

SEES RED!

By HERB GRAFFIS

... but drug-store chain head doesn't mind hammer- and -sickling pros on golf balls. Some lessons in this

IT may be very impolite to laugh right in a guy's face but one can not help doing that to Mr. Charley Walgreen, who is a nice fellow and a prosperous owner of that chain of 500 drug stores selling such drugs as golf balls, radios and little books of comic pictures for the kiddies.

Mr. Charley Walgreen comes out with a big blast in the papers about his niece learning to be a communist at the University of Chicago. Charley does a lot of newspaper advertising so this stunt, which some press agent probably told him was a swell idea, rated a good many columns of space in which the glorious tale of Charley from pill roller to president and defender of American institutions is told in an inspiring manner. After reading Charley's dope you would be afraid to answer the doorbell for fear you would be met by the Red horde, headed by Charley's niece, her hair messed up very revolutionistic, her beautiful eyes blazing and with a red banner having the sickle and hammer on it slapping you right in the pan.

Things quieted down when President Hutchins of the University of Chicago replied to Charley, "Nuts. Don't bother us by popping off unless you have some facts. We are having a hell of a time trying to teach these kids the regulation stuff without detouring into left field."

The whole affair died away quickly and fortunately for Charley. Charley's chain of 500 drug stores probably implanted profound communistic impulses in the minds and muscles of more adult druggists and their employees, by virtue of their having been steam-rolled out of business by the Walgreen chain, than there are impressionable and changeable college kids who have shown any interest in communism even as a historic, economic and sociological subject. The kids that do go for communism handle it in about the same way and in the same spirit as the young write dirty words on alley fences, so it's not a hell of a lot for Charley to worry about.

A Tip-Off to Pros

The incident has in it a lesson for the pros; especially for those pros who de-

pend to a reasonable important degree on ball sales for their living, and whose sales are reduced by drug store balls.

The Chicago university president sent Charley back to minding his own business—to attending to something Walgreen knew about—by the simple process of calling for a show down on facts.

If the pro suffers from cheap ball competition he also can call for a show-down in a plain and convincing manner. Let him make a display of any competitive chain store price ball construction cut up and mounted on a display board, with the pro's ball in the same price class also cut apart for the player's inspection. The pro can sell better balls in any price class than any other outfit, even if it's necessary sometimes to sacrifice part of the profit margin. It is better to sacrifice some of your legitimate margin for a time in a campaign to win back ball customers you have lost, than it is to keep up the margin and see the business go elsewhere. But before you plan on any campaign like this on the cheaper balls make sure that the volume of cheaper ball business among your members really warrants a special drive. You have the 75 cent ball volume and profit standard to protect. The chain stores simply want to go after the cheap business.

It's a good idea to check on the ball contents of your members' bags once a month. With data thus obtained you will be working on a basis of certainties instead of hunches.

Don't Fumble This Stunt

This ball and club inventory angle seldom is worked enough by pros. They have in this inventory the sure way of keeping their fingers on the pulse of sales. They can find out from the bags exactly why they are not getting the volume of business they think they should. The fault may lie in the pro's stocks or something about his method of presenting his merchandising story and his merchandise may be at fault.

Seldom need a pro become discouraged about his merchandising prospects. By and large the pros are developing quicker and more solidly as small merchandisers

than any other group of small retailers in the country. He has an ideal point-of-use selling location. He is—or certainly should be—closer to his customers than almost any other small retailer.

On this subject of intimacy with his customers, a nationally prominent and successful business man recently told this writer he believed the pros made up one of the most influential groups in the country, but very few of them knew how to use their influence. It was his suggestion that the pros, instead of telling sorry tales of cut price competition with lower quality goods and referring to lack of member patronage, go about the solution of such difficulties by diplomatically detailing the superior values of pro shop merchandise, and the dime-for-dime edge pro goods have over the cheap stocks of the "bargain" stores. He might then get his business men members interested in giving the pro advice and assistance in putting the pro story over. The influential member then would feel himself partially responsible for the success of the pro's business operations. It was this man's opinion that pro complaint of lost business encourages members to sample the goods of competitors.

Why Mess With Alien Worry?

This all gets around to the sound advice of minding one's own business first instead of expressing lively concern about the practices of competitors. It's a mistake fairly common to all civilized humanity. Some rather ridiculous and weakening inconsistencies come out of this eagerness to run the other guy's business instead of devoting the energies to one's own affairs. Maybe—but we hope not—players may have reason to call attention that while pros have registered some perfectly legitimate squawks against co-op buying at "wholesale" prices of golf goods by corporation employees or other groups, several of the same pros proclaim loudly the merits of co-op buying for the pros. If that *reductio ad absurdum* of co-op buying were carried through the entire populace there would be no need of pros selling and serving members, and eventually not many club members with the ideas of profit for service rendered and an American freedom of buying choice eliminated.

While the old gag, "the customer is always right" has plenty of holes in it, there's still enough good sense to it for the pro to consider carefully whether the pro himself is wrong when the customer is not

doing the buying he should at the pro shop, or whether the customer is willfully and stubbornly ignorant.

At any rate, while the pro is trying to figure out the answer to his merchandising and policy problems for this season, we hope that he won't go about it on the Walgreen plan of blaming somebody else in a case where he is not entirely free from guilt.

Willie Hoare, Pro Vet, is Convalescing

WILLIE HOARE, vet pro and pro golf salesman, is winning the battle to regain his health. Doctors advise that Willie will be able to tour his neighborhood in a wheel chair this spring but won't be up and around on his legs for some time. Willie suffered a sunstroke and complications during the 1934 Illinois Open that has kept him bedridden for nine months. He is still too weak to acknowledge the many thoughtful and welcome letters he has received from his pals and wants the boys to know that he appreciates their notes and would like to hear from them all when they get in the mood, at his home address, 4879 N. Paulina Ave., Chicago.

IT LOOKS like there must have been something to that tale GOLFDOM carried, quoting an insurance authority's high rating of golf pro salesmanship. Read the following Associated Press item:

"General insurance agents have approved an agreement prohibiting golf professionals from selling life insurance in Indianapolis 'on the side.'

"Many of the larger life-insurance companies are said to be behind a movement to stop professional athletes from augmenting their earnings in the insurance business.

"Theodore M. Riehle of New York, president of the National Association of Life Underwriters, says agreements to eliminate 'obviously unqualified' persons from the business is one of the biggest steps taken by underwriters to set up standards in the field.

"Tennis players and amateur athletes who participate in sports as an avocation and not for the purpose of earning a living are not affected by the agreement, says Riehle."