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## Greenkeepers Hear How 'Planned' Work Pays Dividends

ONE of the most interesting and informative educational sessions at the recent annual greenkeepers convention in New York City, was that on "Maintenance Labor and the Country Club." The problem of handling men and keeping them satisfied so as to produce best type of work, was the focal point in talks by Mark L. Putnam, personnel assistant, Western Electric Company, who was in charge of the session, Eberhard Steiniger, Pine Valley (Philadelphia district) Country Club greenkeeper, and Kingdon Troensegaard, supt., Old Oaks CC. Additional comment on the subject was added by greenkeepers Gerald M. Dearie and Leo Feser. Putnam, in leading off the session, said:

I don't think maintenance labor is different from any other kind of labor in certain fundamental respects; so what I want to say is about the handling and the supervision of any type of individual that you want to do a certain kind or amount of work. The basic objective of the employer is to develop and maintain an effective work force. If you want to have an effective work force you've got to have your whole job arranged so that you can employ men, so that they want to stay with you, so that they want to do their best. It implies that you are going to have some incentives of one sort or another for them to do that. You are going to have some financial incentives; you are going to have some non-financial incentives.

### Conditions Must Be Right

You cannot demand and you cannot enforce the highest effectiveness and the highest morale; you have got to reach that by setting up conditions from which effectiveness and morale naturally spring. You can't demand of a man that he feel good about his whole situation. You can't demand of him that he give you the highest effectiveness of which he is capable. But you can set up conditions from which that kind of effort on his part and that kind of satisfaction on his part will naturally develop.

The conditions which I think have to be set up if you are going to get the highest effectiveness and the highest morale from employees are:

First, I think every employee has to have a broad understanding of the sig-



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# TIMELY TURF TIPS

## THE POA ANNUA FAIRWAY PROBLEM

On many watered fairways poa annua, otherwise called annual blue grass, is increasing. On some courses it has become the predominating grass. Then greenkeepers are confronted with the problem of holding this shallow-rooted grass, at least until means of discouraging it and fostering other grasses are discovered.

Poa annua is the first to grow in the spring. It flourishes when days and nights are too cold for blue grass and bent to grow. Consequently, poa annua quickly robs the soil of its meager supply of usable nitrogen. Kentucky blue grass, thus deprived of nitrogen before growth starts, must surrender to poa annua which becomes the predominating fairway grass. Then some time after seed heads form, usually in late June, poa annua weakens and disappears—for want of nitrogen. Fairways become thin and ragged despite watering.

Evidence supports the belief that lack of nitrogen is one cause for thinning of this grass. Last year light feeding with Milorganite and a trifling amount of ammonium sulphate produced startling improvement. Poa annua revived quickly, continued growth through the summer and produced good fairways. In these trials Milorganite was used at 200 pounds and ammonium sulphate at 25 pounds per acre. This tip is revealed now so others can make similar trials on limited areas this year.

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nificance of his work. He is not really going to dig in and do his best and do more than what you expect, perhaps, unless he has something which is a challenge to him in the form of an understanding about the significance of his work.

Second: when we have stimulated and increased his interest in his every-day activities to a high point.

Third: when the employee has a sincere loyalty to the enterprise in which he is employed and to the supervisor for whom he works.

Fourth: when he develops and shows enthusiasm in cooperative effort.

Fifth: when we have created greater satisfaction in his every-day work and in his personal relationships.

In setting up those conditions I left out certain obvious things with respect to proper materials, the right training, and that kind of thing. There are five key words we can think about in these five conditions; these are: understanding, interest, loyalty, cooperation, satisfaction.

A condition which is often against the supervisor is the physical condition of work. Obviously, if men are called upon to work in physical conditions which they find distasteful, unsatisfying, conditions which are conducive to poor morale on their part, the supervisor is going to have a pretty difficult time. It just isn't natural to expect the individual to come through, to do his best, to feel satisfied about it, if he is going to work in physical conditions which are unsuitable, as he sees it.

