their analyses they must be different although each house representative says his will do everything the other will."

Course Suppliers' Tale

Chiseling the prices of course equipment and supplies long has been an inviting field for effort, although it is difficult for one who knows something about the supply business to present a reason for supply houses being targets. The reason certainly has not been their opulent profits during the brightest years of golf course construction.

One of the supply houses that by good fortune managed to have stamps enough to send out a form letter on buying, set forth one angle of the suppliers' case in the following letter:

"Prompt efficient service is costly; you know its value and so do we, that is why we give it.

"Just the other day several greenkeepers called and stated that the web worms were destroying their greens and wanted to know how soon we could get some Evergreen 20 and Arsenate of Lead out to them. They had to have it in a few hours as they were holding their men overtime to put it on. We had it delivered on time. They wanted service and got it.

"Supposing there wasn't any equipment house to render this service and these greenkeepers had to send to Minneapolis for the Pyrethrum extract and to Detroit for the Arsenate. There would be a delay of from two to five days before they would receive the shipment and their greens would probably be seriously damaged.

"Frankly, isn't this type of service worth

something to the Greenkeepers of the Chicago area? To have a 100 per cent golf equipment house that carries from \$50,000 to \$100,000 stock at all times during the season so that the greenkeepers can draw on these supplies at will whether their purchase is a routine one or an emergency one.

"Your golf equipment houses need your loyal support if they are to exist. They have their money invested to render you a twelve months service plus a well trained staff who know how to fulfill your requests.

"During depressing times other industries have turned to the golf clubs for business with no idea of permanency but just to 'chisel in,' sell some goods and then step out later with no idea of ever rendering a permanent service. There is even a manufacturer who calls directly on the greenkeepers to sell a fungicide and after he has made a sale, what other service can he render? None! Absolutely none and you won't see this salesman again until the next brown patch season.

"It is salesmen of this type who make a clean sale, a clean profit and a clean get away without having the expense of rendering any kind of service to the club. All they have usually is a price appeal item which can usually be purchased from your equipment house for the same price or less—plus a service.

"In the above instance the golf house has suffered the loss of a legitimate profit and the business has gone to support another industry which will never again directly benefit the service of the golf clubs themselves. The club and greenkeeper is ultimately the sufferer because he is discouraging the golf equipment house from keeping its money invested in a field that will not support them or yield a profit."