## Physical Well-Being Is Important

Another factor that probably is as of great importance is the physical condition of the employee. Unfavorable physical conditions of the employee can manifest themselves in a lot of ways. He might be just uncooperative, inefficient, irregular at work, susceptible to accidents, imprudent with equipment. Those symptoms of a physical condition in the employee are pretty serious. We look at those things as supervisors and we wonder why he is that way. We may bawl him out, but find out that doesn't help much.

There is a very simple but a very fundamental kind of information which all employees could have more of, and that is the information on why they are doing the job they are doing, or the "why" of any request that we make of employees. Why is it that we just ask him to do something? We tell him, "Do this," and they do that. But if we are going to set up the conditions we enumerated here, it doesn't seem to me that that is enough. He's got to have more. He's got to have something which gives his work a lot of significance, which isn't there if we just tell him what to do.

I think your men ought to have a pic-

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ture of maintenance costs. I think they ought to know what it means in terms of money to do the job on the course. I think you could separate these costs and show them some of the details: how much it costs to rake traps, how much it costs to mow fairways, and whatever other kinds of natural categories you divide your costs into.

They won't understand much about that to begin with. But if they had that information over a period of years, if they had a chance to see whether costs were going up or going down, if they had a chance to see what kind of result in terms of money their activities were bringing to the course, I think that would have a lot of significance to them.

With information like that the employee is "in the know." He is a part of the enterprise. His boss has given him a lot of information. The implications of that are pretty powerful. When the boss gives information like that, he implies that the man is important enough to know things like that. It gives the individual a lift.

EBERHARD STEINIGER (Pine Valley Golf Club); I realize that every golf club has its different conditions and its own problems. Therefore, I can only tell you about some of the things we do at my club. We have about 800 acres of land. That includes over 250 acres of golf course, 12 private estates, over 6 miles of road, nurseries, and other things. Besides the grounds, we take care of the golf buildings, the repair of the buildings, the clubhouse, the dormitory, servants' quarters, and other buildings.

## Keeps Year-Round Crew

We have a crew of 14 men who work steadily summer and winter, all the year around. Two of these men are foremen; they are working foremen. One of them is a good mechanic, and he is in charge of all the machinery, water systems, the electrical and refrigeration plant, and so on. The other is in charge of the men. We are very fortunate that this man is also an excellent carpenter. Then we have 6 greensmen. Each is in charge of three holes, from tee to green.

It is my custom to see each man three or four times a day during the critical season, because I feel that if anything goes wrong on the golf course the superintendent must take the blame.

Then we have two truck drivers. They are very important men and have special work to perform. They worked several years as greensmen, and now, although we call them truck drivers, they do work like spraying, fertilizing fairways, scraping roads, working the soil bed, etc.

The 4 other men are all-around men. They, too, were greensmen, and they now take care of the nurseries, the private

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estates, and the hothouses, and do all-around work.

Naturally, in the summertime we have to hire some extra help. And our outside employees are young men, and almost all of them were picked from the caddie ranks.

The fact that we are able to keep this crew all the year round is due to a well worked-out budget and a carefully planned year of work. Besides our regular winter course work of preparing topdressing, repairing and painting machinery, cutting wood, and clearing fire lines, we can find plenty of other work in the other departments to keep our men busy all year around. Even during icy weather and snow, there is plenty of inside work that needs attention.

### Work Is 'Timed' to Season

As I said before, we do almost all our work; that is, in addition to our course work, we do work like plumbing, electrical work, repairing furniture, painting, and so on. What we usually do is to record during the summer time all necessary repairs to buildings that do not need immediate attention, and when the bad weather comes along and outside working conditions are impossible, these repairs are made.

And one other reason why we keep this crew all year around is that we feel we cannot afford to lose those good men by giving them only 8 or 9 months' employment a year. We pay our men by the hour, and we are paying top wages in the Philadelphia district. All our employees are insured against any kind of accident. Besides this insurance, our club has set up a fund of several hundred dollars which we call a sick fund, to take care of any other time lost by the men. So the man loses practically no time all the year around, except when deer season comes along and the whole crew quits for three days.

All our men have been with us for over 10 years. Some of them started with me about 13 years ago. Twelve out of the 14 men own or are buying their own homes. Several of our boys are interested enough to attend evening lectures in horticulture at the county vocational school. Their registration fee is paid by the club or, in some cases, by the private estates. Almost all our men are keen golfers, and they are allowed to play the course whenever time permits. Every fall of the year they have their annual tournament. That is usually quite an event. This year our men even expect to play Joe Valentine's crew, at Merion.

At Christmas time the club gives our outside employees a dinner party in the clubhouse. The president of the club and several members are always present, and this party is usually a good one. Besides,



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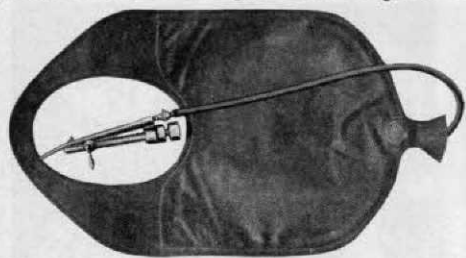
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they all receive a good Christmas present. They are a happy and contented crowd, and are eager to keep their jobs.

We do everything we can for them, but in return we expect hard work, loyalty, and above all, interest in their work. Now, although this social end of it might not seem important to you, I feel it goes a long way toward a harmonious relationship with the men in their work.

**KINGDON TROENSEGAARD** (Old Oaks Country Club): I think it is most important that the men we select for our workmen on the golf course should have had some farming experience. If they have been used to growing crops and they have a liking for their work, I think they make very good golf course employees.

### **Steady Income Helps Workers**

Another important thing is the yearly income of a golf course employee. From my experience, it ranges between \$700 and \$900 per year. I have found that in paying my men it is best to put them on a monthly basis, so they know they have a steady monthly income for the period of time they may work. That is preferable to an hourly rate, because with an hourly rate they have possibly \$20 coming in one week and \$30 another week, and they are never sure just how they can run their home life. A golf course employee from his income has to support himself, his wife, and possibly one, two or three children; and I think it is quite a problem in some cases.

Another thing is the equipment on a course. It should always be in good repair, and the proper safeguards against accidents should be provided.

Of course, the men should have proper instruction on the work to be done. The man should be interested in his job, and he also should be loyal to both the club and his supervisor. Another important thing is that he should cooperate with his fellow workers. If you get no cooperation amongst your men, that makes it quite hard for yourself.

Mr. Putnam brought out that the employees should be at all times in good physical condition. I think we get around that in a way, by making out a compensation case if a fellow does have some trouble; we send him down to the doctor, let the doctor look him over and give him a prescription or any medical attention he may need.

Then, also, one should try to make the general working conditions on the course as pleasant as possible. By that I mean this: suppose you are digging a ditch in possibly the spring of the year and the conditions are unfavorable; it may be raining, and the side walls of the ditch dripping, and so forth. If you could give them some old clothing and rubber boots, that would help them out.

And another important thing: I think

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we should become interested in our men as individuals, not just as employees that we may pick and fire from day to day. A man should be impressed with the effect of his work. If he does his job well, we can give him credit for it instead of having him do it just to get by.

When you are laying out your work for your men, let them thoroughly understand the work that they are to do; question them about it. In making your suggestions to them, take into consideration the suggestions that they may give you. The amount of knowledge that you may impart to your men should be only what they can absorb and digest, and it should create a more active interest in their work.

GERALD M. DEARIE (Edgewater Golf Club, Chicago): No set rules can be followed in the management, development, and maintenance of country clubs. What would be the correct thing at one club would be a mistake at another. As labor represents the bulk of the budget, a greenkeeper must be on his guard at all times to maintain the highest possible condition of his ground within that budget.

### Must Keep 'Up-to-Date'

The greenkeeper who has foresight analyzes his golf course as to its construction, equipment, drainage, irrigation system, barns, and compost. He keeps abreast of the new improvements in equipment and course management, and sees that these are applied so as to reduce his maintenance labor to a minimum. With the right management of men, the greenkeeper can provide a real test of golf and bring out the beauty of his grounds to the utmost.

The alert greenkeeper today keeps an accounting system of his golf course maintenance, but the statistics are worthless unless they are properly understood. An accounting system is a ready means for the greenkeeper to outline in detail all phases of golf labor and its management.

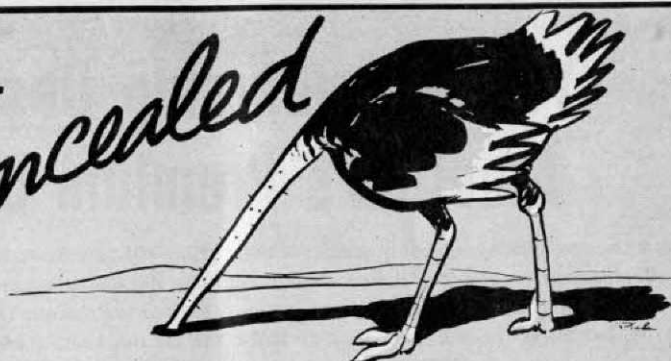
LEO FESER (Minneapolis): I have had about the same experience as Mr. Steiniger, but I can't say we keep all of our men on during the winter. We keep our married men, who constitute probably 80% of our crew, on throughout the winter, under conditions that are quite severe up in Minnesota. During January and up to the time I left, there was no time at which the temperature rose above thirty-two degrees; and a good deal of the time it was around zero or below. But we did manage and have managed for years to make winter work for the men and employ them on a year-round basis, using this hourly system.

I would like to ask you, Mr. Steiniger, what you did to sell your club the idea.

MR. STEINIGER: We have no chairmen at Pine Valley; we just have a board of governors. I am not responsible to the

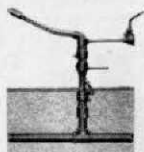
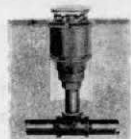
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whole board. I am just responsible to the president of the club. If anything comes up pertaining to the club, I am called in on it at a board meeting.

But, again, I am very fortunate in having a very good president. He is the boss of Pine Valley and whatever he says goes. And he is the boss with us; he is with the outside crew. Everything I tell him, if it is sensible or has some merit to it, he approves.

That gave me a good chance to work out my budget so that I could spread out my work all over the year. Now, we won't do any work in the middle of the summer that should be done in the winter, like repairing pipe dressing. We won't do that in July when there is other work to do. Our board of governors approves this system. If I went ahead and spent all that money in July and August, when October came along I would have to lay my men off; but by spreading out the work and the money, we can keep our crew all year around.

MR. FESER: It so happens that out at my club the house is closed during the winter, and it gives us an excellent opportunity on very bad days to work on furniture. We have no fire in the clubhouse—we drain the thing off—and any furniture from the swimming pool and the clubhouse is brought down to the shop and painted and taken care of.

Then, as our season starts some time in the first part of April, we usually build

our fires in the clubhouse from the first of March; and we divide the house into sections according to the demands of the committees, and fix up a locker-room or the dining room or the different parts. We go right in and do the job, from plastering to paper-hanging—a certain kind of paperhanging.

In order to do that, it was necessary to send some of our men to trade school, which we did a number of years ago. The club paid the bill. We sent these men to trade school for as long as six weeks at a period, to take up painting and plastering. Now, those men are not painters or plasterers; we don't consider them such. They are golf course workmen. But they have that skill, which has enabled them to work on a year-round basis.

In addition to that, for instance, out there today, if the weather is above zero, our men are moving soil. A grade was made last fall. We are digging off the knoll of a hill, and that particular knoll was covered with about eighteen inches of manure and strophole and saddleback. So, in spite of the fact we have had temperatures going to twenty below zero (there was practically no frost under that) it is true that we have done a lot of soil moving. As a matter of fact, there has hardly been a year in the last six or seven years that during the winter time we haven't moved two or three thousand yards of soil, and by hand, too.